Public power advocates trek to Washington, D.C.

The American Public Power Association held its annual Legislative Rally Feb. 27-March 1 in Washington, D.C.

Approximately 50 people attended under the MMUA banner, including power agency personnel, MMUA staff and numerous member representatives. A number of attendees were accompanied by other family members.

Working with APPA and our Government Relations Committee, MMUA staff produced a series of position statements and compiled them into a 12-page booklet. (This booklet is available on the MMUA website in the Public Policy/Federal section.)

The preservation of tax-exempt financing is our top federal legislative priority. The public power advocates engaged lawmakers on tax reform legislation, urging Congress to preserve the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds, which are key for public power infrastructure development. The House is soon expected to start work in earnest on tax reform legislation, with a Senate following suit.

Our other issues included: Preserve Local Control of Pole Attachments; Distributed Generation; Protecting the Interests of Western Area Power Administration Customers; Grid Security; and an informative piece on Why Public Power?

As the MMUA group grew over the years, MMUA would reserve a room and our Senators and Representatives would make the trek to visit with the group. As things changed over the years, the pendulum swung back to meetings of representatives with their constituents, and larger meetings of those available from the group with our senators

Legislative meetings

Mailing Address
MMUA
3025 Harbor Lane North
Plymouth, MN 55447
763.551.1230

Regulators Adjust MP’s
Time of Use Rate
page 2

Friends Help Brownston
Move Ahead
page 9

Water guy' Boyce retires after 42 years
by Steve Downer

Dan Boyce retired Feb. 28 after 42 years of public service, the last 26 coming as general manager of East Grand Forks Water & Light. His last official duty was attending a metro-area board meeting of the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (MMPA). Everybody brought him out to lunch afterward.

Then, as he has so often over his career, Boyce made the 320-mile drive back to East Grand Forks.

Boyce was known as "a water guy" in MMUA circles, having worked as city chemist at the Grand Forks, North Dakota water department for 10 years and then water plant superintendent for six more before crossing the Red River to East Grand Forks in 1990.

He was also a smart, hard-working guy. He learned perseverance early in life, and it served him well.

He grew up on a dairy farm near Parkers Prairie, and wrestled in high school and Concordia College, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude, studying math and chemistry. He taught for two years in rural Minnesota and South Dakota before joining the City of Grand Forks in 1974 as city chemist. He then served as water plant superintendent from 1984-1990.

Boyce was an active member of the American Water Works Association (AWWA), served on many committees and planned and taught at operator training schools. He served on the Section

Boyce: see page 8 please

Leading the way

Individuals, organizations drive progress in Renville, Sibley area

There is a lot going on in Winthrop—including progress for the innovative RS Fiber project and a new a combined heat and power plant at the local ethanol plant. A local group associated with the Leading Sibley Together leadership program toured those facilities, along with the Winthrop Museum, on March 2. MMUA staff was lucky enough to tag along.

RS Fiber has a project "footprint" that includes Renville and Sibley counties. It started construction on a fiber optic cable system in 2015, beginning in Winthrop and Gaylord. New Aurora and Green Isle received service in December.

After several months of testing, residents in the cities of Gibbon and Lafayette began taking service last month.

"We are extremely happy to be able to bring this state-of-the-art network to the residents and business owners of Gibbon and Lafayette," said RS Fiber General Manager Toby Brummer. "In addition to high-definition video and crystal-clear phone service, customers will have access to the fastest internet," including broadband speeds of up to one gigabit.

The 2017 construction schedule includes Brownton, Stewart, Buffalo Lake and Fairfax. When RS Fiber gets close to "lighting up" a city, an open house is held to discuss service offerings, prices, and details related to the service. Citizens in the area are already well aware of the project, which came together after a lengthy, public process.

While the cities are being built out, service is being provided in rural areas through RS Air Broadband, a wireless system. Plans call for the entire RS Fiber project area to eventually be served with fiber. There are approximately 6,200 potential customers in the initial project area.

RS Fiber adopted a cooperative corporate structure after the local governments experienced difficulties getting financing.

The cooperative is financed from multiple sources. The 10 cities and 17 townships that voted to join the project formed a joint powers entity and the cities collectively sold a $13.7 million general obligation

Leading: page 7 please
State regulators make adjustments to MP time-of-use rate pilot project

by Steve Downer

Will time-of-use (TOU) rates become commonplace on electric utility systems? The rate design certainly has its proponents. But the innovative rates, for now, remain a thing of pilot projects, at least in Minnesota. For example, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) recently approved a temporary rider adjustment to Minnesota Power’s “Residential Time-of-Day Rate for Participants of the Smart Grid Advanced Metering Infrastructure Pilot Project.”

The project began in 2012, when the MPUC approved MP’s petition for approval of the rate with Critical Peak Pricing (CPP) for a select group of participants, in what was dubbed a Consumer Behavior Study Plan. Rate availability was limited to a few areas in Duluth and Hermantown. Participation was limited to volunteers. Customers were required to stay on the rate for at least 12 months. CPP periods could be up to eight hours in duration and customers would not be exposed to more than 160 hours of critical peak events a year.

Along with their usual rate schedule, customers were billed an Energy Charge Adjustment of -0.0299 (Off-Peak Discount); $0.01415 On-Peak Adder and a whopping $0.77 per kWh CPP Adder. The rate took effect in October 2014. Evaluation efforts began in January 2016. MP’s standard residential rate was bill a blocking rate, with an $8.00 service charge, plus energy charges starting at $0.05008 per kWh for the first 300 kWh. On the time-of-use with CPP rate, the basic rate structure does not change, but adjustments are added to or subtracted from the standard tiered rates based on the time electricity is consumed. The CPP adder was designed with an assignment of 100 hours that could be called. Only 18 hours (six events) were called during the first year of the pilot. Actual usage also varied from the assumptions used in the initial rate design. MP experienced an under-recovery of more than $74,000 from TOU participants compared to standard residential rates. There was also lower than average energy consumption.

A total of 660 participants stayed on the pilot. The follow-up survey was sent to 521 participants and 276 responded. Participants were knowledgeable about the rate, understood it and were willing to adjust their electricity use. Twenty-two percent made changes to their daily use. Eighty-nine percent reported saving money and 83 percent wanted to stay on the rate. Data collected indicated participants typically used 10 percent less on-peak energy than non-participants.

Because the on-peak rate resulted in an under-collection of revenue, adjustments were made, although MPUC staff expressed concern that the new on-peak rate would be much greater relative to the standard rate. Rate adjustments approved by the MPUC included: 25 hours of CPP instead of 100; and increase of the on-peak adder to $0.04870 per kWh from $0.01415. The new on-peak rate is $0.09586, a 53 percent increase over the previous rate, and a 96 percent increase over the current standard rate.

MPUC staff noted it was concerned about the significant increase to the on-peak adder. With such a significant increase, “customers might see little incentive, if any, for continuing to stay on the rate,” noted staff, even though customers seemed satisfied with the pilot.

MP said “the peak-to-off-peak price ratio is a key driver of customer response because a large price differential provides greater savings opportunities and more incentive to shift consumption.”

The proposed rate modification balances out the under-collection. However, MPUC staff noted the rate modification is likely to limit if not reduce participation in the program, which encourages conservation.

MMUA named to MPUC’s ‘DG’ workgroup

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission March 8 issued a notice establishing a Distributed Generation Workgroup and setting a schedule. MMUA was among the 15 organizations included in the workgroup. Missouri River Energy Services, an MMUA affiliate member, is also a workgroup member.

For a complete listing of participants, see the ‘Break-even News’ section of the MMUA website.

MMUA’s Bob Jagusch will participate on the workgroup. Bill Black is an alternate.

The first meeting of the workgroup is set for April 7 in the MPUC’s large hearing room. The agenda has not yet been delivered, but is likely to revolve around issues related to the DG interconnection process.  

CUSTOMIZED SOLUTIONS TO MEET YOUR CRITICAL POWER NEEDS

- Life Cycle Extension
- Electrical Upgrades
- Emission Upgrades
- Mechanical Upgrades

Fairbanks Morse Engine 701 White Ave Beslt, WI 55511 612-884-9916 F858olutions@fairbanksmorse.com

MMUA The Resource USPS 8009836. ISSN: 1080-3750 is published 11 times a year, combining July-August, by MMUA at 3025 Harbor Lane North, Suite 400, Plymouth, MN 55447. Periodicals postage paid at MN and other mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MMUA The Resource, 3025 Harbor Lane North, Suite 400, Plymouth, MN 55447. 763-551-1230, members 1-800-422-0119. FAX 763-551-0459.

MMUA The Resource
Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association
To unify, support and serve as a common voice for municipal utilities

Officers and Directors
President
Bob Elston, Sleepy Eye
President-Elect
John Crooks, Shakopee
Secretary/Treasurer
Greg French, Virginia
Past President
Troy Adams, Elk River

Directors
Kevin Berg, Hawley
Mark Erickson, Winthrop
Chuck Heine, Redwood Falls
Chris Olson, Alexandria
H. Peterson, Blooming Prairie
Vernell Roberts, Detroit Lakes
Bill Woolse, Brainerd

Staff
Executive Director
Jack Kegel, jkegel@mmua.org
Associate Executive Director
Steve Downer, sdowner@mmua.org
Government Relations Director
Bill Black, bblack@mmua.org
Government Relations Representative
Amanda Duerr, aduerr@mmua.org
Director of Engineering & Policy Analysis
Bob Jagusch, rjagusch@mmua.org
Director of Finance
Larry Pederson, lpederson@mmua.org
Director of Administration
Rita Kelly, rikelly@mmua.org

Accounting Assistant
Karen Heiden, kheid@mmua.org
Administrative Assistant
Theresa Neddermeyer, tneddermeyer@mmua.org
Director of Training and Safety
Mike Willetts, mwilletts@mmua.org
JTS & Apprenticeship Instructor
Art Gatchell, agatchell@mmua.org
Natural Gas Circuit Rider
Troy Dahlen, tdahlen@mmua.org
Regional Safety Group Program Leader
Mike Sewell, msewell@mmua.org
Regional Safety Coord/JTS Instructors
Bruce Westergaard, bwester@mmua.org
Shane St. Clair, sstclair@mmua.org
Generation Coordinator/JTS Instructor
Bob Sewell, bsowell@mmua.org
Training Center Coordinator/JTS Instructor
Cody Raveling, craveling@mmua.org
Mgt. Services and JTS Instructor
Richard Maxfield, rmaxfield@mmua.org
Regional Safety Coordinators
Janet Aultman, jaultman@mmua.org
Al Cescoz, acescoz@mmua.org
Tom Ewert, tewear@mmua.org
Mark Hotell, mhotell@mmua.org
Robin Klug, rklug@mmua.org
Dave Lundberg, dlundberg@mmua.org
Marc Machacek, mmachacek@mmua.org
Ryan Mihalak, rmihalak@mmua.org
Joseph Schmidt, jschmidt@mmua.org
Kevin Thompson, kthompson@mmua.org
Chris Trembley, ctrembley@mmua.org
The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) and MMUA on March 8 joined in comments to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), in the matter of Streamlining Deployment of Small Cell Infrastructure By Improving Wireless Facilities Siting Policies.

The municipal organizations urged the Commission to not interfere with management of property by local municipalities.

LMC and MMUA noted they support wireless deployment, including smart deployment of 5G. They also recognize, however, that deployments impact public assets, rely upon public resources (e.g., public poles and power), use shared antennas, necessitate adequate public protections, and warrant receiving fair market consideration.

In Minnesota, no municipal roadblocks to the deployment of wireless technology exist. (Small cell deployments grew 140 percent in 2015, and projections call for small cell shipments to double this year, with a 270 percent spike in sales growth.)

Minnesota municipalities effectively process applications for wireless facilities, including 5G wireless facilities, under existing federal, state and local laws. Enacting regulations that hold every municipality accountable to the same process would allow the wireless industry to profit from use of public assets without providing fair compensation to municipalities and their taxpayers.

LMC and MMUA comments:
- explained Right of Way (ROW) and facility management practices in Minnesota;
- argued that Congress intended to defer to local controls;
- and highlighted how the different types and needs of communities in Minnesota necessitate each community maintaining local control.

LMC and MMUA urged the Commission to refrain from interfering with local ordinances and practices, as well as the application of state zoning and the Local Telecom ROW Act. Imposing a new federal regulatory overlay not only would create confusion and administrative burdens upon communities (many with limited resources and personnel); but also, would create unnecessary costs and would undermine important local policies. Each community should have the discretion, in light of their resources, to decide how to best site wireless structures for their community.

Depending on the community or the right of way, wireless facilities could:
- create land use conflicts and incompatibilities including excessive height of poles and towers;
- create visual and aesthetic blights and potential safety concerns;
- cause substantial disturbance to rights-of-way;
- create traffic and pedestrian safety hazards due to unsafe locations which could have been addressed during local government review of site requesting; and
- result in a negative impact to the unique quality or character of the city in general.

The FCC proceeding is WT Docket No. 16-421.

Mobilitie petition led to joint comments

On November 15, 2016, Mobilitie, LLC filed a petition requesting the FCC issue a Declaration Ruling interpreting the “fair and reasonable compensation” provision of Section 253(c) of the Federal Telecommunications Act (TCA) as amended. Section 253 provides the FCC with some authority to preempt enforcement of any state or local government action that may inhibit the ability of an entity to compete effectively in providing telecommunications services. However, Section 253(c) intentionally preserves the role of state and local authorities to manage the public rights-of-way or to require fair and reasonable compensation from telecommunications carriers to provide their services.

The FCC requested comment on Mobilitie’s Petition but also asked for input on additional issues related to deployment of next generation wireless infrastructure, including how federal law applies to local government review of wireless facility siting applications and local requirements for gaining access to rights of way.

The FCC proceeding is WT Docket No. 16-421.
Westbrook Municipal Light & Power removes historic engine from power plant

The Westbrook Municipal Light & Power generating plant was built when the municipal utility was formed and the city first began generating electricity in 1937. Utility staff is currently in the process of removing an engine and generator from the plant that may well have been part of the original installation.

Superintendent Dan Joel and utility worker Levi Brummer have been dismantling a Fairbanks-Morse 38-8-1/8, a two-stroke, opposed-piston type diesel engine. The type of engine being removed was developed in the 1930s, and was used extensively in U.S. diesel electric submarines of the 1940s and 1950s.

The 38 series has been in continuous production since its development in 1938, and is currently manufactured by Fairbanks-Morse Engine of Beloit, Wisc. A slightly modified version continues in service on nuclear submarines of the U.S. Navy, as well as in a power plant and a variety of other uses.

These engines have been manufactured with between four and twelve cylinders, depending on application. The engine being removed from the Westbrook plant is a six cylinder.

The engine/generator set still worked as designed, but a number of issues—including environmental and economic—conspired in its demise. Utility staff tried to find a buyer for the engine and generator, or parts, without luck.

The engine, a common sight in municipal power plants, is being removed as part of a general refurbishment of the power plant.

In 2001, a new two-megawatt generator, radiator and switchgear, were installed. That ‘genset’ alone can meet the utility’s 2-megawatt peak load, when called upon. Westbrook buys the bulk of its power at wholesale, from the Western Area Power Administration and Missouri River Energy Services.

Along with electric service, Westbrook provides natural gas, water and cable TV. Utility staff will be busy locating underground utilities this construction season.

Improvements coming

Woodstock Communications, an independently-owned telecommunications company out of Ruthton, was awarded a grant through the Minnesota Department of Employment Economic Development to bring fiber optics to 368 unserved households, 29 unserved businesses and seven unserved Westbrook anchor institutions.

While generally viewed as a positive, the fiber installation begins to leave the future of the municipal cable TV system in doubt. Population in the Cottonwood County city has declined 16 percent since 1990, according to the 2010 census and stands at 739, but, along with its utilities, the city has a number of things going for it.

The Sanford Westbrook Medical Center is connected to an assisted living facility. There are a number of local service and retail businesses. A hardware store recently closed, leaving people a half-hour drive to Slayton or Windom for certain necessary items.

Public facilities include a large and expanded library, a community center with seniors’ activities, a park which includes playgrounds, a swimming pool, ball field, sand volleyball area, and picnic shelter. There are a number of churches and community organizations.

Westbrook also houses the junior high and high school for the Westbrook-Walnut Grove School district.

The Sanford Westbrook Medical Center is connected to an assisted living facility. There are a number of local service and retail businesses. A hardware store recently closed, leaving people a half-hour drive to Slayton or Windom for certain necessary items.

Public facilities include a large and expanded library, a community center with seniors’ activities, a park which includes playgrounds, a swimming pool, ball field, sand volleyball area, and picnic shelter. There are a number of churches and community organizations.

Westbrook also houses the junior high and high school for the Westbrook-Walnut Grove School district.

Wind, gas plants lead to merchant growth

The American Public Power Association recently reported that most electric generating capacity has historically been constructed under long-term bilateral contracts or utility or customer ownership, with almost no project developers relying on wholesale market revenues. But in 2015, that trend shifted significantly, with almost 20 percent of the new capacity constructed under merchant arrangements. Wind and natural gas dominated the new generation constructed in 2015, equal to 47 and 33 percent of the new capacity respectively.
MMPA’s 46-megawatt Shakopee Energy Park now generating electricity

Shakopee, MN, -- Shakopee Energy Park, owned and operated by the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (MMPA), has achieved commercial operation and is producing electricity from clean-burning natural gas.

The 46-megawatt (MW) facility, located in Shakopee near Canterbury Park, uses fuel-efficient reciprocating engines to generate local, reliable power for Shakopee as well as contributing to the overall power supply for all MMPA member communities.

“The facility is a great addition to our growing community,” said Shakopee Mayor Bill Mars. “Shakopee Energy Park provides our residents and businesses with long-term efficient, competitive and reliable electrical supply, which is delivered by Shakopee Public Utilities. In turn, our community’s future economic development and sustainability goals are supported.”

“MMPA has been a strong supporter of local contractors and businesses, such as Greystone Construction, for the project’s construction, which means more jobs locally,” he said. “Public power is stronger than ever with the addition of MMPA’s Shakopee Energy Park.”

MMPA’s management partner, Avant Energy of Minneapolis, managed the facility’s design and construction, and provides operations management for the plant.

“This facility is an example of MMPA’s commitment to local, efficient power generation,” said Derrick Dahlen, Avant Energy President & CEO. “We put a lot of effort into designing an attractive facility that will be a long-term asset to Shakopee.”

John Crooks, Shakopee Public Utilities Manager and Chairman of the MMPA Board of Directors, said, “Our Board and Management believe in investing in clean, efficient technologies because it is the right thing to do both environmentally and economically.”

Shakopee Energy Park, with its fast-start Wartsila engines, is part of MMPA’s strategy to maintain power supply flexibility. The Agency takes a long-term approach to power supply planning that includes assembling a diversified portfolio containing both conventional and renewable resources. This approach ensures that the Agency is well positioned to continue delivering reliable, competitively-priced power to its members, while creating value for the Agency and its members.

Other MMPA member utilities include: Anoka, Arlington, Brownston, Buffalo, Chaska, East Grand Forks, Elk River, Le Sueur, North St. Paul, Olivia, and Winthrop.

The Shakopee Energy Park is a 46-megawatt, natural gas fired power plant using reciprocating internal combustion engines.

APPA Spring Institute brings quality education to Minnesota

The American Public Power Association (APPA) is holding its Spring Education Institute from May 15-19 in Minneapolis.

This seasonal education institute offers in-depth training courses for all skill levels. Institutes allow attendees to focus on a single topic or spread the week in multiple classes for more comprehensive training.

Classes are designed by instructors who have decades of industry experience and understand the specific needs of public power utilities. The Institute format also provides an excellent opportunity to network with industry peers and earn continuing education credits.

The Spring Education Institute features 17 in-depth courses on the following timely topics:

- Accounting
- Financial Planning
- Work Order & Asset Management
- Cost of Service and Retail Rate Design
- Underground Distribution Systems
- Overview & Practical Applications of the APPA Safety Manual
- Work Order & Asset Management
- Financial Planning
- Work Order & Asset Management
- Cost of Service and Retail Rate Design
- Underground Distribution Systems
- Overview & Practical Applications of the APPA Safety Manual

For more on the institute, go to the Education Institutes and Other Events\Spring Institute page on the APPA website.

Wind, solar workgroup on decommissioning forms

The Minnesota Department of Commerce has proposed the establishment of a wind and solar decommissioning workgroup. Decommissioning plans filed by developers so far have not specified what financial assurance is required to accomplish decommissioning tasks.

According to a memo from the Department to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, nearly 50 large wind energy conversion systems site permits have been issued since 1995, and many of those permits are approaching the 15-year milestone requiring the establishment of a financial instrument to ensure funding for decommissioning.

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.”
Rally: continued from front page

were held Feb. 28-March 1. The MMUA contingent, which varied in size depending on the particular visit, covered every one of Minnesota’s eight Congressional districts and both Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken. It was a particularly busy time on “the Hill,” with numerous votes being taken.

Official APPA events started Monday, Feb. 27 with a variety of pre-rally seminars and committee meetings. A welcoming reception capped the day’s events. APPA determines many its positions on issues through its Legislative and Resolutions (L&R) Committee. The morning of Tuesday, Feb. 28 was taken up with the L&R meeting and luncheon. Earlier that day, Missouri River Energy Services held a breakfast and briefing session.

MMUA held a March 1 reception in the Capitol Visitors’ Center.

Minnesotans sign on to tax-exempt bond letter

Congressmen Randy Hultgren (IL) and ‘Dutch’ Ruppersberger (MD), Co-Chairs of the Congressional Municipal Finance Caucus, on March 8 sent a bipartisan letter to leaders of the House Ways and Means Committee in support of tax-exempt municipal bonds. Minnesota Reps. Tim Walz, Keith Ellison, Collin Peterson and Rick Nolan were among the 154 signers (95 Democrats, 61 Republicans).

The letter asks leadership to reject any proposal to cap or eliminate the deduction on tax-exempt municipal bonds, which are used to finance the vast majority of infrastructure projects in America’s communities.
Hazelton part of local leadership leading to area's economic growth

Jenny Hazelton, the Winthrop city administrator, is involved in or has a ringside seat to all this activity. She comes from a long-time Winthrop family. Her grandfather worked for the city and later retired serving on the city council. She lives 20 miles west of Winthrop, in Fairfax. When a seat opened on the Fairfax council and a candidate did not come forward to fill it, Hazelton agreed to serve. When the last election rolled around and nobody filed to run, she agreed to put her name on the ballot, and ran unopposed. She is also serving as mayor pro tem. As a city administrator, she admits the council experience does give her added insight into the elected officials she works with. The time commitment, however, is more than she bargained for. Hazelton is also involved in the Leading Sibley Together program, and the MMUA Leadership Academy. Hazelton's situation goes to show what can happen to a person with ability and the willingness to get involved. She vows, however, that she will be done as an elected official at the end of her term. But you can bet she will remain a leader.
Boyce: continued from front page

Board for seven years and was Chair of the North Central Section. He eventually received the highest awards in the Minnesota Section of the American Water Works Association.

He was a quick study on the electric industry. Ten years after joining Water & Light, he was elected to the MMUA Board of Directors, and served from 2000 to 2006. He was President in 2003-04 and served as MMUA Government Relations Committee chair. He

was an active member of the MMUA Mid-Continent Area Power Pool joint membership, and of the Midwest Municipal Transmission Group, where he served as chair. He served on several MMUA committees and task forces and continued to serve on the government relations committee until his retirement.

A master of breaking down complicated subjects into a simple analogy, he often served as a spokesperson for public power in both St. Paul and Washington, D.C.

Boyce is also a past president and was secretary of the board of MMPA, Water & Light’s wholesale power supplier.

In August 2015, Boyce received the MMUA President’s Award, the association’s highest honor. Last summer he was awarded an MMUA Honorary Lifetime Membership, symbolizing a long professional life dedicated not only to the advancement of municipal utilities locally, but also for the betterment of the industry on a statewide basis.

Significant events

His time at East Grand Forks was full of significant events, including the building of the Water & Light Distribution Service Center, and joining the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency. But no event defined his tenure like the flood of 1997 and its aftermath.

The devastating spring flood was preceded by an April blizzard and ice storm. The Red River swept aside sandbag dikes on April 18, leaving most of East Grand Forks under water. While much of the population evacuated temporarily, many East Grand Forks utility people stayed at their posts.

Boyce and a handful of others were positioned at the heavily-sandbagged water treatment plant. It was exhausting work. He was sleeping one night when the phone rang. He picked it up and answered but nobody was on the other end. This happened regularly. It was a bit maddening. He learned later that automatic meter reads were being called in.

Most of the utility staff worked straight through until July 4. The flood-related work stretched over a decade, as a permanent dike was constructed to help avert future disasters. Boyce and the people at Water & Light played a large role in this process.

Fond farewell

Many well-wishers turned out for his retirement open house, Feb. 24 at city hall. A table was set up, full of awards from a lifetime of work. Looking over the awards, Boyce picked up a small wooden plaque. It was not picked out of a catalogue, and read ‘Best four-man sandbag team.’

Along with Boyce, one of the names was Gary Hultberg, former water plant superintendent. Hultberg called Boyce “the energizer bunny.” He was always dedicated and never quit. Hultberg recalled, “He was quite the superintendent.”

With over 500 pages of historical and monumental passages and photographs, The American Lineman makes the perfect gift for power delivery employees and retirees, family members and friends close to the trade.
Brownton gets by with a little help from friends

by Steve Downer

Some challenges are widely acknowledged, but there are a lot of good things about living in a small city.

One challenge is that retailers often have a hard time making a go of it in many downtowns. On the other hand, small cities generally contain a supply of reasonably-priced housing. That living space, along with a safe, relaxed lifestyle, make many small cities an attractive place for retirees and young families alike.

Brownton’s population is approximately 750, down 8.4 percent from the 2000 census, but young families are moving in and the household age is below the state median. Market value is up $6 million, said Brownton City Clerk/Treasurer Ella Kruse. As soon as a house hits the market, it is sold.

Good things are happening. The city, with the necessary support from its citizens, is often in the middle of it.

For example, Brownton is participating in the RS Fiber project. Plans call for a build-out of the fiber-to-the-premise system in the city this spring. “People are ready for it,” Kruse said. Service provided by incumbents has remained status quo. There was some initial trepidation over the cost of the project, but as time goes on it is looking more and more like the right move.

With the need for broadband service, not participating looked like a bigger risk than getting involved.

The city has a recent history of taking big steps forward. In March 2013, voters overwhelmingly approved a referendum to build a municipal natural gas distribution system. The system was built that summer. Gas is piped to Brownton by Hutchinson Utilities Commission, which transports it to the big United Farmers Cooperative unit train shipping facility, located just to the west of the city. A town border station was built at that point, bringing gas to Brownton.

Hutchinson Utilities and Brownton have an operations and maintenance agreement. Hutchinson, 12 miles to the north, has helped with service installs and uses its automated metering system to help Brownton with meter reading and billing services.

Approximately 90 percent of the potential customers in Brownton are taking the gas service, and the partnership with Hutchinson is going well, Kruse said. It’s a good, mutually-beneficial partnership between two municipal utility cities.

The Brownton municipal electric distribution system is maintained by an electric contractor, located in Hutchinson. Outage response is becoming a concern, and with an aging workforce, it is unclear how long the contractor is going to be able to provide the service.

Brownton upgraded its electric substation and related facilities in 2007. Distribution voltage was upgraded at that time, from 2,400 delta to 4,160 wye, and a number of distribution system improvements were made at that time.

Some residential areas have new LED street lights, partially funded by a Clean Energy Resource Teams grant. Some people didn’t like the new lights at first, said Kruse – too bright!

The city has tightened up its sewer and water systems over the years, and a big step is coming in 2018—an $8.5 million street and sewer project. Funds have been approved and the engineering design study is underway. Some sewer pipes will be replaced; many others will be left in place but lined.

The improvements come with a price tag. But for small cities like Brownton, improved services promise to keep the city a good place to live now and for years to come.
Accountants and Consultants

CliftonLarsonAllen
St. Cloud/Brainderd
Doug Host
Mary Ready

Austin/Mankato
Craig Poppenhagen
Sarah Cramblit

Minneapolis
Dennis Hoogeveen
Chris Knopik

888-529-2648 | CLAconnect.com

Advocacy | Outsourcing | Audit and Tax

©2016 CliftonLarsonAllen LLP

Attorneys

Proudly representing municipal clients

McGrann Shea
CARNIVAL
STRAUBH & LAMB
CHARTERED

800 Nicollet Mall, Suite 2600
Minneapolis, MN 55402
(t) 612-339-2535 (f) 612-339-2386
www.mcgrannshea.com

Engineers and Engineering Firms

AES

Think Big. Go Beyond.
ADVANCED ENGINEERING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, INC.

www.2es.com

Energy Services

Energy Insight, Inc.

MATT HALEY
PRESIDENT

952-767-7464
www.EnergyInsightInc.com

7935 Stone Creek Drive, Suite 140
Chanhassen, MN 55317

Bolton-Menk

SIPO

Engineers

DGR Engineering

Trusted. Professional. Solutions.

DGR

ENGINEERING

Certified

Water / Wastewater

Electric Power

Civil / Survey

15213 Danbury Ave W
Rosemount, MN 55068
(952) 280-2306
www.davebergconsulting.com

David A. Berg, PE – Principal

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

dave@DavebergConsulting.com

‘Dedicated to providing personal service to consumer-owned utilities’

Electrical Equipment and Suppliers

Spiegel & McDiarmid LLP

1875 Eye Street, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20006
www.spiegelmcd.com

Phone: 202.879.4100
Fax: 202.393.2866
info@spiegelmcd.com

Electrical Services

Simplify YOUR life with a one-stop backup power supplier!

HM Cragg

critical power +

800.672.7244 • info@hmcragg.com • www.hmcragg.com

We are proud to be 100% Employee Owned!

HELP WANTED
Water/Wastewater Operator D

The City of Lake City Public Works Department is accept-
ing applications for full-time Water/Wastewater Class D Operator. Position responsi-
ble for maintenance of sewer collection and treatment sys-
tem, water treatment and distribution system, meters and associated equipment. Minimum qualifications in-
clude high school diploma or equivalent. Must have or obtain Class D Waste Water Treatment Operator’s Certifi-
cate, Class D Water Operator’s Certificate and Class B CDL with air brake endorse-
ment. Minimum starting wage $20.31 per hour DOE.

City application and job de-
scription available at www.
ci.lake-city.mn.us Position questions can be submitted to Public Works Director Scott Jensen at sjensen@ci.lake-
city.mn.us or 651.345.6850.

Letter of interest, resume and city application must be sub-
tmitted to – City Clerk Kari Schreck, 205 W. Center St., Lake City, MN 55041 or to kschreck@ci.lake-city.mn.us by 4:30 p.m., March 31, 2017.

Water/Wastewater Operator

The City of Mountain Iron has an immediate opening for one (1) full-time Water and Waste Water Operator position in the Public Works Department. This position reports to the Lead Water and Waste Water Operator. Minimum qualifications include three (3) years of expe-
rience, Class C Water license, Class C Waste Water license and valid class B commercial driver’s license. Starting sal-
ary is $22.29 per hour. Appli-
cations will be accepted until 4:00 p.m., Friday, March 31, 2017. Send applications, re-
sume and other completed materials to Craig J. Wainio, City Administrator, City of Mountain Iron, 8586 Enter-
prise Drive South, Mountain Iron, MN 55768.

For a complete and up-to-date listing, including For Sale items, see the News / Classi-
sifieds section at the MMUA website, www.mmua.org
The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission Feb. 9 issued a preliminary draft site permit for the Blazing Star Wind Farm, for the up to 200 Megawatt Blazing Star Wind Project in Lincoln County.

EDF Renewable Energy of Minneapolis said recently it hoped to start building the Red Pine Wind Project near Ivanhoe by the end of June. The proposed project would occupy approximately 45,000 acres in Lincoln County.

A group of organizations under the moniker of “Competitive Clean Energy Advocates” have requested an expedited hearing before the MPUC in regards to a complaint filed by Red Lake Falls Community Hybrid LLC. The complaint said the situation at issue “spotlights larger issues around how to appropriately value distributed wholesale renewable projects,” and highlights the importance of Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act (PURPA) obligations.

Otter Tail Power said the company should not be required to conduct a bidding process to obtain 200 megawatts (MW) of wind and 30 MW of solar by 2012 and the complaint should be dismissed. The company said the rates, terms and conditions proposed by the developer would impose unnecessary and excessive PURPA-related costs on ratepayers.

The MPUC Feb. 23 granted a partial exemption from pipeline route selection procedures and issued a route permit to Northern States Power Company d/b/a Xcel Energy for the Black Dog Natural Gas Pipeline Project in Burnsville. The 16-inch, 650-psig pipeline will be roughly two miles long and will pass through parks along the Minnesota River bottoms, to the Black Dog electric generating station. The pipeline is part of the conversion of the plant from coal to natural gas.

Minnesota Power said Feb. 28 it will not move to cut its rate increase request by 29 percent, due to an increase in energy demand. The utility reduced its proposed increase from $44 million to $39 million, resulting in an average rate increase of 6.1 percent.

Arizona, resulting in an average annual cost shift of about $63 million from customers.

Arizona agreement includes time-of-use rates; addresses cost shift involving rooftop solar

from AIPA

Arizona Public Service (APS), has reached a rate case settlement agreement that makes key changes to the utility’s rate structure, including new time-of-use rates and rates for distributed solar. APS contends that its current rate structure is leading to an annual cost shift of about $63 million from customers with rooftop solar to the rest of the utility’s customer base.

If approved by regulators, the agreement lets existing solar customers keep the rates they have for 20 years. New solar customers would receive a credit starting at 12.9 cents per kilowatt-hour for their excess generation. Also, new solar customers could choose from updated rate options that include a time-of-use rate plan that incorporates a grid access charge, or a demand-based rate plan without a grid access charge. APS originally proposed requiring all rooftop solar customers to have a demand charge in the rates, which was opposed by solar advocates.

The proposal also includes several time-of-use options, which APS believes will allow the utility to defer adding resources needed during periods of high energy use. Starting in May 2018, all new APS customers would be given a default time-of-use rate.

The agreement includes restrictions on building power plants. The ban doesn’t include distributed generation or energy storage under 50 megawatts, renewables or uprates and repowerings of existing power plants. A typical residential customer would see a 4.5 percent, or $6 a month, bill increase if state regulators approve the agreement.

“The future of Arizona’s solar industry was very much on the line in this case and while this settlement doesn’t help Arizona solar grow, it allows solar to remain a viable option for some Arizonans,” said Brandon Cheshire, president of the Board of Arizona Solar Energy Industries Association.

Under a separate agreement APS and the solar industry agreed not to undermine the pact via ballot initiatives, through the Arizona Legislature or at the ACC.

The agreement builds on a December state regulatory decision to end net metering for distributed generation and replace it with “export credits” that will provide reduced payments for excess generation.
METER SCHOOL

popular still, but adjusts with times

Few components in the electric distribution system infrastructure have undergone as many changes in recent years as meters. Formerly a simple electro-mechanical device, meters are now often a solid-state, digital device.

In whatever form, meters are crucial as the utility’s ‘cash register,’ tracking the amount of kilowatt-hours consumed. They also increasingly provide a variety of other data, including the maximum amount of electrical energy consumed at a given time (demand), time of use and more.

The importance of accurate meeting and metering data may explain, in part, the popularity of the annual MMUA Meter School, which was most recently held Feb. 15-17 at the Training Center in Marshall. The conference was preceded by a Pre-Conference on Basic Metering, held Feb. 14-15.

The Basic/Intermediate Class dealt primarily with “single phase” (two-wire Alternating Current) meters, and other aspects of the electrical system related to this type of meter.

The Advanced Class was largely self-directed and offered students the opportunity to work with and ‘pick the brains’ of the expert instructors on items of particular interest. Self-corrected exams helped focus training needs and hands-on training was held on more than 15 work stations. Trouble-shooting was a favorite activity during this phase of the training.

In terms of attendance, it was our largest Meter School ever. Forty people from 22 Minnesota municipal electric utilities, four from two South Dakota municipals and a strong contingent from eight electric cooperatives attended the Meter School, along with MMUA staff and instructors. Thirty-one people participated in the Basic Metering Pre-conference.

Scott Murfield brought his 30 years of experience and desire to teach to the school. Here he worked with Xavier Holden (center) and John Wick of North St. Paul.

Lenny McCall of Chapman Metering, left, discussed solid state metering with Eric Landmark (center) and Mitch Christensen of Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative.

Larry Chapman, center, worked with students on the latest in metering technology. Chapman, an acknowledged expert in the field, has taught at the school for a decade.

Mark Parsons of Chapman metering worked at troubleshooting with Chad Davidson and Scott Nyberg of Moose Lake (left to right).

Upcoming MMUA Events

PCB Management & Recordkeeping
April 10-11, Ziegler Power Systems, Shakopee

MMUA and Minnesota Rural Electric Association are pleased to offer this program, one of the few available that specifically focuses on managing PCBs and PCB contaminated items. Instructor is Mark Pennell, founder and President of Regulatory Compliance Services, Inc. (RCS), a PCB management consulting firm based in Springfield, Missouri. Registration deadline is March 24.

Substation School
April 11-13, Ziegler Power Systems, Shakopee

Come and learn more about sub-stations from top-notch presenters. Topics to include:

- Fundamentals of Equipment & Control Systems
- Inspections and Maintenance Testing: How, When and Why
- Tour of Ziegler’s Power Distribution Equipment
- Substation Transformer Addition
- Tour - Shakopee Public Utilities Substation
- The ‘Ins and Outs’ of Substations.

Deadline to register is March 24.

Generation School
April 18-20, Glencoe City Center and Glencoe Light & Power

MMUA is pleased to partner with American Public Power Association (APPA) on the 2017 Generation School. This School can benefit well-seasoned operators, as well as those just starting in the generation field. Hands-on plant training will take place at Glencoe Light & Power where participants will engage in a range of activities — from basic operation to technical maintenance. Among our instructors will be Steve Payne on Cooper engines and Kyle McLenachen of Fairbanks Morse. Registration deadline is March 24.

Underground School
May 16-19, MMUA Training Center, Marshall

MMUA is pleased to partner with the Minnesota Rural Electric Association and the American Public Power Association (APPA) on this outstanding school. The school will feature a variety of hands-on training in the field, as well as an Advanced Lineworker Class focusing on underground distribution design. Hands-on topics include use of infrared technology, locating, and of course construction, maintenance, repair and troubleshooting. A breakout session will cover splicing and terminations, and general sessions will cover ‘Competent Person’ training and an introduction to Fault Indicators.

Additional information can be found at www.mmua.org

Go to Events/Calendar and the date for each event.

MMUA Training Center Coordinator/JTS Instructor Cody Raveling welcomed students to the school.