

## Stemming the tide

### Smiglewski hopes to reverse 'alarming decline' in civic, community engagement

by Steve Downer

Few know more about 'civic engagement' than Dave Smiglewski.

Smiglewski has been Mayor of Granite Falls for nearly 22 years. He was a council member for 17 years before that, and has served on the local utilities commission for 35 years.

Not done yet, Smiglewski has embarked on an in-depth study of the topic. He recently received a Bush Foundation Fellowship to take a closer look at what he calls "an alarming decline in civic and community engagement, particularly in rural areas."

The topic is crucial for municipal utilities. Without a core of dedicated people in local policymaking positions, a municipal utility could well find its future bleak, and short.

It is not a new problem.

Smiglewski, 64, was 26 years old when he was appointed to fill a seat on the city council.

"I was the only one who put his name in," he recalled.

He was the youngest person on the council, for 20 years. It has sometimes taken recruiting and cajoling to get people involved. Smiglewski, generally optimistic, said the problem has worsened. As a result, he is actively involved in trying to "foster a culture where people want to be involved" in various community organizations, including those that involve making important decisions for the community.

One of those decisions for Smiglewski came in 2015, when the city invested \$2 million to upgrade the local Municipal Hydroelectric Plant. The city has generated using hydro-power



Photo courtesy of the West Central Tribune

Granite Falls Mayor Dave Smiglewski addressed a gathering at a Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities Lobby Day, May 11 at the state capitol. Smiglewski is president of the Coalition and is also on the League of Minnesota Cities board.

from the Minnesota River since 1900 and has had a run-of-the-river hydroelectric plant operating at the present site since 1911. The plant, dam, spillways

and generating equipment have been modernized repeatedly over the years.

Smiglewski: see page 7 please



Cody Raveling, Theresa Neddermeyer and Rita Kelly of MMUA, and Steve Johnson and Tony Mead of Marshall Municipal Utilities (left to right), enjoyed the Dec. 5 trade show at the Technical & Operations Conference in St. Cloud.

## Municipal utility people gather in St. Cloud for annual Technical & Operations meeting

Municipal utility people from around the state gathered Dec. 4-6 in St. Cloud for the annual Technical & Operations Conference. This year's conference delivered on its goal of offering useful information to superintendents, managers, supervisors and crew leaders, and to help create quality leaders within the municipal utility industry.

Conference favorite Kit Welchlin opened the program Wednesday afternoon with The Language of Responsibility: Become the Leader People Want to Fol-

low. This session featured solid information, personal humor and observation, and group discussion.

The conference's highlight may have been an expert talk on an unfortunate part of our modern world: Active Threat Preparedness & Verbal De-escalation for the Workplace. Sgt. Tad Hoeschen of the St. Cloud Police Department shared the best research and his riveting personal experience in regards to this troubling topic.

Prior to lunch, MMUA's Mike Willetts and Don

Harbuck of the Northwest Lineman College recognized recent graduates of the Apprentice Lineworker program and standout performances at Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo.

The afternoon was divided into Manager and Crew Leader/Foreman tracks.

Threats of the electronic type led off the Manager Track, as Eric Brown and Jesse Homa of Cyber Advisors delved into the Mindset of a Cyber Attacker. Troy Adams of Elk River Municipi-

T&O: see back page please

## MPUC finds changes necessary to co-op 'DG' fee calculation

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) Nov. 9 unanimously determined that changes must be made to a Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) fixed-cost recovery fee calculation methodology, in order for it to comply with state law.

Twenty of the state's 45 electric distribution cooperatives assess such a fee as part of their cogeneration and small power production tariffs. Cooperatives involved will issue refunds to customers if fees based on a new calculation are lower than those currently used. Commissioners also acknowledged that fees at some co-ops will likely increase based on this decision.

Much of the recent debate over the issue of fixed-cost recovery fees, at the legislature and the MPUC, revolved around Minn. Stat. 216B.164, Subd. 3(a), which applies only to cooperative electric associations and municipal electric utilities. A 2015 law change allows them to charge a fee "to recover the fixed costs not already paid for by the customer through the customer's existing billing arrangement."

This docket was initiated by Fresh Energy and the Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC) to oppose MPUC approval of co-op cogeneration and small power production tariffs that, for the first time in 2016, included these fees. They challenged the fees as

DG Tariff: see page 8 please

Periodicals  
Postage  
PAID  
at  
Twin Cities, MN

Inside  
Stories

Co-op Makes  
Offer for  
Municipal  
page 4



Spotlight  
On  
Apprentices  
page 5



'DG' Workshops  
Move Around  
the State  
page 9



# MMUA Scholarship program seeks member support, student essays

MMUA's Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award program was created as a public relations tool to increase the awareness of public power and create goodwill in your city for your utility.

Consider this sentence from a recent winner:

"While there have been many changes in the utility industry since our local utility was created, one thing has remained constant—its ability to provide a steady, reliable utility service at competitive rates to the citizens and businesses of Hibbing."

Wouldn't you like to have

high school seniors in your community writing papers like this? You can, by bringing these materials to your local high school guidance office. Our fund is split into four prizes and awarded to essay contest winners who plan to attend a post-secondary educational institution.

MMUA has a few simple documents that we request members forward to all your local high schools—public and private. We have emailed these documents—a letter to the school, scholarship program guidelines and an entry form—to each utility and also

posted them in the 'Services' section of the MMUA website.

Here's how it works: The local governing body of the utility picks a local winner. Every MMUA member may then enter the one local essay contest winner to the state contest. The deadline for having utilities forward local winners to MMUA is April 16, 2018. Local deadlines will need to be set earlier, to allow

the local governing board (or its designee) time to review the entries. Many members, with necessary local political support, award their own scholarships locally to encourage participation. A group of MMUA members will select the first, second, third and fourth place winners statewide. MMUA will announce the winners by mid-May.

The MMUA awards are

divided into \$2,000 for first place, \$1,500 second, \$1,000 third and \$500 fourth place.

Students can find resource materials at [www.mmua.org](http://www.mmua.org), the American Public Power Association website, and often from the local utility.

Please call if you have any questions or comments. Thank you for helping make this program a success.

## Associate Members snapping up MMUA Annual Sponsorships

Associate Members are signing up now for 2018 MMUA Annual Sponsorships.

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tendees at either the Summer Conference or Technical and Operations (T&O) Conference

• Two meeting registrations at either the Summer Conference or T&O Conference

Be seen on our website, at our meetings, and in our publications. For more information, please contact Steve Downer at [sdowner@mmua.org](mailto:sdowner@mmua.org) or Rita Kelly at [rkelly@mmua.org](mailto:rkelly@mmua.org).

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# Cyber, physical grid security tested during November nationwide exercise

by Paul Ciampoli

News Director, American Public Power Association

More than 6,000 stakeholders from across North America in November took part in GridEx, an exercise designed for utilities to exercise their response and recovery to cyber and physical security threats in a simulated environment.

The exercise, which takes place every two years, allows utilities, government partners and other critical infrastructure participants to engage with local and regional first responders, exercise cross-sector impacts, improve unity of messages and communication, identify lessons learned and engage senior leadership, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation noted. The exercise began in 2011 and NERC hosts the GridEx series. The 2017 GridEx, which took place over two days (Nov. 15-16), marked the fourth such exercise.

More than 1,100 public power employees and 53 public power organizations participated in the 2017 GridEx

## Washington

### Report



exercise. In 2015, the total number of public power organizations participating in GridEx was 26.

The exercise includes direct engagement among senior federal government officials and leaders from the Electricity Subsector Coordinating Council (ESCC).

The ESCC serves as the principal liaison between the federal government and the electric power industry and is comprised of the CEOs that represent all segments of the industry, including investor-owned electric companies, electric cooperatives, and public power utilities in the U.S. and Canada.

Kevin Wailes, administrator and CEO of Lincoln Electric System, serves as co-chair of the ESCC, while Sue Kelly, president and CEO of the American Public Power Association, serves on the ESCC steering committee.

The participation by Wailes and Kelly in GridEx activities helped to ensure that public power's voice was heard throughout the two-day event.

#### Scenario designed to overwhelm

The large-scale GridEx cyber and physical attack scenario was designed to overwhelm even the most prepared organizations, NERC noted.

"Participating organizations are encouraged to identify their own lessons learned and to share them with NERC," said Charles Berardesco, acting CEO for NERC, in a conference call with reporters on Nov. 16.

"We believe this input to develop observations and propose recommendations helps the electric industry enhance the security, reliability and resilience of North America's bulk power system," he said.

He noted that the ESCC and NERC's Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center, or E-ISAC, serve as

the information-sharing conduit between the power sector and government for cyber and physical threats.

Following the 2013 GridEx, the ESCC developed a plan called the ESCC playbook for responding to grid emergencies, which was exercised in the fourth GridEx, Berardesco said.

The playbook offers a framework for responding to grid emergencies for senior industry and government executives to coordinate response and recovery efforts and communications to the American public.

Wailes, who also participated in the media conference call, said that with the exercise, "there's an awful lot of relationship building" going on.

Wailes added, "We can't prepare for all threats and be prepared for all types of events, but we can certainly try to make sure we have the relationships in place to address those as we go forward." Tom Fanning, ESCC co-chair and president and CEO of investor-owned Southern Com-

pany, said during the conference call that "the usefulness of these exercises is not only to test the unknown and heretofore unseen, it is to break the system. It is to find out where the friction points are, not only within our industry, but in trying to harmonize the activities among and between the federal government, private industry, and state and local governments."

In addition, one of the objectives "of this exercise is to test the friction points and the interdependencies among and between, say, electricity, telecom and finance and other lifeline sectors," Fanning said.

On Nov. 16, an executive tabletop took place. The tabletop focused on the grid restoration and recovery response by senior government and industry leaders to the simulated cyber and physical security events reflected in the GridEx scenario.

Patricia Hoffman, principal deputy assistant secretary for the Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability at the Department of Energy, said the DOE "is very excited to participate in this year's grid security exercise, which has become a fundamental cornerstone to enhancing the preparedness and security of the North American power industry."

#### Measure of success or failure

During the question-and-answer portion of the call with media, a reporter asked for comment on what the measure of success or failure is with the exercise.

Wailes noted that "some of the outcomes of these events have actually caused us to develop pretty extraordinary measures."

He said, for example, "we have a cyber mutual assistance group" that came about in the wake of GridEx III, "when we realized that we really did not have a deep enough bench, from an industry perspective, to deal with some of these events on an individual basis." Wailes said "we now have 130 companies involved in cyber mutual assistance," similar to what would be deployed in a mutual aid event "to put linemen on the ground."

NERC's Berardesco said that one measure of success "is simply the number of participants. The people that are learning from this exercise through participation has grown exponentially over the last four years."

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## Kandiyohi municipal receives purchase agreement from electric cooperative

It was reported at the Nov. 20 Kandiyohi City Council meeting that the city council and the city attorney have received the first draft of the purchase agreement from the Kandiyohi Power Cooperative and are in the process of reviewing the agreement.

When contacted by MMUA, a city staff person said the city's attorney has issued an opinion that the city need not have a referendum to sell the

utility, only a public hearing. MMUA believes this is an incorrect reading of Minn. Stat. 412.321, which concerns the sale, lease or discontinuance of a municipal utility.

MMUA has contacted the city in regards to this legal question.

In the only sellout of a municipal electric utility in recent memory, the city of Darwin held a referendum before it sold its municipal electric

utility in December 2007.

The Kandiyohi Council at its Oct. 16 regular meeting unanimously voted to approve the sale of the city of Kandiyohi municipal electric utilities and infrastructure to the Kandiyohi Power Cooperative (KCP), pending approval of the contract wording from the city attorney.

KCP, headquartered seven miles directly north of Kandiyohi in Spicer, has been main-

taining the municipal electric system and also provides a portion of the city's wholesale power supply.

The city hosted a public forum on Oct. 3 in regards to the KCP offer to buy the municipal utility.

## Melrose, Stearns Cooperative file amended territory map

The city of Melrose and Stearns Cooperative Electric Association have filed an amended service territory map with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.

A 14.6 acre tract is being added to the municipal service area. The city annexed the area to better enable a Jennie-O Turkey Stores project, which is largely a replacement to the company's current facility in the city. The expansion will allow for increased production, depending on demands. Construction on the \$137 million expansion started in May.

Electric service to the new facility will be extended from

facilities serving the existing facility. If the municipal extends electric distribution plant into the area, it has agreed that compensation will be owed. Though no current plans exist to extend plant into this area, the municipal has agreed to pay compensation for 10 years, except no payment will be required after 15 years, dated from the official approval letter from the state of Minnesota.

The agreement stipulates the Melrose Public Utilities Commission will compensate the cooperative at a rate of 0.9 cents per kWh, if necessary.

"Jennie-O Turkey Store has had a long-standing

relationship with the city of Melrose," Glenn Leitch, president at Jennie-O Turkey Store, said in a media release. "Melrose has been and will continue to be a great place for our company and our team to grow and prosper. We appreciate the support that the city of Melrose has shown us in getting this project off the ground."

The current Jennie-O plant will remain in operation during the construction process. Once the new plant is finished in early 2019, the existing plant will be partially torn down and the remainder will be used for further value-added products.

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission Nov. 30 approved a petition from Xcel Energy to terminate power purchase agreements for biomass-fueled electricity from the **Laurentian Energy Authority (LEA)** and **Benson Power**.

That is not the end of the story, however.

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Minnesota have sued to block the plant closures. The suit alleges the plant closures would hurt the environment and cost jobs.

The LEA plants are operated by the Virginia Depart-

ment of Public Utilities and Hibbing Public Utilities. Benson Power is privately-owned.

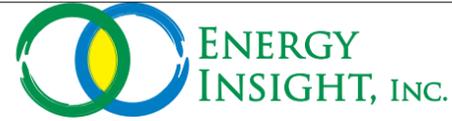
The biomass power purchase agreement resulted from 1994 legislation (rescinded this past session), which allowed Xcel (then Northern States Power) to expand radioactive waste storage at its Prairie Island nuclear power plant. Xcel sought to nullify the agreements due to the cost of power from the plants.

The **Minnesota River Valley Public Utilities Commission**—which oversees a wastewater treatment plant serving the cities of Le Sueur and Henderson—is asking the Minnesota Court of Appeals to review phosphorus discharge limits imposed by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

The local commission, according to news reports, wants to continue to submit annual reports, while the MPCA seeks monthly reports and an average daily discharge limit of a maximum of 5.4 kilograms per day.

The **Detroit Lakes** city council in November approved a \$28.6 million bid for a new wastewater treatment plant. The final price tag, which will include a number

*State: see facing page*



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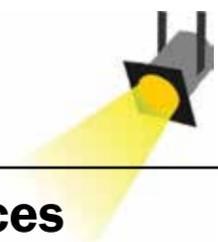
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## Spotlight on apprentices

### State officials visit program in Austin; graduates honored

National Apprenticeship Week was Nov. 13-19 this year. As part of the celebration, John Aiken, director of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry Apprentice Program and Apprentice Program Senior Field Representative Leslie Philman, Nov. 14 visited the Austin Utilities registered apprenticeship program. They visited with apprentice lineworkers Colin Roberts, Dillion Sprague, Isreal Wacek

and Tyler Underdahl. The apprentices all work with Austin Utilities, except for Wacek, who works for Blooming Prairie Public Utilities.

The apprentices regularly are instructed by and train with MMUA's Mike Taylor, who also participated in the event.

Taylor and MMUA congratulate these recent graduates of the MMUA Apprentice Lineworker Training program: Derek Groebner of

Elk River Municipal Utilities, Karl Green and Benjamin Hoyt of Virginia Public Utilities, Steven Lyseng and Daniel Rasmussen of Fosston Municipal Utilities.

MMUA's innovative, four-year Apprentice Lineworker Training program brings top-notch teaching and hands-on skill development to municipal systems. The course allows the municipal utility employee who wants to advance in the lineworker's trade to receive professional training from experienced instructors, right at the utility site. Students are given a cutting-edge academic program along with extensive hands-on training to help them progress to journeyman status. Program timing is flexible and training typically takes place one or two days a month. This training often involves actual projects on the local distribution system. Students also attend four MMUA schools, tuition free.

Students from any MMUA member utility can enter this program at any time during the year, so you have the flexibility to start your apprentices when the time is right for you and your employee. MMUA has worked with newly-hired people from member cities, as well as well-established employees from various city de-



photo by Mike Taylor

Top: John Aiken, director of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry Apprentice Program (left) and Apprentice Program Senior Field Representative Leslie Philman (right), visited Austin Utilities registered apprenticeship program. They are pictured with apprentice lineworkers Colin Roberts, Dillion Sprague (on pole), Isreal Wacek and Tyler Underdahl, from left to right. The apprentices all work with Austin Utilities, except for Wacek, who works for Blooming Prairie Public Utilities. Pictured at right: Dan Rasmussen (left) and Steve Lyseng of Fosston Municipal Utilities attended the recent MMUA T&O Conference. The men both recently graduated from the MMUA Lineworker Program.



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## State:

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of other items, is expected to be closer to an estimate of \$34.4 million.

The city anticipates \$17 million in low-interest money from the Public Facilities Authority to help finance the plant. The project is expected to take well over two years to complete.

The Willmar Municipal Utilities power plant is switching from coal to natural gas as its primary fuel for electric generation and hot water for the district heating system. The heating system is being shut down by July 1, 2020.

The Anoka City Council has approved increases to sanitary sewer, stormwater and electric rates, effective Jan. 1. Sewer rate increases are also planned for 2018 and 2019. The electric rate increase is the first since 2013 and is approximately 3.3 percent, depending on various factors.

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## Willmar commissioner, businessman receives McKnight 'Unsung Hero' award

Article reprinted courtesy of the West Central Tribune

WILLMAR — A Willmar businessman is one of four people in Minnesota to receive the 2017 Virginia McKnight Binger 'Unsung Hero' Award.

Abdirizak "Zack" Mahboub, 57, of Willmar, a native of Somalia, was named for the honor by the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and the McKnight Foundation.

Mahboub and his wife

Sahra Gure own and operate West Central Interpreting Services and New Minnesota Realty.

They are remodeling a building in downtown Willmar with the intention of renting space to a variety of small businesses. The former Erickson Furniture building is now called Midtown Plaza and is expected to open later this fall.

Mahboub said Monday that three people nominated

him for the award: State Rep. Dave Baker, a local businessman; Diana Anderson, director of the Southwest Initiative Foundation; and Ken Warner, president of the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce.

"Amazing" was Mahboub's reaction to the award.

"Since I moved here in 2011, I've tried my best to be a bridge between the minority and the mainstream communities," he said.

Over the time he's lived in Willmar, he said, he's tried to help newcomers from East Africa adjust to life in America and to explain the newcomers' culture to people in what he calls the mainstream culture.

"Internally, we suffer, as immigrants, with our own baggage," he said. Many Africans arrive after having dealt with clan warfare in Somalia's civil war and having spent many months in refugee camps.

Through their interpreting business, Mahboub and Gure also speak on cultural competency in the community to help different groups learn about each other.

The African immigrants and refugees here are not different from immigrants who have come to the country in previous generations, he said. He lived for a time on the East Coast, he said, and he learned of the difficulties Irish, Italians, Greeks and other nationalities had adjusting to



Willmar business owner 'Zack' Mahboub also serves on the Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission. Mahboub is a native of Somalia.

the cities, and the problems Americans had adjusting to them. "Today, they are as American as anybody else."

Africans and other newcomers have found Willmar to be a generally accepting community, he said.

A change in the political climate has brought a few more challenges, he added. He's been yelled at on the street a couple of times, for example.

Mahboub said he often explains that the east Africans here are "no different from any other immigrant" and that they make significant contributions to the local economy.

Immigrants' children are Americans, he said. "They don't know any other home."

Mahboub said he has tried to work to expand opportunities for ethnic businesses

along with increasing cultural understanding. He expects Midtown Plaza to house a variety of ethnic and mainstream businesses as well as offer some cultural activities.

Mahboub has lived in the United States since he came here to start college in 1981. He is a mechanical engineer and has a master's degree in public affairs from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. He currently serves as secretary of the Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission (WMU).

"I am proud to be an American citizen, and I have committed my life to show Americans can always do better," he said.

"Mr. Mahboub is an excellent Commissioner who has been a member of our governing board since February of 2015," said WMU General Manager John Harren. "Mr. Mahboub also serves as Vice Chair of the WMU Planning Committee. He is knowledgeable about the utility business and is always inquisitive about issues affecting the utility and the city we live in. Zack provides valuable insight to our staff and the community relating to the Somali and minority cultures in our area. We are fortunate to have Abdirizak Mahboub as a member of our Commission and a vital part of our community."

Mahboub worked for the Minneapolis-based African Development Commission when he and his family moved to Willmar. About a year later, he resigned and they started their own business.

Honorees receive a \$10,000 cash prize, and were honored at a private luncheon in Minneapolis. They were also recognized at the 2017 Minnesota Council of Nonprofits annual conference in St. Paul.

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## Smiglewski: *continued from front page*

That willingness to invest in the community is one reason Smiglewski loves Granite Falls. He said, "We have great people who are not afraid to invest in our needs and take care of our infrastructure."

The advisory utilities commission also oversees a diesel electric generating plant, substations and the electrical distribution system. The municipal electric has provided service for 115 years. The utility currently serves 1,660 electric customers, in a city of 3,070.

The community has a good sense of its history, and the utility has played an important role in local affairs—it is no mistake that Granite Falls is home to the Kilowatt Community Center.

The utility is one example of local people being willing to invest in their community, to help keep it an attractive place to live and work. It also is an example of a bright spot: While young people often leave the area, many come back.

Because of the retirement of several long-time employees there has been a lot of turnover in city administration and staff in the past three years. The city offers good, local jobs that attract good candidates, many from the local area. Many of the city's utility staff are new, including most of the electric line department, Smiglewski pointed out. "Most are from here," he said. "They went away to school and came back for a good, local job."

"It's heartening to see," he said.

### *One thing leads to another*

It hasn't been easy for Granite Falls. It has overcome a lot of challenges beyond those faced by a typical Greater Minnesota city, in-

cluding floods, flood mitigation, tornadoes and tornado recovery.

Those issues, along with a well-rounded local policymaker's knowledge that much of what a city deals with comes from other levels of government, led Smiglewski to get involved in various state associations.

He was elected President of the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities in August. He has also attended MMUA Legislative Rallies, and has been a member of the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) board of directors, since October 2015.

While familiar with city operations, Smiglewski also knows how hard it is to make a go of it in the business world.

In April 2016, he retired after more than 11 years as Publisher/Editor of the Granite Falls *Advocate Tribune*. At the same time, he also oversaw operations at two other local newspapers owned by a New York-based company.

Smiglewski was in charge of newspaper financials and was involved in sales, content development, editorial layout and photography. According to a farewell article, "on the weekends would even help clean the office." Prior to that he worked as a track maintenance foreman for BNSF Railroad for 30 years.

While working for the railroad and later at the newspaper and also serving as mayor and utilities commissioner, he also served on the Granite Falls Chamber, and a variety of other local and regional organizations.

People, and organizations, need to be led. And if they are not led well, they will either find other leaders, stagnate, or worse. Smiglewski is intent on always becoming a better



photo by Steve Downer

On Saturday, Oct. 12, 1991, Granite Falls celebrated the centennial of its municipal electric utility. MMUA presented a plaque, in honor of the occasion, to Council Vice President and Commissioner Dave Smiglewski, left, and the late Mayor Roy Lenzen. In the background is the municipal hydroelectric plant.

### Homegrown Bush Foundation awards Granite Falls community foundation \$1.8 million

The Bush Foundation was started in 1953 by Granite Falls natives Archie and Edyth Bush. For seed money, they used \$200 million worth of stock accumulated during his career.

Born and raised in Granite Falls, Archie Bush dropped out of school in eighth grade to work on the family farm. In 1909, he joined Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3M) as a bookkeeper and eventually rose to become the company's executive chairman.

The Foundation in November announced it would award Granite Falls \$1.8 million. The Granite Falls Area Community Foundation will direct the majority of the gift.

"This will truly be a game changer for the Granite Falls Area Community Foundation and will enable their good work to go further and reach more of our community's needs," Smiglewski said in a news release. "We are humbled and grateful beyond words."

degree and pursue post-graduate education, "studying the best methods to incubate, model and drive civic engagement."

"I have long wanted to return to school and finish up my bachelor's degree and do further studies at the graduate level," he said. After being away from college for 42 years, he has graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Metropolitan State. He is also exploring other graduate school options and opportunities.

"There is a world of possibilities that my Fellowship is making available to me," he said. While Smiglewski is eager to explore that world of possibilities, he will be the first to tell you, there is no place like Granite Falls.

leader.

In 2016, he was named a Bush Leadership Fellow, focusing on Civic Engagement and Community Involvement. The Fellowship is spread over 24 months, and allows recipients to "pursue the education and experiences they need to become more effective leaders

in their community."

The Fellowship allowed him to finish his bachelor's

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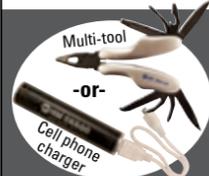
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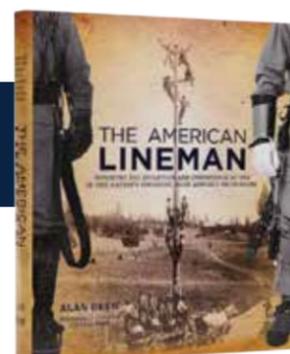


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## DG Tariff:

*continued from front page*

unlawful because they are set based upon revenue information, rather than cost data as the recent new legislation requires.

The co-op methodology uses figures from revenues collected for utility fixed costs as they are reported on forms that co-ops provide annually to the federal Rural Utilities Service. Cooperatives had generally used revenue calculations in computing the tariffs, not Cost of Service Studies (COSS), and argued that the revenue calculation was a reasonable estimate of the cost of service.

MREA said the methodology it proposed complied with state law because the revenue information comes from rates that were based on the co-ops' cost of service studies. It also said the resulting fees were "reasonable and appropriate," as required by statute.

The Department of Commerce (DOC) recommended approval of the MREA methodology, which it said was generally reasonable, with modifications.

MMUA agreed with the DOC comments that the MREA methodology to develop these fees was reasonable and its use should be found to comply with the statutory directive. MMUA also noted that the Legislature reinforced the intent of state law towards local control in 2017, with certain related changes it made to Minnesota Statute 216B.164, described below.

Fresh Energy and the ELPC said the MREA methodology could not reasonably be called a cost of service study (COSS). The methodology flipped the COSS concept on its head, they said, by starting with existing rates to derive an estimate of utility costs. Substituting the actual COSS used by Minnesota Valley and Dakota Electric reduced fees by 16 and 22 percent respectively, they noted.

In early 2017, the cooperatives went to the Legislature to establish, by statute, a framework for the MPUC's handling of the fixed cost fee docket. With debate swirling, Fresh Energy and the MREA in February requested the MPUC suspend the comment period.

After a veto of one bill pertaining to the issue, Gov. Dayton on May 30 signed an omnibus bill which included direction to the Commission to complete the investigation, by the end of the year.

The law change also allowed cooperative electric associations to elect by board

resolution to assume implementation authority for the cogeneration and small power production statute by adopting implementing rules and tariffs locally (as municipal utilities are already permitted to do). Co-ops' rules must also provide for a process to resolve customer disputes through independent mediation, where the co-op will pay 90 percent of the cost and the customer will pay 10 percent. Customers with qualifying facilities over 20 MW may still

request that the PUC resolve disputes with municipal utilities or cooperative electric associations until December 31, 2022. More importantly to municipal utilities, the 2017 law change also eliminated a provision allowing the PUC to settle municipal and co-op customer disputes so long as the utilities have adopted state-conforming rules and standards.

During discussion of the motion to draft the Commission's final order, Fresh En-

ergy, with support from two commissioners, asserted that the co-op methodology should be modified so that distribution system "fixed costs" considered in the methodology should be limited to those functionalized and classified as "customer-related distributions costs" in a cooperative's Cost of Service Study.

However, commissioners stopped short of trying to direct local cooperative boards on classifying fixed costs.

While the MPUC had not

published its order finalizing this docket as of this writing, commissioners signaled that it will also require that a DG system not be assessed a kilowatt (kw) fee if it is also assessed a minimum bill charge and that a DG system assessed a kilowatt-hour (kWh) fee must only have the kWh fee applied to excess energy produced in a given month if it is also assessed a minimum bill charge.

The MPUC closed the docket, as of the end of 2017.



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## MMUA 'DG' workshops aim to help municipals retain local ratemaking authority

All municipal electric utilities need to have certain rules in place and understand state law requirements when a customer seeks to install solar or other electric generating equipment. Some utilities are finding themselves unprepared to deal with these situations, which are becoming more common.

Municipal utilities can govern customer generation interconnections *only* if they officially adopt appropriate regulatory rules, rates and contract forms pursuant to state laws related to distributed generation (DG). Without the right procedures in place, municipal utilities may be subject to DG regulatory scrutiny by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC). As customers are increasingly interconnecting to the grid statewide, it is extremely important that each municipal utility adopt these regulatory tools and understand how they affect customer and utility rights and obligations.

To help municipal utilities prepare for these issues, MMUA has scheduled a series of regional workshops. These workshops are designed to

*Upcoming workshop dates and locations are:*

*January 4 - Detroit Lakes  
January 18 - Marshall*

provide you with the materials and information your utility needs to be in compliance with state law and to be able to handle the many customer interconnection issues that can arise and otherwise lead to trouble. It's important for every municipal electric utility to attend one of these sessions.

MMUA, along with Star Energy Services, has developed a set of model rules with a contract template specifically for use by municipal utilities to affirm local control while following state law as required. At any one of the regional half-day training sessions hosted by MMUA, municipal utilities can receive the tools and information they need to serve customers seeking to interconnect solar, wind and other generation.

Our lead instructor is Kristi Robinson of Star Energy Services, along with Bill Black of MMUA.



MMUA held the first in a series of five 'DG' regional workshops Nov. 21 at Owatonna Public Utilities. Pictured above: Kristi Robinson of Star Energy Services led the presentation. At right: MMUA Government Relations Director Bill Black (seated at left, facing camera) explains a point during the question and answer session.

*photos by Steve Downer*



For more information see the Events/Calendar section of the MMUA website, or contact [rkelly@mmua.org](mailto:rkelly@mmua.org)

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**Supervisor, Accounting**  
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prentice program and be required to obtain a journeyman lineman license.

To apply: Call or stop in for an application. Contact: Superintendent Paul Hoeschen and/or Electrical Supervisor John Egan @ 320-352-6538 Monday thru Friday 7:30 am. to 4:30 pm. Closing will be January 12, 2018 at 4:30 p.m. or until filled.

#### Associate

#### Member News

MMUA has a new Associate Member: Excellence Opto, Inc.

The company is located at 1663 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Pomona, CA 91766. Phone is 909-784-3333 and fax is 909-784-3330. Company website is [www.eoius.com](http://www.eoius.com)

Main contact is Emmergy Yang. Yang's office number is 909-784-3333, ext. 106 and email is [emmergyyang@eoius.com](mailto:emmergyyang@eoius.com)

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TKDA announced Nov. 14 that Tom Stoneburner, PE, LEED AP, will become the new president and CEO of TKDA in 2018.

Stoneburner has been with the employee-owned engineering, architecture and planning firm for more than 30 years. A graduate of the

University of Minnesota, Stoneburner, a civil engineer, has served as vice president of TKDA's largest division, Facilities Engineering, since 2006.

Stoneburner succeeds Bill Deitner, PE, who is retiring after a nearly 40-year career with the company.

The firm serves public and private clients in the aviation, municipal, rail, surface transportation, corporate, government, education and iron mining markets.

Stoneburner and Deitner will work closely together over the coming months on the transition that will occur in March 2018.

**For a full and complete list of current job openings, for sale and wanted items, see the News/Classifieds section at [www.mmua.org](http://www.mmua.org) MMUA Regular (Utility) Members can place ads directly on our website, after creating a website account.**

## T&O

continued from front page

pal Utilities, Dave Hunstad of Hutchinson Utilities and Dirk Bierbaum of Rochester Public Utilities presented on Communicating the Value of Reliability.

Marc Machacek of MMUA and Matt Tupper of Rochester Public Utilities kicked-off the Crew Leader track with a presentation titled Safety Culture Within. Joshua Burman of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency gave a PCB Snapshot. Rick Martagon of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry discussed the Minnesota Lineworker Apprenticeship.

Following the Vendor Showcase was the ever-popular evening Trade Show and Reception.

Friday morning started with possibly the most heart-wrenching presentation ever to be made at an MMUA conference. Matt Logan, who lost a beloved daughter to a traffic accident while texting, talked about How Distraction Changed My Life. Put that cell phone down and drive!

The next topic—after a break—focused on how to handle solar energy development on your local electric distribution system—certainly a hot topic. Speakers were Bill Black and Bob Jagusch of MMUA. This important ses-



Utilities and individuals responding to the call for mutual aid in response to Hurricane Irma were recognized at the T&O. Those present included Matt Clements of Owatonna, Josh Waldorf of Alexandria, Andrew Romine of Chaska, Brad Gunderson of Rochester, Kent Sanders of Shakopee, Trent Hawkins of Brainerd, Mark Fuchs of Elk River, Larry Botten of New Ulm, Larry Lamote of Marshall, Ed Evans of Anoka, Joe Moore of Moorhead, Jeff Meyer of Sleepy Eye and TJ Becthold of St. James.



## 2018 Meeting & Training Center Calendar

### Meter School & Pre-Conference

February 13-16

MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### PCB Workshop

February 27-28

MMUA Office, Plymouth

### Rodeo Team Training Clinic

March 6-7

MMUA Training Center, Marshall



### Legislative Conference

April 3-4

Best Western Capitol Ridge, St. Paul

### Generation School

April 10-12

Owatonna Public Utilities



### Substation School

April 17-19

Rochester Public Utilities

### Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo

April 28

Wake Forest, North Carolina

### APPA E&O Technical Conference

April 29-May 2

Raleigh, North Carolina



### Underground School

May 15-18

MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Annual Summer Conference

August 20-22

Arrowwood Resort, Alexandria



### Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo

September 11

MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Overhead School

September 11-14

MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Cross Training School

October 16-18

MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### Technical & Operations Conference

December 4-6

Best Western Plus Kelly Inn, St. Cloud



### Transformer School & Pre-Conference

December 11-14

MMUA Training Center, Marshall

### MMUA Leadership Academy

Group A - Year 2

February 7-8

May 22-23

September 12-13

November 28-29

Group B - Year 1

March 14-15

May 30-31

Sept. 26-27

Dec. 12-13

All at MMUA Office, Plymouth

### Firstline Supervision

Session 1

February 7-9, Brainerd

February 21-23, Plymouth

March 7-9, Plymouth

Session 2

October 10-12, Plymouth

October 24-26, Brainerd

November 14-16, Plymouth

sion was titled Distributed Energy Resources—It's Not That Simple.

The meeting concluded with MMUA Updates from Jagusch, Black and MMUA Executive Director Jack Kegel.

Thanks to all our various sponsors, speakers, attendees and the municipal utilities that sent them. You made it all possible!

A particular thanks to our conference sponsors: Bolton & Menk, Border States Electric, Coalition for a Secure Energy Future, CORE & MAIN, Energis High Voltage Resources, FS3, Inc., MP Technologies, Northwest Lineman College, and Utilities Plus Energy Services.

## Save the Date!

MMUA will hold a PCB Workshop Feb. 27-28 at our office in Plymouth. The workshop will include working through some "real world" scenarios. This workshop was very highly rated last year and we are very excited about this year's program!

Our expert instructor, Mark Pennell, works with many utilities across the country. In addition, representatives from Minnesota Pollution Control Agency will participate and can offer useful insight. Registrants will receive a useful take-home manual and sample forms. Registration opens in January.

