Elk River moves to ride electric vehicle ‘wave of the future’

Is it time for municipal utilities to reach back to a strategy from their earliest days, and once again promote electric use?

Elk River Municipal Utilities (ERMU) thinks so, at least when it comes to electric vehicles (EV).

“It’s the wave of the future,” said Elk River Mayor John Dietz, who also serves as chair of the ERMU Commission.

ERMU currently operates three public charging stations in Elk River—one downtown, one in the ERMU parking lot adjacent to City Hall and one at the Cohron’s fuel station on U.S. Highway 169.

The public charging stations reduce ‘range anxiety’ and build consumer confidence that the EV buyer can drive beyond their neighborhood. They are visible and have received good publicity, but what ERMU really wants—in an era of increased costs but little or no growth in electricity sales for many utilities—is to promote at-home chargers. Increased sales, mostly off-peak, are the goal.

ERMU: see page 5 please

MMUA files amicus brief in railroad crossing case

MMUA has joined the Minnesota Telecom Alliance, Minnesota Cable Communications Association and the Minnesota Rural Electric Association in submitting an amicus brief to the Minnesota Court of Appeals. The effort follows from a Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) docket involving telecommunications carrier Qwest and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad.

The MPUC on Nov. 7 issued an order in favor of Qwest (CenturyLink) and against BNSF, finding that Minn. Stat. 237.045 applied to “paralleling” as well as crossings of railroad rights-of-way (ROW). This allowed CenturyLink to install new replacement cable within the BNSF ROW after providing required notice and paying the.statutorily set fee of $1,250. BNSF had sought $27,000 in licensing fees.

BNSF argued that the law establishing the $1,250 fee did not apply to paralleling because it only expressly referenced crossings. The MPUC, however, agreed with CenturyLink and held that the term “paralleling” was defined and used throughout the statute, and that it would render the definition meaningless if the term did not apply to paralleling as well as crossings.

BNSF has appealed the MPUC order to the Minnesota Court of Appeals. The MPUC ruling would benefit utilities needing to run power lines, pipes and other infrastructure within a railroad’s ROW.

An amicus brief advises the court on special or unique impacts of the case. MMUA is awaiting word on whether the court will accept its brief.

MMUA broadens training to include Leadership; students give new Academy the highest marks

MMUA has for years provided information on timely topics and systematically trained people how to perform certain tasks. Now it is embarked on a program to train people how to lead.

While leadership has been a part of various workshops and meetings over the years, it has only been since the advent of the MMUA Leadership Program that the association has offered Public Power in Minnesota a systematic method of developing its leadership core.

Two groups of students are currently enrolled and participating in the program. MMUA Executive Director Jack Kegel is a member of the first group. “Participating in the Leadership Academy has made me a better leader. The program starts by focusing on a key issue that every leader confronts—building better teams,” Kegel said.

“Building trust, embracing conflict, generating commitment and accountability, and focusing on results are some of the key skills in a leader’s team-building toolbox.”

Chris Olson, finance manager at Alexandria Light & Power and an MMUA board member, started in the program this year. He is impressed.

“The program itself is interesting and good and instructor Kent Myers does a really good job of it,” Olson said. “He’s a good choice.”

The first session is Building Great Teams. Myers gets everybody in the room engaged. He also leads people into uncomfortable issue areas and gives them the tools to have the ‘crucial conversations’ that are necessary in a relationship, including those at work.

“You have to do that,” Olson said.

The second session deals with Political Intelligence and Conflict—Navigating the Minefields. Myers leads his students through a systematic method to lay the groundwork to deal with difficult issues. Though not always easy or comfortable, “this will be extremely beneficial to anybody who goes through it,” Olson said.

Class attendees often know somebody else in the class, but they certainly don’t know everybody. Others come in with no acquaintances among their fellow students. That changes quickly.

Following the first day of class, there is a group dinner, with focused discussion. Conversations often continue into the evening.

Leadership: see next page please
Three Minnesota municipal electric utilities recently earned the RP3 (Reliable Public Power Provider) designation from the American Public Power Association (APPA). The RP3 program recognizes utilities that demonstrate high profile in reliability, safety, workforce development, and system improvement.

The three Minnesota utilities are:

- Shakopee Public Utilities
- Willmar Utilities Electric Superintendant
- Kasson Public Utilities

The RP3 program is broken into four, two-day sessions per year. Class size is limited to 25 students.

Some sessions will feature additional instructors and guest speakers who have been through their own journey of adversity and triumph and have expertise in that session’s leadership topic.

We will follow the second class through the program in future articles. For more information on the MMUA Leadership Academy, call MMUA Executive Director Jack Kegel at 763-551-1230.

Meeting municipal needs

The Academy focuses on the needs of Minnesota’s municipal utilities. Curriculum was developed based on focus group feedback. The Academy instills the key skills, awareness, and perspective that 21st Century municipal leaders need.

The primary instructor for the Academy is Kent Myers, who has over 25 years of experience providing strategic visioning, operational effectiveness, and technology alignment consulting services to global companies. He has a decade of experience in working with Minnesota municipal utilities on leadership and culture development and strategic visioning. In addition to his extensive consulting practice, Kent is an adjunct professor at the Harvard Business School.

The two-year program is broken into four, two-day sessions per year. Class size is limited to 25 students.

Sessions are held at the MMUA office, with an allowance for travel time on both days. The first day of each session will feature a networking and emergency response plan, and implementing cyber and physical security.

Three就是这样 electric utilities must create a culture of safety. Commitment to safety must begin with top management and be included in all aspects of operations from generation to line work. Benchmarking safety metrics, focusing on frontline workers, and implementing rigorous safety training is crucial to the delivery of safe and reliable electricity.

**Development:** How staff is trained and opportunities to network with public power colleagues from across the state nation is important.

**System Improvement:** The utility must show a commitment to system integrity and long-term planning and improvement, including procedures to maintain distribution system and financial health with the growth of distributed energy resource.

**Leadership:**

**continued from front page**

Todd Kispert, Kasson Public Utilities Electric Superintendent, said he was really impressed how people would take the time to listen to each other and talk about common issues. The program leads to good relationship building.

“It’s a real help to me in my job,” he said.

Jenny Hazelton is the Winthrop city administrator. She is also an MMUA board member, and a first Leadership class member. She said city hall municipal utility is considering installation of automated metering infrastructure. The contacts she has developed with other program classmates has already proven invaluable, she said, promising to save time and money.

People come from different backgrounds with different areas of knowledge. Once students go through a couple of classes, they often call each other to talk about various issues.

“You grow together as you go through the course,” Olson said. It is good to make relationships with other utility providers, and to build a network of utility colleagues. “It has been very beneficial,” he said. “It’s a great program.”
Highline Heroes Foundation leader thanks MMUA for help raising needed funds

Editor’s note: MMUA recently received a thank you note and letter from Tracey Moore, founder of the Highline Heroes Foundation. Moore formed the foundation following the tragic death of her husband, Marc Moore. MMUA’s Rita Kelly annually makes a quilt that is raffled at the national Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo. This year’s quilt brought in $3,785, with proceeds going to the foundation. Moore wrote:

Thank you so much for the quilt raffle donations again this year for Highline Heroes! I cannot tell you how much it means to me, as together we will further the ministry and Safety and support for our Line Family.

It’s people like the talented Ms. Rita Kelly that enable me to continue to honor Marc, keep his memory alive and bring comfort and peace to others in need. I wanted to let you know some of the many ways Highline Heroes and your donations have helped others over the past year, since I was presented last year’s donations at the APPA Rodeo in San Antonio:

• A lineman in Fort Meade, Fla., to assist him during his time away from work due to his mother’s cancer.
• A Georgia lineman that was crushed between two trucks during Hurricane Irma.
• An Alabama lineman who has a daughter battling cancer.
• A Florida lineman who fell 80 feet from a helicopter while helping the people of Puerto Rico after the hurricane.
• Cystic Fibrosis and several lineman families who have children affected by this disease.

In addition to these donations, I was able to assist at the command centers around my area when Hurricane Irma hit in September. We took food, water, drinks and did multiple lineman’s laundry while they were helping with storm restoration.

Also, I can’t tell you the number of memorial shirts and or support packages that I’ve mailed to the families of injured linemen or linemen who have unfortunately lost their lives.

Highline Heroes has a mission to support any lineworker family that suffers catastrophically and it doesn’t have to be job related.

None of this would be possible without people like all of you. Thank you so very much for helping me continue my ministry of safety and compassion for the trade that I love so much! My love, prayers and appreciation always! Thank you, Tracey Moore

Scholarship Contest winners thank MMUA

Editor’s note: MMUA recently received the following “thank you” cards from two of the four winners in the recent Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award essay contest.

Dear Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association,

I want to sincerely thank MMUA and Steve Downer for the $1,500 Tom Bovitz Scholarship! It was truly a pleasure to meet you and learn more about how utilities make a difference in our communities. I will use this scholarship as I attend the University of Minnesota-Duluth to further my education in marketing and graphic design.

Sincerely,
Alyssa Nielsen
Elk River, Minn.

Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association,

Thank you so much for the scholarship and support on my graduation. It will help me immensely next year at St. Thomas. I also want to thank you for all that you do for our great State. You are the core of Minnesota that allows it to thrive, and I felt honored to highlight the amazing works and doings of municipal utilities!

Brownwyn Tollefson
Willmar, Minn.

MMUA’s Steve Downer presented a certificate denoting her success in the MMUA Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award Contest to Alyssa Nielsen. The presentation came June 12, during the Elk River Municipal Utilities Commission meeting. Downer made a similar presentation June 26 before the Rochester Public Utilities Board, to first place award winner Eric Chestolowski.
Xcel Energy gained regulatory approval May 31 to run a residential time of use (TOU) rate design pilot program. The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) granted approval as it received the utility’s regular ‘distribution approval as it received the Commission (MPUC) granted Minnesota Public Utilities rate design pilot program. The new pilot program will be operated through awareness building, education and data access. The pilot is to be operated for two years, to begin in early 2020. Customers excluded from the program, due to billing system/rate design limitations, include those on: net metering, residential electric vehicle service, off-peak and energy-controlled service, medical equipment dependent.

Customers in the target areas will be auto-enrolled with the opportunity to opt-out, and will have an opportunity for a partial bill true-up to flat rates during the pilot. Xcel noted it is devoting “substantial resources” to attract volunteers to a TOU pilot in Colorado and “hopes it can devote more resources to facilitating customer education and satisfaction with engaging tools and targeted messages” in Minnesota. Pilot participants will be split into “treatment” and “control” populations, with both receiving an AMI meter. The “treatment population” will be placed on the TOU rates, while the “control” population will remain on a flat rate.

The monthly TOU rate would not change the monthly customer charge and the TOU charge is designed to recover the same revenue as present energy charges. Xcel proposed three TOU rate periods (see table at left). Xcel said the off-peak period is intended to encourage customers to shift consumption to the lowest system loads when low-cost wind energy is likely to be on the margin. Xcel noted that as more wind is added to the system, it anticipates that instances of wind energy on the margin and negative pricing will increase in frequency, especially during the off-peak period. The mid-period, which includes the majority of hours, results in a rate similar to today’s volumetric flat rates. The summer on-peak rate reaches 25.949 cents per kWh, which, Xcel noted, provides a strong price signal for demand reduction. The price for most hours is 10 percent less than the current flat rate. Xcel does not anticipate significant adverse bill impacts, but did include some billing protections to maintain customer satisfaction and avoid major or unanticipated impacts.

Xcel said the AMI meters, with two-way communication and interval data capability, would provide significant benefit to participants and provide a critical learning opportunity for the company. Xcel’s current residential metering technology communicates from meters to data aggregating devices upstream. For more information, see MPUC docket No. 17-775 and 17-776.

**TOU Pilot Rate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate Description</th>
<th>Average (June-Oct)</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>Sept.</th>
<th>Oct.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Peak 3pm-8pm weekdays</td>
<td>23.821</td>
<td>25.949</td>
<td>22.385</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Peak Other Hours</td>
<td>11.07</td>
<td>12.125</td>
<td>10.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Peak 12am-6am all days</td>
<td>5.676</td>
<td>5.676</td>
<td>5.676</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard Flat Rate</td>
<td>12.386</td>
<td>13.437</td>
<td>11.742</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**TOU Percentage Change from Standard Rate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate Description</th>
<th>Average (June-Oct)</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>Sept.</th>
<th>Oct.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-Peak</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Peak</td>
<td>-11%</td>
<td>-10%</td>
<td>-11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Peak</td>
<td>-54%</td>
<td>-58%</td>
<td>-52%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Meters with two-way communication capability are at the heart of the TOU pilot program.**

### Cost of Service Studies
- Utility Rate Design
- Contract Negotiations
- Utility Education
- Expert Testimony
- Feasibility Studies

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‘Energy City’ partners to promote electric vehicles

Elk River’s downtown EV charger ribbon-cutting ceremony brought together event partners including: the National Drive Electric Week, Great Plains Institute and Drive Electric MN, Cornerstone Automotive, the City of Elk River, the Elk River Star News, the American Public Power Association, ERMU staff members, and especially the EV community.

Partnerships are the key to success. ERMU worked closely with the City of Elk River to include electric vehicles and charging infrastructure in the City of Elk River - Energy City Action Plan. ERMU also applied for DEED Grant through APPA and received a grant of $40,000 to implement an EV marketing plan, a electric vehicle fleet assessment, and implement time-of-use pricing for public charging stations.

So far, nine ERMU customers have installed at-home chargers. Two more customers are working through the process to install in-home chargers, said ERMU Conservation and Key Accounts Manager Tom Sagstetter.

Public charging stations

The public ERMU charging stations were installed in the last 12 months. The three stations have provided 184 charging sessions and delivered over 1,350 kWh of green renewable energy to EV owners reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 580 kilograms.

The downtown and ERMU charging stations are 240-volt Level 2 chargers, capable of adding 10 to 20 miles of range per hour. ERMU charges a connection fee of $2 per session and applicable TOU rate for energy depending on the day and time of the session.

The charging station at Cowborn’s is a 480-volt DC Fast Charger, which can fully charge a depleted battery in as little as 20 minutes, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. DC fast charger connection fee is $5 at the applicable TOU rate for energy, depending on the day and time of the session.

EV drivers pay for each session through an account they set up that utilizes either a proximity card or a mobile application on their smartphone. The online app vendor processes all charges and remits payments back to ERMU less a processing fee.

To be prepared with FS3’s Excavation Verification Kit

FS3’s Excavation Verification Kit includes:

1) tri-fold ruler, (3) foldable “MARK” markers, (1) foldable “HIT” marker, whiteboard, marker set and eraser all compacted neatly into a 13" x 17" drawstring backpack.

ERMU: continued from front page

goal.

ERMU offers a $500 rebate towards the purchase and installation of a 240-volt EV charger, used for the sole purpose of charging on-road vehicles.

The customer is also responsible for the purchase and installation of a 200-amp bypass meter socket, to be set in a mutually agreed-upon location. Inspection by a State Certified electrical inspector of all metering equipment is required before ERMU will install the meter.

The electric vehicle charging program places ERMU on the technological forefront. ERMU supplies 100 percent renewable energy to cover EV sales. All EV charging is metered separately. Rates vary depending on time-of-use (TOU). Because the price of electricity fluctuates depending on system demand, a TOU rate fluctuates based on time.

The rate is subject to application of any Power Cost Adjustment but is not subject to load control.

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One of the often-stated core benefits of a municipal utility is “local control.” With local control, a municipality is both empowered and obligated to make many important decisions concerning its utility enterprises and services. For an electric utility, these decisions involve such wide-ranging elements of the business as sources of electric supply, physical and financial assets, rates and charges for electric service, and workforce. For “local control” to deliver on its advertised benefit, a municipality must make business decisions that are aligned with and responsive to customer and community needs and values. Such decision-making calls for the combined perspectives and expertise of professional managers and elected or appointed policymakers. Such decision-making also calls for effective governance and effective policy development and use.

What can be done? The first step toward effective policy development and use is the governing body to recognize that its leadership is fundamentally defined by the process through which it develops and implements policies. Another way of stating this is that the principal work products of the governing body are its policies and its legacy is the result of those policies in action. Because a state statute, city charter, articles of incorporation and by-laws, on their own, are seldom adequate for effective governance, a board’s documented policies provide the basic structure and processes through which it fulfills its fiduciary and other mandated responsibilities.

To put a more practical spin on this topic, let’s get specific about policy. What is it? What does a policy statement look like? At its most basic level, a policy is a statement of value, agreed upon and adopted by a governing body, that establishes expected outcomes, actions and behaviors . . . or establishes boundaries/limits on expected outcomes, actions, and behaviors. For example, in adopting a policy for its own members, a governing body might state: “Board members are expected to be present at all regular and specially called meetings of the Board and any Board committees to which they are assigned. Board members will properly prepare themselves to perform their assigned duties as Board officers and members, and for effective Board deliberation, decision-making, and representation in advance of all assigned meetings and other Board-related activities.”

As another example, a governing body might adopt the following policy statement for its chief executive when delegating authority to act on behalf with respect to customer service: “In all interactions with customers and customer representatives, the General Manager shall not intentionally allow situations, processes, actions, behaviors or attitudes that are unsafe, undignified, inattentive, disrespectful or unresponsive to customer needs and requests, or otherwise in conflict with the organizational purpose, mission, and values advocated by the Board.”

The bottom line is that a governing body uses statements of policy to define performance expectations for the utility overall, for itself, and for management. It assigns those expectations to someone and then monitors actual performance against expectations. In the first of the two policy examples above, the governing body would expect individual members to be self-accountable, but the board’s presiding officer (chair or president) would routinely monitor and report on policy compliance, as well as take appropriate steps to correct any noncompliance. In the second example, the governing body would expect the General Manager to routinely monitor, report, and maintain compliance.

Policy development in the manner described here can...
MMUA invites you to Annual Summer Conference; annual gathering of municipal utility people

MMUA holds its 87th annual meeting, beginning Monday, Aug. 20 at Alexandria’s Arrowwood Resort and Conference Center.

The Annual Summer Conference begins officially with an outside welcome reception and dinner the evening of Monday, Aug. 20. Those arriving early often participate in the popular afternoon ‘scramble’ golf tournament or group bike ride.

MMUA President John Crooks, general manager of Shakopee Public Utilities, opens the meeting the morning of Tuesday, August 21. The program includes:

Shifting Gears & Changing Lanes, Jay Gubrud
A Catalyst for Performance Improvement

A New Vision for CIP (Conservation Improvement Program)
Mark Kotschevar, Rochester Public Utilities and Jared Echternach, Beltrami Electric Cooperative

The Washington Scene

The Tuesday, Aug. 22 afternoon program will consist of two tracks—Management or Policymaker

Management Track
Looking Ahead – Large Scale Solar with Storage
Mike Fosse, Dakota Electric Association

Electric Vehicles (EVs): Opportunity Now or Later?
Hear how the EV market is unfolding and how advancements in public charging infrastructure are accelerating market forces. The program will also include a discussion of how one of our members leveraged their opportunities to create the framework for a robust utility program.

Municipals Helping Municipals
Scott Hain, Worthington Public Utilities; Jeff Beethold, MRES; Jim Marus, Medallia Municipal Light & Power

Our panel of MMUA Regular and Affiliate Members discusses how they are involved in working with other municipal organizations to strengthen Public Power in Minnesota.

Keynote speaker promises to energize, educate and entertain!

Whether an organization is growing or simply moving in a new direction, change is inevitable and happens at a dizzying pace. Jay Gubrud’s presentation on Shifting Gears & Changing Lanes will provide the tools to effectively navigate the road to change by:

· Finding out the four major reactions to change and how to make them work for you and people you lead
· Discovering practical communication skills that facilitate change

· Finding the four steps to highly effective conflict, change can be a rocky road
· Breaking out of old roles, habits and assumptions

Shifting Gears & Changing Lanes will enable people to accept change, confront their fears and move forward in a positive direction. Change is inevitable. Why not embrace it?

· Get energized, educated and entertained. Don’t settle for the same old ideas that are being used in your industry.

Policymaker Track
Board Policies that Work
John Miner, Collaborative Learning

Policy development and use is at the core of effective municipal utility governance. Because enabling legislation and by-laws on their own are seldom adequate for effective governance, a board’s documented policies provide the basic structure and processes through which it fulfills its responsibilities.

In this seminar, participants will learn about the importance of documented policies in strengthening board leadership and decision-making. As a relevant and important example of policy leadership, participants will focus on the development of documented policy describing the Board’s role and responsibilities for performance planning and evaluation of the chief executive (general manager, utility director, superintendent, etc.).

Time permitting, seminar participants will also consider other selected governance issues that are common to municipal utility organization, as well as alternative responses to those issues and the development of policy statements to address them.

Evening Activities
Trade Show and Reception Banquet and Awards

Wednesday, August 22
(Wednesday’s meeting is open to Regular & Affiliate Members Only)

MMUA Business Meeting
This meeting is necessary for the carrying on of association business as required by the MMUA bylaws. Attend and carry on the business of Public Power in Minnesota.

Minnesota Public Power Forward Partnership
Patricia Keane, American Public Power Association

The electric industry is in a period of rapid transformation. New technologies have emerged, energy markets across the country have dramatically changed, and customers expect and demand 21st Century services. This creates opportunities and challenges for the electric utility industry – particularly smaller publicly owned electric utilities – where meeting customer expectations for new services while maintaining the current high standards in reliability and affordability may not be easily accomplished.

With that in mind, the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association (MMUA), Missouri River Energy Services (MRES), Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA) and the American Public Power Association (APPA) have entered into the Minnesota Public Power Forward Partnership to assist Minnesota’s public utilities in their planning for the future. Attend and learn about the toolkit that will walk you through topics including rate design, new technologies, and IT/OT.

Getting Rates Ready for Competition – A Guide for Policymakers
Dave Berg, Dave Berg Consulting

MMUA and Dave Berg Consulting are developing ‘Getting Rates Ready for Competition – A Guide for Policymakers’. This guide is designed to assist policymakers and other non-technical utility personnel in their understanding of electric rates and the theories that support the design of rates. As the industry evolves toward greater reliance on renewables, distributed generation, storage and other new technologies, rate design must evolve with it. Dave Berg will present a summary of the guide to give participants an overview of the materials.

Electric Service Issues: Analysis and Developments
Steve Dooner, MMUA and Mark Fritsch, Oceatonna Public Utilities

State Legislative Developments
Kurt Solum and Bill Black, MMUA; and Doug Carnival, McGrann Shea

Issues Round-Up
Jack Kepl, Bob Jagusch and Mike Willetts, MMUA

For more information, see the ‘Events’ calendar at www.mmua.org or contact Rita Kelly by email rkelly@mmua.org or phone 763.746.0707.
The Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (CMMPA) and Central Municipal Power Agency/Services (CMMPAS) Board of Directors June 15 announced the appointment of Christopher Kopel as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) effective June 6. Kopel had served as Interim CEO since January 2018. In 2013, he joined the Agency as Chief Operating Officer (COO).

Kopel brings more than 25 years of power industry experience. Prior to joining the agency, Kopel served in leadership and business development roles at NextEra Energy Resources, Iberdrola Renewables, and NRG Power Marketing, as well as various regulatory, operations, and business development experience.

25 years of power industry Kopel brings more than 2 years of power industry experience.

2018. In 2013, he joined the agency as Chief Operating Officer (COO). Kopel served in leadership experience.

The Sleepy Eye Public Utilities' office has moved from its power plant location into city hall. The Post Office box has been discontinued and the new address is: Sleepy Eye Public Utilities, 200 Main Street East, Sleepy Eye, MN 56085.

Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU) is decommissioning its district heating system on July 1, 2020, and with the dwindling steam load the existing power plant boilers are no longer an efficient supply option. As a result, WMU is using a mobile boiler, small enough to meet the district heat needs. The natural gas-fueled boiler is inside a trailer outside of and connected to the power plant.

Last year, there were approximately 220 heating system customers, now there are 165 with more leaving this summer, including a handful of large customers that make up the majority of the load.

Virginia Department of Public Utilities is moving forward with a downsizing of its steam heating system and converting residential customers to natural gas service. The downtown commercial area will remain in the core steam district. Steam will be turned off to residential areas by 2021.

Wendy Meyer retired as Mountain Lake city clerk/administrator May 4 and has been replaced by Michael Schulte. A native of the Bird Island area, Schulte was most recently an intern in Nebraska City, Neb., and is receiving his master’s in public administration from the University of Nebraska-Omaha this summer.

New Prague Public Utilities Commission and Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative held a joint open house April 24 in regard to the municipal utility acquisition of four areas and some 750 cooperative customers located within the city limits. Approximately 50 people attended the event. The Commission approved a territory transfer agreement April 30. It moved its meeting to a larger room, in anticipation of accommodating more interested persons than usual. However, only one person turned out to address the issue.

According to press reports, the transfer deal had been under discussion for approximately two years.

After discussion of a rate consultant’s findings, the Baudette city council adjusted electric rates. Large power customers will see an energy rate decrease from $0.1090 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) to $0.10 per kWh but a demand charge increase from $4.37 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) to $7.50 per kW. The uncontrolled heat category was discontinued and merged with the appropriate residential, commercial or large power category.

Meanwhile, the council heard a report on progress of the new Willie Wall eye statue, which is being constructed in Sparta, Wis. The existing 40-foot, 2 ½ ton statue is to be demolished and replaced this summer.

According to local press reports, both the City of Randall and the Aitkin Municipal Utilities Commission have joined the Northeastern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency. The stated goal is to help members negotiate a better wholesale power contract.

The city of Blooming Prairie has received a state Legacy grant to pay for a survey and evaluation of the Blooming Prairie water tower, to determine the structure’s eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The survey is expected to be complete by year’s end. If found to be eligible, a second grant application is anticipated to complete the nomination, and position the city for future grant applications.

The 1922 Elk River water tower was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2012. The towers are architecturally significant because hemispherical-bottom towers, built from about the 1890s to about 1940, are being rapidly replaced.

The Blooming Prairie tower was built in 1925 and has a capacity of 65,000 gallons. Blooming Prairie Public Utilities is considering a 100,000 gallon tower to give the city sufficient storage to handle population growth.
An administrative law judge (ALJ) May 14 recommended the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission deny a site permit to Freeborn Wind Energy to construct and operate an up to 84 Megawatt portion of a wind farm in Freeborn County. As an alternative, the judge recommended the Commission allow a certain amount of time for Freeborn Wind to submit a plan demonstrating how it will comply with Minnesota Noise Standards.

Among the ALJ’s findings:
• The turbines cannot be lawfully operated if it results in total noise in excess of the standards in Minnesota Rule 7030.0400. A total of 78 homes in the project footprint will experience more noise than permitted.
• The project will result in benefits to the local economy.
• The preponderance of evidence demonstrates that current science supports a determination that people who live near wind turbines may experience annoyance, loss of sleep, and headaches.
• It is not in the best interest of the local community to locate wind turbines in a manner that angers and alienates the people whose lives are most directly affected by the wind turbines.

The ALJ recommended that, if the Commission issues a site permit, the draft site permit conditions be amended to require residential setbacks of 1,500 feet for all non-participating landowners.

A number of parties intervened in the case, including a group of local landowners opposed to the project. The landowner group requested that the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency develop rules governing wind turbine noise. The MPCA said “the current understanding of wind turbine noise and its potential effects is insufficient to support rulemaking at this time.”

State agencies, including the MPCA, said the current state noise standard has not promulgated with wind turbine-like noise in mind.

Freeborn Wind is an affiliate of Invenergy LLC, a large-scale developer headquartered in Chicago. Freeborn Wind has entered into an agreement with Xcel Energy to acquire Freeborn Wind upon conclusion of all development activities, and then own and operate the project.

The MPUC has not yet set a date for hearing. It generally follows ALJ recommendations, but is not bound by them. -Steve Downer

The energy industry is rapidly changing, presenting utilities, companies and communities with new challenges and opportunities. Avant works with its clients to develop innovative, yet practical solutions based on a simple, overarching belief that, “better is possible.”

The Preponderance of Noise

The MPUC has recently dealt with several large wind development proposals. During its May 17 meeting alone, it dealt with site permits or transmission related developments for:
• Nobles 2 Power Partners, a 260-MW project in Nobles County;
• Flying Cow Wind’s proposal for the 152-MW Bitter Root Wind Project in Yellow Medicine County;
• Blazing Star Wind Farm 2’s request for a high-voltage transmission in Lincoln County;
• Wisconsin Power and Light’s request for a site permit for the Bent Tree Project in Freeborn County;
• Lake Benton Power Partners, an 107 MW facility in Lincoln County; and
• Trimont Wind I, in Martin and Jackson Counties.

The MPUC May 11 approved a permit for the 44.8 MW Palmer’s Creek Wind Farm in Chippewa County.

According to a report issued in June by the Solar Energy Industries Association, Minnesota has 849.5 MW of solar energy installed. In the first quarter of 2018, 105 MW of solar was added in Minnesota, the fifth most among states during that time. Minnesota’s solar market grew 89 percent during that quarter.

According to the report, Minnesota now ranks 14th among states for total solar power and there were 105 ‘community solar gardens’ operating in Minnesota.

Governance

continued from page 6

appear to be an overwhelm- ing task for a council or board . . . but it need not be. With some up-front planning and a basic commitment to devote a portion of every meeting to policy, real progress can be made in just a few weeks. Before getting started, it is best to develop a basic framework that establishes a process and schedule for policy development and approval, a policy document template, a structure of policy types (e.g. organizational results, governance, management) and specific policy topics (e.g. board member responsibilities and conduct, budgeting and rates, employee interests).

Participants at the Conference will focus on the development of a documented policy describing the Board’s role and responsibilities for performance planning and evaluation of the chief executive.

Time permitting, seminar participants will also consider other selected governance issues that are common to municipal utility organizations.
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see us (and maybe yourself!) at Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association

While you are at it, follow us at #MMUAnews

**Apprentice Lineworker Training**

Our experienced instructor provides on-site instruction.

Call MMUA Director of Training and Safety Mike Willetts at 612-802-8474 for more information.

**General Manager/CEO**

The Owatonna Public Utilities, supplier of electricity, water, and natural gas services in Owatonna, Minnesota is seeking qualified candidates for the position of General Manager/CEO. Candidates must have experience in the utility industry including operations, organizational management, strategic planning, and financial management. Candidates should also possess exceptional communication, interpersonal and leadership skills, and have a personal commitment to providing excellent customer service. Experience in employee engagement, marketing and knowledge of engineering principles is a plus. The General Manager/CEO reports to an appointed board of commissioners and is responsible for carrying out all board policies and directives.

A bachelor’s degree in public administration, business, engineering, finance or equivalent and 5-10 years senior level management experience in a municipal public utility with more than one commodity is preferred. OPU’s compensation and benefits are competitive and will be dependent upon qualifications and experience. An Opportunity Profile for this position is available upon request; see e-mail below. Interested candidates may apply by submitting a cover letter and resume no later than September 14, 2018 to: madsonm@owatonnautilities.com or mail to: Marge Madson, Owatonna Public Utilities, P.O. Box 800, Owatonna, MN 55060. 507-446-5414 Equal Opportunity Employer EOE-M/F/H/V

**Job Training & Safety Instructor – Electric**

Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association (MMUA) is accepting applications for an Electric Job Training & Safety Instructor. Responsibilities: This position will travel to instruct apprentice and journeyman lineworkers. As a member of the MMUA Safety Team, the successful candidate will have the opportunity to mold the new public power workforce and reinforce top journeyman’s work habits daily. This person will also serve as Job Training & Safety Instructor – Electric and General Industry.

- Primary instructor for MMUA’s 4 year On-Site On-Demand Lineworker Appren-
**Customer Relations Manager**

Heartland Consumers Power District is seeking a customer-focused, technically-adept professional to manage the delivery of electrical services, customer programs, and marketing initiatives for 30 cities and municipal electric systems in South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska. As part of a strong team of engineering, economic development, energy services, account management, and marketing professionals, you will foster and manage the relationships of customers, along with their governing board and city commissions. You will utilize strong interpersonal skills to form constructive business relationships and communicate the value that locally-owned, not-for-profit, public power brings to the community.

**Positions Required:**
- Salary DOE. EOE
- Submit resume, letter demonstrating your qualifications and salary requirements by July 16, 2018. Apply to: Mike Willetts, Director of Training & Safety, MMUA, 3025 Harbor Lane N Suite 400, Plymouth, MN 55447-5142

**Requirements:**
- Must have good communication skills and enjoy public speaking
- Applicant must have good computer skills; proficient in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint
- Must have good driving record. Extensive travel required

Heartland Consumers Power District is an equal opportunity employer.

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**MMUA**

MMUA has two new Associate Members: Open Access Technology International (OATI) and Southern Minnesota Inspection.

- **Since 1995,** more than 2,000 energy industry customers have turned to OATI to provide solutions to their operational challenges. In fact, more than 98% of North American energy industry organizations use our solutions, making OATI one of the most trusted names in the energy arena. OATI has unprecedented software solutions tightly integrated with the data powering the North American energy infrastructure. By connecting generation, transmission, and demand-side resources to the wholesale energy markets, our solutions allow utilities to optimize their power supply management efforts, manage the reliability needs of the grid, and fully harness the economic and social value of their assets.

  - **The company is located at** 211 Johnson Street, Eagle Lake, MN 56024.
  - **Phone** is 507.257.3472 and website: southernminnesotainspection.com

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**MMUA**

MMUA is proud to announce that in its 2018 rankings Chambers & Partners has once again recognized Spiegel & DiMardi LLP as one of the nation’s leading law firms. Chambers recognizes Cynthia Bogord, David Pomper, and Scott Strauss individually as among the top lawyers in the United States for 2018 in the area of “Energy: Electricity (Regulatory & Litigation) — Nationwide.” Chambers ranks “the world’s best lawyers and law firms based on in-depth, objective research” and extensive interviews with clients and colleagues. Their guide is considered the premier survey of attorneys and law firms in the country.

- For the year 2018 in the practice area of Energy & Natural Resources, Washington, DC Super Lawyers has selected Cindy Bogord, Jeff Schwarz and Scott Strauss as “Super Lawyers,” and Katie Mapes has been named a “Rising Star.” Super Lawyers, a Thomson Reuters business, is a rating service of outstanding attorneys from more than 80 practice areas who have attained a high degree of peer recognition and professional achievement.
- Super Lawyers are selected through a process involving independent research, peer nominations and peer evaluations.

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**Heartland Consumers Power District**

**Associate Member News**

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**MMUA**

MMUA invites you to learn more about Heartland Consumers Power District, which is now seeking a Customer Relations Manager. Below is a summary of the position:

- **Requirements:**
  - Salary DOE. EOE
  - Submit resume, letter demonstrating your qualifications and salary requirements by July 16, 2018. Apply to: Mike Willetts, Director of Training & Safety, MMUA, 3025 Harbor Lane N Suite 400, Plymouth, MN 55447-5142

**Positions Required:**
- Must have good computer skills; proficient in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint
- Must have good driving record. Extensive travel required

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Upcoming training events — Overhead School and Lineworkers Rodeo

Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association and our partners, Minnesota Rural Electric Association and American Public Power Association, are pleased to announce the 2018 Overhead Lineworker School. Classes offer useful instruction for all levels of lineworker. Students (except for Advanced Class) will rotate through four different 3-hour training sessions.

GENERAL SESSIONS
Customer De-escalation Strategies
Learn about pre-assault behaviors both verbal and non-verbal. A variety of methods will be discussed on ways to calm a verbally aggressive or potentially disruptive individual.

Drone Operation
Today, drones are being used to find the source of outages on power lines and pinpoint leaks in underground water pipelines and gas lines. Drones bring safety benefits to the inspection and maintenance side, where crews face risks from climbing poles or towers, assessing damage after natural disasters, driving remote roads inspecting the line or trimming foliage near high-voltage equipment.

2018 Rodeo Recap
A total of five teams and six apprentices competed this April in North Carolina. Hear from several who participated. Plus we’ll recap this year’s Minnesota Rodeo.

Second Annual Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo
Sept. 11, MMUA Training Center in Marshall
This event will be held prior to the Overhead School. The Rodeo offers lineworkers the opportunity to increase proficiency, gain confidence and experience some healthy competition. Events will include Hartman Rescue, Rope Toss and an Obstacle Course. All events will be single-person so that any lineworker can participate!

The event precedes the Overhead School and is free to MMUA members. Any lineworker, however, may participate.

For more updated information, see the Events calendar at www.mmua.org

Schedule
Tuesday, September 11
8:30 am Multi-Session / Advanced Class Training
12:00 pm Lunch (provided)
12:30 pm Multi-Session Class (rotate) / Advanced Class (continued)
Friday, September 14
8:30 am General Session: Drone Operation
10:00 am Rodeo Recap
12:00 pm Closing Comments & Wrap Up
* Schedule subject to change without notice.
Questions? Please contact Theresa Neddermeyer by email neddemyer@mmua.org or phone 765.551.1230.

ADVANCED CLASS
Budgeting and Finance 101
Making the transition from the line crew to management can be a big undertaking. This class is designed to help you along that path. Topics to be discussed include the following but are not limited to: safety, work management, budget planning, mutual aid/ emergency preparedness, and finances.

ADVANCED CLASS
Register by Aug. 10 for best rate. Deadline to register is Aug. 20.

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