Determined to compete

ALP Utilities builds on century of service with new name to match its business offerings

by Steve Downer

What’s in a name? For ALP Utilities, quite a lot.

Alexandria Light and Power (ALP) has provided reliable, reasonably-priced water and electric service to its community for 100 years. The utility has a sterling reputation for reliable provision of reasonably-priced services, but it was no longer enough. It had to compete.

Two factors led General Manager Al Crowser and the ALP Board to reconsider their approach to the utility business: the need to sell water service in areas recently annexed by the city of Alexandria; and the need to assert itself in an increasingly competitive telecommunications environment.

There has long been telecommunications competition in Alexandria and that remains the case today. Other providers include large multi-state cable and phone companies and an aggressive area telephone cooperative, which also offers basic and residential internet service. Some pieces were in place. Tech-savvy personnel included Network Administrator Nathan Chan and fiber/electric substation technician Alvin Shuck.

Crowser realized the utility also needed something few municipal utilities have: a marketing and communications person. After a careful search, ALP hired Megan Chisholm, a native of nearby Henning, who had been working for an area magazine.

Chisholm brought a new perspective. The old ALP name never made much sense to her. Light and power seemed redundant. What about water? And there was a real need to let commercial/industrial customers know the utility provided high-speed business communications.

An entirely new name would have squandered a good reputation, so it was decided to adjust the name to allow for current realities: ALP Utilities. The organization includes ALP Business Communications. Icons were developed for each service and are part of the utility’s new logo, which was unveiled two years ago.

Chisholm spent time with customers, finding out what they knew about the utility and letting them know what the utility offered.

Residential customers in recently annexed areas were often confused about the utility’s offerings—The ALP name didn’t say anything about ALP Utilities: see page 6

lead counsel lauds FCC on broadband
page 3

Generation, Substation Programs Set
page 8

Court Rules Utilities Must ‘Buy the Farm’
page 12

MMUA contingent carries message to Capitol Hill

Any public official will tell you that having people in the room makes a difference. So it surely makes a difference when MMUA brings over 70 people to congressional meetings in Washington D.C., as the association did March 9-12 during the American Public Power Association (APPA) Legislative Rally.

All told, more than 600 members from public power utilities throughout the nation gathered for the rally. The meeting includes a number of different events, from setting public power’s national policies to communicating those positions to our elected representatives, their staffs and regulatory agency personnel.

MMUA did the bulk of this communicating on Tuesday, March 10, when the group held a series of meetings with Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken, and staff from our House representatives (the House was not in session during our visit, hence the absence of the elected representatives).

MMUA extends its thanks to our Senators and legislative staffs, members who carried our message during these meetings, all who attended and the cities/utilities that sent them.

The overarching issue today is the federal Environmental Protection Agency’s ‘Clean Power Plan,’ a major undertaking that seeks significant nationwide reductions in car-

Sewell’s path takes him back to municipal generating plants

Bob Sewell retired from the municipal utilities business in 2010... for a couple weeks. Retirement was fine. But then the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities (IAMU) needed somebody to fill in for 16 weeks as a job-training and safety person. IAMU called MMUA Job Training and Safety Director Mike Willetts, to find somebody to fill the temporary position. Willetts called Sewell, an old friend. Iowa is his home state, so Sewell thought he would give it a try.

He liked that work, too. Sewell’s job duties with MMUA have changed over five years, but, in his eyes, only for the better. That’s Sewell: see page 5 please
The resolution for equitable treatment under the Regulatory Flexibility Act was proposed by members from the Illinois Municipal Electric Agency, Kissimmee Utility Authority in Florida and Owensboro Municipal Utilities in Kentucky with additional support from the city of Idaho Falls, Idaho.

While large cities may have 500 employees or more within their municipality—the requirement that knocks a business out of the “small” category under the existing law—only a few of those employees may actually be employed by the utility, said Kevin Gaden, CEO of the Illinois joint action agency.

“This resolution is actually reforming the determination of what is considered a small public power system under the Regulatory Flexibility Act. What it does is ensure that small entities aren’t regulated like large entities,” Gaden said. “What’s happened here is a disconnect between what (the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) and the Small Business Administration recognize as a small utility.”

What should be considered a large utility makes up only about 25 to 30 of the nation’s larger ones through the Regulatory Flexibility Act was one of six policy resolutions put forth and adopted by the L&R Committee members.

Rally continued from front page

bon dioxide emissions from existing power plants. This proposed rule presents very serious problems for Minnesota, and during the meetings MMUA and its representatives laid out our concerns in an orderly fashion.

Among the other issues we discussed during the meetings were the need to preserve and protect tax-exempt financing, grid security, and needed reform to protect ‘captive’ rail shipping.

Along with the various receptions, speakers and presentations, a major rally event is the proceedings of the APPA Legislative and Resolutions (L&R) Committee. This committee meets at the rally, to propose and vote on new policy resolutions. Each APPA member may designate one voting delegate.

Focusing small, municipal utilities from being regulated in a manner that should only apply to much made a priority by the L&R Committee were easing access to unmanned aerial aircraft for utility-related operations; protecting preference customers from the costs of transmission projects, and addressing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s final coal ash rule.

Renewables, gas pace new generation; coal continues retreat

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Renewables, gas pace new generation; coal continues retreat

The addition of more natural gas, solar, and wind generating capacity follows the pattern of the past several years. Wind additions are largely found in the Plains states; utility-scale solar additions in California and North Carolina. TVA’s Watts Bar 2 nuclear facility will be the first new nuclear reactor brought online in the United States in nearly 20 years.

According to the federal Energy Information Administration, solar and wind generation companies in 2015 expect to add more than 20 gigawatts (GW) of utility-scale generating capacity to the power grid. The additions are dominated by wind (9.8 GW), natural gas (6.3 GW), and solar (2.2 GW), which combine to make up 91 percent of total additions.

Nearly 16 GW of generating capacity is expected to retire in 2015, 81 percent of which (12.9 GW) is coal-fired power. Public companies, said Gaden and APPA Senior Vice President of Legislative and Political Affairs Joy Ditto. MMUA co-sponsored two resolutions: improving problematic coal shipments by rail; and supporting the affordable, reliable deployment of solar power. Other issues

U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, center, listened while Rochester Public Utilities’ Director of Power Resources Wally Schlink talked. Also pictured is MMUA President and Brainerd Public Utilities Commissioner Bill Wroolie, at right. Wally Schlink talked. Also pictured is MMUA President and Brainerd Public Utilities Commissioner Bill Wroolie, at right.
by Paul Ciampoli

American Public Power Association

Sue Kelly, president and CEO of the American Public Power Association, in February said that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission should have an “essential role” related to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed plan to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing power plants.

Appearing at a Feb. 19 FERC technical conference at the commission’s headquarters in Washington, D.C., Kelly urged the commission “not to be chopped liver.” She said that the commission needs “to have an active role in this process because you, under the Federal Power Act, have important responsibilities” such as ensuring the reliability of the bulk power system. FERC needs to “play a vital role in shaping the rule before it is issued.”

The technical conference was the first in a series of conferences that will examine a number of issues related to the EPA proposal for existing plants. Kelly was one of several power industry participants to discuss electric reliability considerations tied to the EPA proposal.

She said that FERC should also support the North American Electric Reliability Corporation’s (NERC) ongoing analysis of the EPA’s proposal. In a statement filed at FERC in relation to the technical conference, Kelly said that the commission should also support any recommendations that NERC may offer in its report, which is due this spring.

In addition, the APPA president and CEO told FERC commissioners that FERC should support the inclusion of a “reliability safety valve” in the final rule. In her prepared statement and opening remarks for the technical conference, Kelly also said that FERC should:

• Support APPA’s recommendations for EPA changes to the proposal to give states more time and more discretion in implementing the final rule.
• Continue to seek improvements and efficiencies in coordination between the natural gas and electricity sectors.
• Expedite approvals for new infrastructure necessary to implement the final rule.
• Provide guidance to the states and other stakeholders on how to reflect public policy requirements associated with state implementation of the final rule in the regional and interregional transmission planning required by FERC Order No. 1000.

Kelly also said that FERC needs to take another look at Regional Transmission Organizations (RTO) market structures in the context of the EPA proposal. “We have felt” for some time that current mandatory capacity markets in certain RTOs “do not do the best job of supporting and developing the new resource mix we’re going to need to meet this rule and that’s going to become apparent very soon,” the APPA president and CEO said.

Kelly will convene several regional technical conferences in February and March related to the EPA’s proposed plan in Denver, Colorado, Washington, D.C. and St. Louis, Missouri.

In late January, FERC Chairman Cheryl LaFleur said that the commission will have an “essential role to play” as the EPA’s proposed plan to reduce emissions from existing power plants is implemented.

“I believe that we as a nation can achieve real environmental progress, including on climate change, but only if we’re willing to build the infrastructure – both gas and electric – and build the energy markets to make that possible,” LaFleur said in a Jan. 27 speech at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., that focused on the EPA’s plan.

Both infrastructure and market changes “will be necessary if the values of reliability and cost are sustained as we make progress on the environment, and that’s where FERC comes in,” she went on to say.

“I think we will have responsibilities across three areas–infrastructure, markets and to be an honest broker for the discussion,” LaFleur said.

The EPA proposed the rule to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing plants by 30 percent by 2030 in June 2014 and a final rule is slated to be released this summer.

APPA in December 2014 submitted comments to the EPA on its proposed rule to regulate carbon dioxide emissions under section 111(d) of the Clean Air Act. While APPA agrees that the electric sector needs to reduce CO2 emissions, it cautioned against the dangers of the proposed rule trying to do too much too quickly.

“This rule, as proposed, aims to make unprecedented changes to the way energy will be generated and used in this country,” Kelly said when APPA submitted its comments to the EPA. “These changes will ripple over the next several decades, so they must be made carefully and collaboratively. In our comments, we’ve laid out constructive changes to make the proposed rule more likely to work in the real world and fulfill its intended purpose.”

APPA pointed out in its comments that the proposed rule’s requirements go beyond what is legally permissible under section 111(d) and conflict with the authorities of other federal, state, and local government entities.

Lead counsel in telecom case lauds FCC for removing protectionist provisions

by Jim Baller

Baller Herbst Stokes & Lide

On July 24, 2014, the Electric Power Board of Chattanooga, Tennessee (EPB), and the City of Wilson, North Carolina (Wilson), petitioned the Federal Communications Commission to remove certain state laws that impose barriers to broadband deployment and investment and competition. The FCC on Feb. 28 granted the petitions.

Baller Herbst Stokes & Lide, lead counsel to Wilson and EPB in their proceedings before the FCC, applauds the Commission for removing the protectionist laws of North Carolina and Tennessee law that have prevented Wilson and EPB from investing in advanced communications capabilities and bringing competition to areas outside their current broadband internet access service areas, including unserved and underserved areas.

As FCC Chairman Thomas Wheeler stated at the Feb. 26 hearing, “You can’t say you’re following Congress’s explicit instructions to remove barriers to broadband investment and then turn around and endorse restrictions on such investments. You can’t say you’re for competition and then turn around and deny local governments the ability to provide competitive services. As they say in North Carolina, ‘That dog don’t hunt.’ ”

Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 requires the FCC to ensure that broadband is being deployed on a reasonable and timely basis to all Americans. If the FCC determines that advanced communications capabilities are not being deployed to all Americans in a reasonable and timely manner, Section 706 requires the FCC to “take immediate action to accelerate deployment.” . . . by removing barriers to infrastructure investment and by promoting competition.

In removing the provisions of North Carolina and Tennessee law that prevented Wilson and EPB from expanding their networks, the FCC is acting in accordance with the directives of Section 706 and is paving the way for many businesses and residents of North Carolina and Tennessee to gain access to Wilson’s and EPB’s state-of-the-art fiber networks and services.

“This is an important moment for communities in North Carolina, Tennessee, and other states that have barriers to local investments in advanced communications networks,” said Jim Baller, senior principal of Baller Herbst Stokes & Lide.

“No one has the Commission confirmed that it has authority to remove such barriers,” but it has also compiled a massive record documenting the critical role that advanced Internet choice can play in fostering strong, vibrant communities and in ensuring that the United States will remain a leading nation in the emerging knowledge-based global economy.”

“Communities across the nation have recognized that broadband and advanced communications networks can drive and support parallel progress in just about every area of traditional local responsibility, including education, job growth, health care, transportation, government service, environmental protection, and much more. That’s why so many communities are now seeking prompt, affordable access to advanced communications capabilities, by working with willing incumbent carriers, entering into public-private partnerships with new entrants, establishing their own networks, or developing innovative new strategies that may work for them.”

“Barriers to local Internet choice, such as the North Carolina and Tennessee laws that the Commission has considered today, are bad for America’s communities, bad for the private sector, particularly high-technology companies, and bad for America’s global competitiveness.”
Pete Moulton has been named City of St. Peter public works director. Moulton had served previously as water utilities superintendent before being named interim public works director. He oversees electric, environmental services, parks, refuse and recycling, stormwater, streets, wastewater and water services.

City of Caledonia Accounts Receivable/Utility Billing Clerk Joyce Guillaume is retiring at the end of March. City policymakers and staff expressed gratitude and appreciation for her more than 51 years of dedicated service to the city.

Marion Hinte, Spring Valley Public Utilities office manager, recently retired after 37 years. She oversaw billing of water and electric accounts and started the job on Dec. 15, 1977. Ink and paper were used years ago, then came a billing machine and then computers. Meter reading technology in Spring Valley changed too, from paper and pencil to handheld units to radio read. She will miss her co-workers, reported the local paper, and the customers she worked with over the years.

The Willmar City Council March 2 approved an average rate increase for its three classes of electric customers of 4.5 percent. Water rates will increase 20 percent. The increase came as a recommendation from the Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission, which held a public hearing on Feb. 9.

The water rate increase is being driven by needed repairs at the utility’s ageing treatment plant. The electric rate increase is driven by increased power supply and transmission costs and a need for capital improvements, including a new substation. The increases followed receipt of a consultant’s report of cost of service study. More increases may be necessary in 2017-18 to make necessary system improvements and maintain the utility’s financial strength.

With the ground frozen and little snow on the ground, the Grand Marais Public Utilities Commission extended the contract for a tree trimming crew to clear rights of way in the city. It costs roughly $1,000 a day to keep the two employees, a bucket truck and chipper working.

The Austin City Council Jan. 6 approved increasing the Austin Utilities payment in lieu of tax (PILOT) agreement, as the utility readiness to build a new $18.6 million central administrative facility. The PILOT increase is designed to offset the cost of higher rates to the city. The project would house all of Austin Utilities operations and customer service functions. The city will issue the debt for the project.

The utility will sell its downtown office space to the city, which occupies half of the utilities building. The city will pay $275,000 for the space and give the utility four acres of land.

The utility has raised rates, an average 8.18 percent per month for residential customers and one to three percent for commercial customers. Gas rates increased 3.5 percent and water rates 6.9 percent.

Blooming Prairie Public Utilities has been in its current location for 84 years, but Feb. 9 it acquired some new office space. The city council that night approved the sale of the former Blooming Prairie Ambulance Commission building to the utility for $70,111. The utility will relocate three offices to the building while keeping some workers and storage at its current building.

The city has owned the ambulance building since the 1980s. The Ambulance Commission decided to construct a new building in December 2012. Last spring, the Blooming Prairie Economic Development Authority approved the issuance of a $900,000 public facility bond to fund the project. The bond will be paid for through taxes, ambulance association contributions and water and storm sewer funds.

North Branch public officials recently discussed utilities and growth projections with the local paper. City staff noted that the city experienced rapid growth and a 2003 study found that would continue, meaning utilities needed to be upgraded.

A new sewer plant had already been built, and a new water treatment facility and upgrades to the municipal electric system had already been planned, as the systems were aging and were unable to accommodate growth.

The investments were made but the years of 100-plus housing starts stopped. Growth is back to 30-35 new homes a year but the bond payments are ramping up. The good news is the city is positioned to accommodate growth—and that growth would help minimize rate increases.

The MMUA Job Training and Safety Committee met Feb. 10 at the MMUA Plymouth headquarters. The group met primarily to plan for the 2015 MMUA Overhead and Underground schools. Committee members include, front row, left to right: Marty Moxell of Fairmont Public Utilities, Trent Hawkison of Brainerd Public Utilities, Mark Fuchs of Elk River Municipal Utilities, Joe Moore of Moorhead Public Service, Mike Willetts and Jack Kegel of MMUA. Back row, left to right: Jeff Bechtold of Missouri River Energy Services, Doug Ehnstad of Watertown (S. Dakota) Municipal Utilities, Steve Fleck of Rochester Public Utilities (RPU), Russ Nelson of Austin Utilities, Roger Moltzan of Detroit Lakes Public Utilities, Pete Bennett of RPU, John Egan of Sauk Centre Public Utilities and Pete Wyffels of MMUA.

MMUA JT&S Committee meets, plans

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because Sewell now spends approximately two-thirds of his time in municipal electric generating plants.

Sewell has first-hand experience as a lineman and diesel power plant operator. He also has experience as a water superintendent, water plant operator and water distribution technician. All that work had its good points, but Sewell really liked the power plants.

He started as a power plant operator. He managed the Milford, Iowa municipal utility system for 33 years. Prior to that, he worked for the municipal utilities in Hopkinton and West Bend, Iowa. Sewell had worked in the utility business for 33 years, 27 of those years as a manager.

While they still exist, it is no longer common to find municipal utility personnel dedicated solely to electric generating. The downside of that is, the less you perform a certain task, the less proficient you may become at it.

Recognizing this, MMUA and the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT) worked together to create two programs to help run municipal electric utilities operate their local electric generating plants more safely and efficiently.

The first program is called Operations and Maintenance (O&M) and the second is the League of Minnesota Municipal Electric Utilities (LMMUI) part of the preparation coordination. The downside of that is, the less you perform a certain task, the less proficient you may become at it.

Sewell served as a member of the North Iowa Municipal Electric Cooperative Association Board of Directors, and was past president of the IAMU Legislative and Regulatory Committee, and chaired the Electric Safety Committee.

Sewell was also a member of the Iowa Municipal Electric Cooperative Association Board of Directors. He has experience with O&M program and involvement, including a comprehensive inventory of critical equipment, qualifies a utility for a 10 percent rate reduction on their property coverage rates, through the O&M program.

Sewell noted that the program helps a utility save money on equipment replacement cost and maintain a staff of skilled, confident and safe equipment operators.

As a former manager, Sewell knows saving money on insurance is important. But what really motivates him is getting into the plants, getting to know them and the people that run them, and talking about ways to operate a plant most safely and efficiently.

The Generation Consulting program follows from the O&M program and involves an annual audit of the electric generating plant, through the LMCIT, conducted by Sewell.

The audit also provides an opportunity for utility staff to discuss a variety of generation-related issues with an outside expert.

Sewell has experience with a variety of engine generator sets. He not only knows how engines and electrical systems work, but can find his way around a board room or council chamber.

Sewell served on the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities Board (IAMU) of Directors, and was past president when he ’retired.’ He also served on the IAMU Legislative and Regulatory Committee, and chaired the Electric Safety Committee.

Sewell has first-hand experience with the power plants. He has knowledge of how engines and electrical systems work, but can find his way around a board room or council chamber.

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Sewell was also a member of the North Iowa Municipal Electric Cooperative Association Board of Directors.

for 25 years. He received the American Public Power Association’s “Seven Hats” award while working at Milford.

But the ‘hat’ he is wearing now might be the favorite of his career.

The MMUA/LMCIT partnership has greatly helped many utilities better understand the critical environment of the generation station and equipment, said MMUA Job Training and Safety Director Mike Willetts.

“We are pleased to be working with somebody as knowledgeable, well-known and well-respected as Bob Sewell,” said MMUA Executive Director Jack Kegel. “We expect the work he is doing now will help with the maintenance and operation of public power generation facilities for many years to come.”


**MMUA’s Schmidt earns Certified Safety Pro status**

Bob Sewell started in the municipal utility industry as a power plant operator. He picked up line work, water and wastewater operations and management along the way, but never forget where he came from. Today he helps municipal utilities across the state as the MMUA Generation Coordinator. This picture was taken in the Glencoe Light & Power electric generating plant.

**Utility coordinating councils weigh in on EPA’s ‘Clean Power Plan’**

Regional entities such as the Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) and the Western Electric Reliability Council (WERC) are the right groups to review reliability impacts of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Power Plan, panelists said at a Feb. 25 conference.

Representatives from WECC and public power utilities, federal power administrations, public service commissions and other groups in the West spoke before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission at its regional technical conference on the EPA’s proposed rule.

The final rule is expected in June.
Chisholm also works with Alexandria businesses, to let them know about communications offerings. “We used to be the best-kept secret in town,” Crowser said. Chisholm agreed that the utility “hadn’t really marketed” the fiber service. “Customers just kind of came,” she said.

When ALP provided wireless internet service, many people told her that ALP was the provider people just naturally went to. “Nobody (at the utility) had the mindset, ‘We’ll have competition,’” she said.

But many businesses, in the current environment, didn’t know the fiber offering was available. It’s not hard to market, she said. It’s just not a common thought that the utility offers business internet service.

ALP Utilities differentiates itself by offering fast and reliable service, equal upload and download speeds, 24/7 Alexandria-based support, and no contracts. Costs are affordable. Changes to connection speeds are made promptly.

“We guarantee speeds,” said Chan, an Alexandria native who left the local clinic to join the utility in 2011. “Once they hit the internet, it’s out of our control, but with the fiber, you get what you pay for.”

“We market it, but I guarantee you, a lot of it is word of mouth,” Chisholm said. ALP makes sure to deliver the service it is selling. Reliability is expected. When others falter (and some have in spectacular fashion), those businesses often seek out the municipal.

There has been a lot of noise about municipal involvement in telecommunications. ALP took a deliberate route that may have appeared to be the path of least resistance at the time. It has been profitable, Crowser noted. Given a steady erosion of customers connected to cable TV and telephone landlines, the ALP path also appears promising.

“We just supply the pipe,” said Crowser. He notes that you can download a movie or an ‘app’ for voice service. “All you need is a big pipe.” And that is one of the things ALP Utilities is in the business of providing.

Residential electric prices leap upward

Residential electricity customers in most areas of the country experienced large increases in retail electricity prices during 2014, with the average U.S. residential price increasing 3.1 percent over the previous year, according to a March report from the federal Energy Information Administration. The increase represents the highest annual growth rate since 2008.

Regional wholesale electricity markets, at a national level, experienced higher prices. Other reasons commonly cited for higher retail electricity prices are the increased investment in transmission and distribution infrastructure, rising requirements to generate electricity from renewable energy sources, and utility investment in demand-side efficiency.
ALP Utilities continues to successfully navigate shifting broadband seas

Municipal telecommunications has been a hot-button topic in Minnesota since the advent of the internet. With the Federal Communications Commission recently asserting its authority to strike down what it considers restrictions on state laws, the issue is drawing national attention.

Minnesota statute 237.19 requires a 65 percent approval in a referendum for a municipality to operate a telephone exchange within its own borders. Because of this law, Minnesota is often cited as a state with unreasonable restrictions on municipal telecommunications.

Alexandra Light and Power (ALP) has been successfully negotiating these shoals for 20 years. ALP partnered with Runestone Electric Association (REA) in 1995, to offer REA-ALP dial-up service. Though an argument could be made that it wasn’t necessary, the municipal utility obtained a Certificate of Niche Authority to provide telecommunication services from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC). That turned out to be a positive: the MPUC was cooperative and complimentary of the municipal’s efforts.

As technology advanced, REA-ALP offered a wireless internet service. The REA-ALP partnership eventually dissolved, and ALP discontinued the dial-up offering and sold the wireless service to a competitor. ALP did continue selling fiber internet service to businesses.

The state certificate allowed ALP to provide service in the area. REA had facilities outside the city which REA-ALP served. ALP retains service to an REA facility.

ALP Utilities also interconnected the buildings and the ALP network. The MPUC was cooperative and complimentary of the facilities outside the city which REA-ALP served.

ALP fiber now passes most of the city. The utility has expanded to provide services to other entities connected to the service, the utility has diligently developed a fiber optic backbone, which connects its headquarters to key facilities. The fiber network expanded throughout the city over the years as more facilities were connected. Soon, other entities were clamoring to be connected and ALP, ever the good citizen, offered some of its surplus capacity.

The utility’s first fiber customer was the school district. ALP offers the service to several other districts. ALP has lost customers to other providers. ALP has an excellent reputation among its customers. The utility has been profitable, and good for the community.

ALP has lost customers because it didn’t offer phone service, but it has no intentions of becoming anything other than a common carrier.

Christopher P. Schoenherr joined the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA) Jan. 26 as the Director of Agency and Government Relations with a primary responsibility of developing and managing relationships with members, legislators, legislative leaders, regulators and governmental agency staff.

In addition, he oversees communications, human resource functions, demand side management initiatives and non-operations center communication systems. Schoenherr replaces Larry Johnston, who retired from SMMPA after a distinguished career spanning nearly three decades.

Prior to joining SMMPA, Schoenherr served as Deputy Secretary of the Department of Administration for Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker. He was Chief Energy Advisor and responsible for a wide variety of government operations.

Prior to his appointment in the Walker Administration, Schoenherr was employed by Alliant Energy and held various positions in communications, regulatory affairs, customer relations and account management. He joined Alliant Energy in June 2000 and was located in both Madison, Wis., and Washington, D.C. Schoenherr spent the first 20 years of his career at We Energies in Milwaukee, Wis., where he was involved in investor relations, system and project development, government relations, communications, infrastructure sitting and strategic planning.

On his arrival at SMMPA, Schoenherr said, “SMMPA has an excellent reputation in the energy business and I am honored to join such a respected organization. I look forward to working with the SMMPA team to bring value to our members and the communities we are all privileged to serve.”
MMUA announces programs for upcoming Generation, Substation schools

MMUA recently announced its programs for two upcoming trainings: the Generation School, to be held April 14-16 at multiple locations, and the Substation School, to be held April 21-23 in Shakopee.

**Generation School**

MMUA’s annual Generation School will feature expert instructors and hands-on training in the Madelia and Fairmont municipal power plants. The school will also feature a vendor’s show at the Holiday Inn Fairmont. MMUA is partnering with American Public Power Association on this school, along with our host utilities. This school has training for well-seasoned operators or for those just starting in the generation field. The program begins Tuesday, April 14 at the Fairmont Energy Station, with: Arc Flash and Why We Do Infrared Inspection of Critical Electrical Systems, by Greg Wollan of American Training & Inspection.

The rest of the afternoon will feature a tour of the Fairmont Energy Station, conducted by Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency staff. This time will also give the municipal operators time to talk and compare notes. The Product Show/Reception will be held that evening at the Holiday Inn Fairmont. Reading or being told about a procedure is one thing, but it isn’t likely to make perfect sense until a person actually performs a task with a piece of equipment, and that is why Wednesday will concentrate on hands-on training with a variety of engine types in the power plants.

At the Fairmont plant, Chris Farabee of Farabee Mechanical will lead his group through a Fairbanks Morse vertical drive removal, reinstallation and maintenance. Selected topics will also be covered on Cooper Bessemer equipment. Rex Stormer of EXLINE will lead his group through dual fuel engine turbocharger basics. The group will disassemble and reassemble a turbocharger and discuss what problems to look for and examples of those particular problems.

In Madelia, Steve Lang from the Fairbanks Morse factory will share his knowledge, focusing on blower inspection/maintenance. Thursday brings the group together at the Fairmont Energy Station.

The day starts with a session on Station Power Batteries/Chargers, presented by Todd Buehler of GNB Industrial Power and Doug Busho of DC Power Solutions LLC. The focus is on safe maintenance, when to equalize, and how to get the most life out of batteries. MMUA Job Training and Safety Director Mike Willetts will discuss arc protection in the power plant setting and flame-resistant clothing. Job briefings and personal protective equipment will be covered, as well as information transfer and other significant topics.

Operators should have some knowledge of the larger issues affecting their futures, so MMUA Director of Engineering and Policy Analysis Bob Jagusch will bring the group up to date on the EPA ‘Clean Power Plan’ and Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine rule.

There will be a final chance to get questions answered or explore particular topics, as the assembled speakers will participate in a roundtable discussion to end the program.

**Substation School**

The annual MMUA Substation School is set for April 21-23, at the city of Shakopee Fire Station 1. MMUA is partnering on this workshop with APPA, the Minnesota Rural Electric Association and Shakopee Public Utilities. This school includes a wide variety of training with five different presenters.

Jeff Kranz of Rochester Public Utilities opens the program Tuesday with a look at the industry’s best practice regarding Substation Inspections and Maintenance. The Tuesday afternoon training ends with an interesting Jordan Transformer tour.

Paul Schlies of Energis High Voltage Resources opens the program Wednesday with a presentation on Substation Equipment Symbols, IEEE Numbers, Substation Design and Switching. Gary Roskos of Sebesta Inc., follows that with a look at Substation Design Concepts and Equipment Selection. This class will give a good foundation on the many aspects of substation design considerations. This session will be geared toward specific participant needs and will include discussion of specific hazards of the substation environment.

Thursday’s half-day program will focus on Substation Demolition and Replacement by Joe Adams, Shakopee Public Utilities. Adams will lead the group through an actual project: demolition of a combination Xcel Energy/SPU substation and the construction of a new, modern, high-tech sub, solely owned by SPU, including challenges, design, equipment and arc flash considerations.

For more complete information on these informative schools, see the full programs at the MMUA website.
Web: www.novelenergy.biz
Theresa Hebert, Accounts Manager, theresa.hebert@novelenergy.biz
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LADCO Services has 30 years of experience in the planning and evaluation of utility conservation and load management programs. The firm has assisted Minnesota electric and gas utilities with the planning, reporting and evaluation of their Minnesota Conservation Improvement Plans (CIP) since 1998. LADCO also offers strategic advice to utilities with respect to operating their programs in a way to minimize costs and rate impacts to their customers.

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HELP WANTED

Laboratory Operations
Director

Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission. RESPONSIBILITIES: perform and supervise all functions required of a state certified laboratory for the analysis of wastewater, provide direct instruction to operating personnel, prepare laboratory/ regulatory reports and maintain records. QUALIFICATIONS: Minimum Bachelor of Science degree in biology, environmental sciences, chemistry, engineering or closely related physical or biological science. Applicants will be required to obtain MPCA WWTF Operator’s Certificates, Class C, B, A within four years of employment. Please visit www grpuc.org for a complete position description, wage and benefits summary. APPLICATION PROCESS: Applications are available on the web site or by contacting the Minnesota Work Force Center, 1215 SE 2nd Ave, Grand Rapids, MN 55744, 218-327-4480. Monday- Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Return completed applications to the Work Force Center. Persons selected for an interview will be required to submit a cover letter, resume, and references. CLOSES: April 17, 2015. Equal Opportunity Employer.

Wastewater Treatment Facility Maintenance Foreman

Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission. RESPONSIBILITIES: Responsible for supervising, providing technical assistance and coordinating the efforts for the work of one or more crews engaged in the construction, maintenance and repair of the wastewater treatment facilities systems. Including the preparation of periodic reports, planning, preparing and administering the maintenance management system, and assisting in preparation of department budgets and long term capital investment plan. QUALIFICATIONS: Minimum high school graduate/GED equivalent and successfully complet ed vocational training through an accredited trade school or technical college in an industrial machinery or equipment maintenance curriculum, or provide documented training and have five (5) years documented experience relating to industrial construction, maintenance and repair. Please visit www grpuc.org for a complete position description, wage and benefit summary.

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10/March 2015 The Resource
Public Works Director

The City of Mora is accepting applications for the position of public works director. This full-time position is responsible for professional level management of the city’s and utilities’ infrastructure. Minimum requirements of a Bachelor’s degree in a related subject and five years of related work experience; or an Associate’s degree and nine years of experience; or an equivalent combination of education and experience sufficient to perform the essential functions of the position. For more information and required application packet contact: City of Mora, 101 Lake Street South, Mora, MN 55051-1588. Website – cityofmora.mn.us Telephone – (320) 679-1511; E-mail callman@cityofmora.com. Position opened until filled. Applications received by Monday, March 30th will receive priority. Applications by fax or e-mail will not be accepted. The City of Mora is an equal opportunity employer.

Water/Wastewater Superintendent

The City of Le Sueur is accepting applications for the position of Water/Wastewater Superintendent. This position will plan, coordinate, direct and monitor the operations of the Water Utility and the Wastewater Utility. The 2015 salary range for this position is $65,500 - $75,250 including an excellent benefits package. Applications will be accepted until 4 pm on Friday, April 3, 2015. All applicants must submit a complete City application, along with a resume and cover letter. Applications and a complete position description are available at the City’s website: www.cityoflesueur.com. Applications must be mailed to City of Le Sueur, 203 South Second Street, Le Sueur, MN 56058.

Superintendent

The Sauk Centre Public Utilities Commission is accepting applications for the position of Superintendent. This position will be responsible for the operations of the Electric, Water and Wastewater Departments. The Utility has 2,270 Electric customers, and 1,670 Water-Wastewater customers.

There are 13 full-time employees. The population of Sauk Centre is 4,317. A new water treatment plant was built in 2000 and a new wastewater treatment plant in 2010. The requirements for this position are: Must have at least 5 years of Superintendent-General Manager or other supervisory experience in the Utility Field of Electric, Water or Wastewater or has an accounting degree and has a strong background in supervising and communication. Applications and copies of the job description are available at our office at 101 Main Street/ P.O. Box 128 Sauk Centre MN 56078. Applications are due by April 30, 2015.

Purchasing Specialist

Elk River Municipal Utilities is accepting applications for a full time Purchasing Specialist. This position’s responsibilities include coordinating materials and equipment purchased for the electric, water, and technical services departments, and assisting with inventory control and maintenance. Two years of purchasing and inventory-related experience with an understanding of accounting related processes required. Prior experience with utility accounting and/or billing functions preferred. Please visit our website at http://elkriverutilities.com/pages/job-openings for a full job description. Salary range is $48,000 to $54,000 per hour with excellent benefits. Resumes must be postmarked or received by March 27, 2015. Please submit resume to: Elk River Municipal Utilities, Attention: General Manager, 13069 Orono Parkway, P.O. Box 430, Elk River, MN 55330.

Planning/Public Works Technician

The City of Victoria is seeking an individual who is eager to learn about land development and code enforcement, zoning, infrastructure and natural resource management as a Planning/Public Works Technician. This position will provide administrative and technical support to the community development and public works departments. Key tasks include: providing in person and over the phone customer service, permit processing, coordinating the code enforcement process and completing special projects. Qualifications: Associate’s degree (completed or in progress) in planning, urban studies, natural resource management or related field; one year of experience working in a planning or public works environment is desired. Bachelor’s degree preferred. Additional experience may be substituted for education. Position is part-time and anticipated to last 25 hours a week. Hiring range is $14,000-$18,000 DOQ. For the job application and more information visit www.ci.victoria.mn.us or City Hall, 1670 Stieger Lake Lane, Victoria, MN 55386. Submit applications and resumes by March 31, 2015 at 4:30pm.

Lineperson or Apprentice Lineperson

Lake Crystal Municipal Utilities is accepting applications for a Full Time Lineperson. Qualifications: Must be able to climb a 10,000-12,000 lbs. at the 10’ reach. Applicants must have a valid Mn. Class A CDL or the ability to obtain one within 6 months. Pay range $22.30 to $31.86 depending on qualifications. Job description and applications are available at City Hall, 100 E. Robinson St, Lake Crystal MN 56555 or on-line at www.ci.lake-crystal.mn.us. Position will be open until March 31, 2015.

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For a complete and up-to-date listing, including these additional job openings, see www.mmusa.org.

Water Works Operator

Willmar Municipal Utilities

Temporary Groundwork-Electric Department

City of Pierre, South Dakota

Electrical Engineer

Marshal Municipal Utilities (MMU)

Locator

Moorhead Public Service (MPS)

Building Code Official/Zoning Administrator/Engineering Technician

The City of Breckenridge, WANTED to BUY

Digger Derrick truck

Mountain Lake Municipal Utilities is looking for a late model Digger Derrick truck, with a lifting capacity of 10,000-12,000 lbs. at the 10’ reach. If you have one for sale, call Superintendent Ron Melson at 507-427-2999, ext. 6 or 507-822-0212.
Minnesota Supreme Court rules CapX 2020 utilities must ‘Buy the Farm’

The Minnesota Supreme Court March 4 ruled in the case of landowners in the path of the Brookings, S.D. to Hampton, Minn., electric transmission line, apparently forcing Great River Energy (GRE) and other utilities participating in the CapX2020 project to buy their farm to escape condemnation.

The case involves a 218-acre farm in Redwood County. The plaintiffs rent the farm land, which did not contain a home or buildings, GRE acquired an 8.86 acre easement for the line. The farmers argued Minnesota’s “Buy the Farm” law required the utility to buy the entire farm. The utility objected and said the relationship between the size of easement required and the property involved made exercising the ‘Buy the Farm’ provisions unreasonable.

The Supreme Court said the size of the purchase isn’t a factor in applying the law, which was enacted in 1977, following civil unrest against construction of the UPA-CP (forerunners of GRE) high voltage direct current power line. “Great River’s proposed interpretation of the ‘Buy the Farm’ statute adds factors to the statute, is inconsistent with the statute’s language, and is unsupported by our case law,” Chief Justice Lori Gildea wrote in the opinion. She added that the utility’s complaints are better directed to the Legislature.

CapX2020 is a joint initiative of 11 transmission-owning utilities in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The CapX2020 projects provide needed transmission capacity to support new generation, including renewable energy. The projects include four 345 kV transmission lines and one 230 kV line.

This is the largest development of new transmission in the upper Midwest in nearly 40 years. The CapX2020 lines are projected to cost more than $2 billion and cover nearly 800 miles. The four CapX2020 projects in Minnesota have impacted about 2,000 landowners, of which an estimated 40 percent are farms.

The CapX2020 transmission lines will help meet Minnesota’s Renewable Energy Standard (RES), which requires utilities to deliver 25 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2025 (Xcel Energy is mandated to deliver 30 percent by 2020, with 25 percent from wind). Most of that energy comes from wind turbines. The Brookings-County 345 kV line will expand access to wind resources by adding about 700 MW of capacity to the transmission grid. That line, along with other projects, has the potential to add nearly 2,000 MW of wind capacity to the transmission grid. It is estimated Minnesota needs about 5,000 MW of renewable energy to meet the RES, one of the nation’s most aggressive renewable energy laws.

A spokesperson for CapX2020 said it respects the Supreme Court’s decision and is reviewing the decision to determine what guidance it provides. The Supreme Court decision follows on the heels of a lawsuit by New Prague-area organic dairy farmers, who also invoked the “Buy the Farm” law when part of a CapX2020 power line crossed their property.

The CapX2020 utilities argued that the law didn’t apply because their transmission structure would take up less than an acre on the 132-acre farm and that a total purchase would be unreasonable. But the August 2014 Scott County district court ruling said “Buy the Farm” does apply because the power line’s presence affects the whole property, which had an estimated value of $1.4 million. The parties negotiated a resolution to all issues involved in the proceeding.

It doesn’t get any better for Minnesota municipals—APPA National Conference coming to Minneapolis June 5-10

The 2015 APPA National Conference & Public Power Expo takes place June 5-10 in Minneapolis. Conference sessions help you connect to the future as the global energy landscape is changing more rapidly than at any time in the last 40 years, with consequences for markets, geopolitics, and the planet.

Among the general session speakers is Michael Levi, senior fellow for energy and the environment at the Council on Foreign Relations, shares insights on energy trends shaping the future of the electricity industry. He offers his groundbreaking analysis of what the changes in American energy mean for the economy, national security, and the environment.

Dr. Levi is an expert on climate change, energy security, arms control, and nuclear terrorism. He has testified before Congress and presented expert scientific evidence to the National Academy of Sciences on climate change and nuclear security. His essays have been published in Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, Nature, and Scientific American. His op-eds have appeared in numerous national publications.

Discounted early registration hotel room rates are available (through May 15) and available if you act quickly.