MMUA Nominations and Awards Committee seeks individual, system recommendations

MMUA, MREA call for ‘fair path forward’ on net metering reform

RS Fiber project moves forward
Project financing falls into place following public meetings

MMUA Training Center in Marshall. For more on the school, see page 2.

Voice of experience
Former Willmar Municipal Utilities Line Department Supervisor Rich Maxfield, right, shared from his vast storehouse of knowledge and experience with a group of students May 7 at the MMUA/APP A/MREA Underground School. The school was held at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. For more on the school, see the back page.
The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission April 30 approved the sale of Interstate Power and Light Company’s electric utility assets and customers in Minnesota to the Southern Minnesota Energy Cooperative (SMEC), a group of 12 electric co-ops. Despite voicing several concerns, the Commission adopted the transaction, as proposed by SMEC, which will buy power from IPL at wholesale for a period of 30 years.

The Minnesota Office of Attorney General (OAG) and the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce recommended the sale be approved with significant conditions. The OAO argued that the transaction would not benefit ratepayers. It said the record demonstrates that if any benefit exists, it is in IPL’s favor due to guaranteed recovery of an acquisition premium and the Wholesale Power Agreement’s increased return on equity. Claims that IPL ratepayers would benefit were based on multiple hypothetical rates increases, said the OAG. It recommended conditions to any sale, including IPT forego the gain on sale of its distribution assets.

The OAG’s conditions would “imperil” the transaction, said IPL-SMEC. They argued that the sale does not require a showing of affirmative benefits, and that state law does not require that a proposed merger benefit ratepayers or the public or promote the public interest.

The Chamber said there was a lack of prudence review, no certainty of cost impacts and that near-term projected rate increases disproportionately would affect commercial and industrial customers. It recommended that, if the sale were approved, conditions be attached, including denial of the distribution asset acquisition premium of $16.9 million. The Chamber also sought a stipulation that the return on equity for generation infrastructure be set at 9.8 percent (less than the return on equity granted by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission). The Chamber said the deal hadn’t been analyzed from the IPL ratepayers’ perspective and that the bulk of benefits will go to SMEC, while former IPL ratepayers would eventually see significant rate increases.

The Department of Energy Resources (DER) had initially asked for a contested case hearing to study the proposed transaction, but later supported the sale, arguing that the transaction’s benefits are greater than its costs. DER said it was convinced of the transaction’s benefits for customers due to cooperative financial advantages, particularly low-cost federal financing and exemption from federal and state income taxes.

Harold P. LeVander, representing SMEC, said separate rates were “very likely” for rural and city customers, due to different revenue requirements based on cost of service studies. He noted the deal was the result of negotiation. SMEC hired a consultant who brought back statistics and information on other sales around the nation. It was “a fair value,” he said.

Commissioner John Tuma made the motion to recommend the sale, in part, he said, because the Legislature has stipulated that cooperative utilities are effectively regulated at the local level. Commissioner Nancy Lange said the sale was a “good deal for cooperatives,” but that the Commission’s primary consideration was to protect IPL ratepayers.

Commission Chair Beverly Jones-Heydinger said aspects of the deal were troubling, but the cooperatives have assured the MPUC that they will act in good faith and treat all members fairly, she said, and the Legislature did direct the regulators to accept cooperative financial regulations. She said she would support the sale, in part, on the representations of the petitioners.

MPUC approves sales of IPL Minnesota electric assets to cooperative group
Tax exemption of municipal bonds is critical to reliable, affordable electricity

As tax reform gets a closer look on Capitol Hill, it is vital that federal lawmakers not alter or eliminate the current tax exemption for municipal bonds, given the significant role that these bonds play in allowing public power and other entities to make critical infrastructure investments. The American Public Power Association (APPA) and two other public power groups said in April 2015:

Interest on government-owned enterprise bonds has been exempt from federal income tax, and Congress should preserve that tradition as it considers various tax reforms, APPA said in April 15 comments to the Senate Finance Committee.

APPA joined the Large Public Power Council and the Transmission Access Policy Study Group in submitting the comments to two tax working groups created by the Senate committee early this year.

The groups urged the Senate Finance Committee to consider carefully the effect of any tax reforms on the ability of state and local government entities, including public power utilities, to finance critical infrastructure investments for economic growth and citizens' well-being. “Changes to the current law treatment of tax-exempt bonds will increase the price that public power customers pay for electricity, especially affecting small businesses and low- and fixed-income households, and reduce the ability to fund necessary public power infrastructure improvements,” the groups said in the letter.

The comments emphasized the importance of municipal bonds for infrastructure investments by public power utilities, and suggested several ways that policymakers could improve the tax code by simplifying municipal bond private use and arbitrage rules.

APPA also joined with the Municipal Bonds for America Coalition in separate April 15 comments to the tax working groups that warned against repealing or altering the tax exemption for municipal bonds.

February 16, 2016 budget proposal recently submitted to Congress proposed capping the tax deduction for municipal bonds at 28 percent. “We are writing to express serious concerns regarding proposals to eliminate or cap the deduction on tax-exempt municipal bonds in the President’s Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Proposal,” the letter states.

The House members noted that over the last decade, municipal bonds “have funded more than $1.9 trillion worth of infrastructure construction. This financing went to the construction of schools, hospitals, airports, affordable housing, water and sewer facilities, public power utilities, roads and public transit. In 2013 alone, more than 11,000 tax-exempt bonds financed more than $330 billion in infrastructure spending.”

APPA President and CEO Sue Kelly said in a March 30 letter to the Treasury Department that APPA supports the Obama Administration’s proposals to simplify federal tax laws relating to municipal bonds. Further changes could be made to make it easier for public power utilities to make the investments necessary to adjust to a rapidly changing energy sector, Kelly said.

As part of President Obama’s budget submission to Congress, the Treasury Department has proposed to repeal the 5 percent “disproportionate use rule,” which is used to determine whether a bond is being issued for governmental or private purposes or for “private use.” Another rule, known as the 10 percent rule, also is used to determine whether a bond is for government or private purposes.

APPA agrees with the Treasury that the “the 10 percent private use limit generally represents a sufficient and workable threshold for governmental bond status” and recommends that the 5 percent rule be repealed, Kelly wrote.

Kelly also suggested repealing two additional private-use rules, the $15 million per project limit for electric power related output projects, and a rule effectively limiting municipal issuers’ ability to finance other public-private partnerships if the amount of “private use” financed by the issuer’s bonds exceeds $15 million. Both provisions needlessly complicate the federal tax code, she said.

Maintaining the current federal tax exclusion for interest paid on municipal bonds is one of the APPA’s top legislative priorities.

Letter: continued from front page

we are advocating doesn’t do away with net metering but allows consumer-owned utilities to collect the actual cost to serve distributed generators. This additional fee isn’t arbitrary or punitive but tied to the true cost to maintain the grid.

We aren’t asking to end net metering, and will continue to support distributed generators with the technical know-how and technology needed for their systems to operate with the electric grid. However, we believe this reform is fair and needed to ensure that costs don't continue to shift from distributed generators to the rest of our customers.

Darrick Moe
President & CEO
Minnesota Rural Electric Association

Jack Kegel
Executive Director
Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association

May 2015 The Resource/3
Editor’s note: The following is the winning essay in the 2015 MMUA Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award contest. It was written by Sara Antony of Marshall.

My locally owned municipal utility has been serving the community of Marshall for more than 120 years and currently serves over 6,500 customers. Marshall Municipal Utilities is dedicated to providing our community with clean, safe, reliable electric and water services, which is essential to our way of life. Each Municipal Utility is unique but they all share a common goal of serving their community.

Municipal utilities are beneficial for the project because they provide necessary services for their communities at a low cost. They represent the American spirit and the heart of our communities. They are comprised of local people working to meet local needs. Community member’s work together to provide a quality of service that is possible alone. Municipal utilities are also tailored to best meet the needs of individual communities, unlike large investor owned utilities that are spread over a large distance. This makes for a much more impactful, responsive, productive, and efficient utility. Locally owned municipal utilities are governed by their city council or appointed utility commission, which allows the control to remain local. Utilities invite public input and try to remain as open and democratic as possible because their decisions directly affect the local community.

Municipal Utilities tend to serve smaller towns, so they have the benefit of getting to know their customers personally. The employees enjoy their jobs because they are able to serve their friends and family, and provide for the next generation. Another unique benefit that comes from municipal utilities being based locally is that the employees live within the community, allowing them to respond to emergencies quickly. Municipal Utilities also have mutual aid agreements, so when one community experiences a disaster, they can count on utilities from neighboring areas to provide materials, equipment, and assistance to restore services. Another valuable resource to municipal utilities is their statewide utility association. The Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association represents the interest of utilities, advocates for their efforts, and provides safety and training services.

Not only are municipal utilities dedicated to providing individualized and trustworthy electric, water, or gas services, they work to protect our environment. They support the efficient use of resources and sustainable energy. Specifically, my utility educates customers, purchases power from environmentally friendly generation sources, and provides many conservation programs such as rebates for energy efficient lighting, heating and cooling, water heating, and appliances. They also offer a custom efficiency program for unique energy efficiency projects.

Municipal utilities also work hard to achieve a diverse mix of energy resources. My locally-owned utility provides a balanced energy resource mix that consists of both renewable and non-renewable energy sources. They carefully weigh out the challenges of keeping rates affordable and protecting our environment, by considering all energy resources for current and future needs.

Another way Municipal Utilities benefit all of us, is from the contributions they make to the community. Locally Owned Municipal Utilities are non-profit and return money to the city general fund each year. This effectively lowers property taxes and benefits local community programs. Municipal utilities also contribute to the community by providing materials and equipment for community projects, providing discounted services, volunteering time, and more. Everything they do is to benefit the community, not for profit. Also by keeping their prices low, they create a competitive edge for their customers and keep other electric and water providers accountable and fair in their pricing. Municipal Utilities stimulate local economies by keeping profits, jobs, and business local, which benefits everyone. I am incredibly grateful to be served by our locally owned municipal utility and have seen firsthand the benefits and values they bring to my community.

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Top four winners selected in MMUA Bovitz Memorial Scholarship contest

The MMUA Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award winners were selected May 5. The top four essays in the 17th annual contest were written by:

• First Place: Sara Antony, Marshall
• Second Place: Eric Branch, Alexandria
• Third Place: Kaylee Schultz, Moorhead
• Fourth Place: Ellie Ekblad, Rochester

“The voting was very close for the top four finishers,” said Steve Downey, MMUA associate executive director. “Sara Antony’s essay won on the strength of her first-place vote.”

The first place scholarship carries an award of $2,000, second place $1,500, third place $1,000 and fourth place $500.

The contest was created as a public relations tool to increase the awareness of public power and create goodwill in the community for the local municipally-owned utility. Essay theme was “Municipal Utilities: Good for All of Us.”

The essays were initially submitted to the governing body of the local utility. Winners of the local contests were then entered into the statewide contest. Judges included six MMUA members and representatives and one MMUA staff member. The judges ranked their top four essays, point values were assigned and winners selected.

The award is named in honor of the late Tom Bovitz, a firm believer in the value of education, who was a former general manager of Hibbing Public Utilities and MMUA president. MMUA, headquartered in Plymouth, represents the interests of the state’s 125 municipally-owned electric and 33 municipally-owned gas utilities.

MMUA thanks all its members who forwarded contest materials, and 33 municipally-owned electric utilities, and three MMUA staff members to distribute the statewide contest.

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Top four winner essay contest winner lauds local utility dedicated to providing essential services
cil did its part at a special meeting the following evening, March 17. The council approved a property tax abatement related to Phase 1 of the project, and the sale of $8,070,000 in RS Fiber Optic project bonds, including $1,322,244 in bonds for the city of Winthrop’s share of the project. The vote followed a 45-minute public hearing on the fiber optic project.

The Winthrop action was significant, as the project would not have moved forward in its current form unless the council analyzed the bond issue and acted on it, said Kennedy & Graven attorney Jenny Boulton.

She said the Winthrop City Council has also agreed to be the sole issuer of the bonds. Agreements with the other eight city councils means that Winthrop will also be responsible for their share of bond payments if the cooperative is unable to make the payments.

Boulton said a reserve fund and a shortfall agreement would allow each city to help cover bond payments.

Agreements with the other cooperative will operate a fiber optic network for most of Sibley County and portions of Republican, Nicolle, and McLeod Counties. RS Fiber has entered into a long-term management contract with Hiawatha Broadband Communications (HBC) of Winona. HBC will oversee the design, development and operation of the network, as well as day-to-day management duties.

HBC President/CEO Dan Pecarina said the project could begin in May or June with a significant amount of the network powered up with internet and phone fiber optic cable service in cities and wireless service in townships by the end of 2015.

“We plan to have data center and customer care buildings open in Winthrop and Gaylord by the end of three months,” Pecarina said. “We’ll have a significant amount of services available in the network that are not now offered.”

Pecarina said local offices and local people will offer around the clock technical support and mobile offices could be brought in for additional support. “It’s about services, education, economic development, farming and healthcare, to mention a few attributes this can add,” he explained.

RS Fiber Cooperative’s members will own 100 percent of the fiber optic network, will obtain 75 percent of the financing through private sources, and will generate 100 percent of the revenues to repay the $13.7 million loan that will be provided by the restructured Joint Powers Board. Initial project costs were originally estimated at $75,000 in matching grants and federal/state appropriations.

The cooperative is also a member of the US Ignite initiative. US Ignite helps member communities develop applications for gigabit enabled fiber networks in the areas of public safety, advanced manufacturing, energy, health care and education and workforce.

Fiber cited in Gaylord medical school plan

The Gaylord city council voted unanimously April 15 to approve a brand new medical school proposed for Gaylord by the Danza Group.

The council voted to allow the medical school to occupy the current Sibley East elementary and junior high school, after it is relocated to a new elementary building in Gaylord.

The proposed medical school is expected to have an enrollment of 600 students. According to Philip Keithahn, the Chairman & CEO of ProGrow Bank, “Mr. Danza has also been impressed with Gaylord’s commitment to invest in RS Fiber Cooperative’s public-private partnership to deliver an affordable fiber-optic broadband network to 10 cities and 17 townships across four counties in south central Minnesota. Medical education and health care today is increasingly dependent on high-speed internet access and Mr. Danza is excited about partnering with RS Fiber and its customers. Mr. Danza truly believes that “we all benefit when we work together.”
The city of Owatonna Planning Commission platted a lot on Bridge Street West to clear the way for a sale to the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA). The agency plans to build a 39-megawatt power plant on the site, at an estimated cost of $44 million. The power will be supplied by generators and reciprocating internal combustion engines, similar to those currently owned by SMMPA at the Fairmont Energy Station.

The Hibbing Public Utility Commission has approved hiring Scott Hautala to become its next general manager. Hautala, who has been working as senior project manager at Lakehead Constructors, Inc., in Mountain Iron, will start as assistant general manager on May 4. Former General Manager Gary Myers had expressed his desire to retire from the utility, and will help Hautala get familiar with the utility’s combined heat and power plant, and electric, natural gas, steam and water services.

Hautala is familiar with utilities and the Iron Range. He worked as operations manager of Minne- sota Power’s Boxwell Unit 3 power plant in Cohasset and worked as a senior environmental engineer at Hibbing Taconite from 1991 to 2001.

Tom Koeritz was also the city’s delegate to MMA. Koeritz also handled a number of other duties for Fairmont, including overseeing the Conservation Improvement Program.

Lake Crystal Municipal Utility hosted an open House April 22 from 4-7 p.m., to provide information on how using electric load management can help control electric rates, by reducing the utility’s collective peak load. The utility is implement- ing the program to reduce its peak and save custom- ers money. Customers, who agree to participate for two years, can sign up for the program at no charge. Also in Lake Crystal, for- mer long-time Le Sueur city administrator Rick Almich is serving as city administrator on an interim basis, while a search is underway for a new city admin- istrator.

Madelia Municipal Light and Power is com- pleting its second phase of street lighting upgrades. The utility received an energy efficiency grant from its power supplier, Heartland Consumers Power District, for the upgrade. The utility is replacing 60 existing high pressure sodium fixtures with light emitting diode (LED) fixtures. The change is estimated to save over 36,000 kilowatt hours a year, or about $3,600, and to pay for itself in just over four years.

The utility recently in- stalled LED lights with motion detectors in its power plant and plans similar up- grades in other facilities.

Austin Utilities broke ground for its new headquar- ters building Tuesday, April 14. A brief ceremony was held at the site, in the city’s NE Industrial Park. The pro- gram included board, staff, architect and construction manager. Refreshments were served.

Moose Lake Water and Light along with Great River Energy crews April 2 in- stalled street lighting pole. The utility will be able to provide a convenient place for osprey to nest when they return to the area for the summer. Nesting on power lines can cause damage and injury. An osprey nest was removed from a transmission pole this winter, and the platform gives the bird a convenient place to nest and protects the pole.

The birds are protected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

A transformer failure caused a system-wide out- age in Spring Valley April 9. In less than half an hour, Spring Valley Public Utilities crews had local generators on-line, restoring service. A new transformer was located and shipped the next day. Four days later, the trans- former was being set into place and final connections were completed the next day. Insurance is expected to cover much of the costs involved.

The Thief River Falls city council April 7 approved a 3.5 percent electric rate increase. The main factor in the increase is rising wholesale power costs.

The city of Windom Mu- nicipal Utility is replacing its 2,424 electric and 2,017 water meters this year. The new meters will transmit a signal that will be read by a mobile remote receiver. Cost of the electric meter system is $125,000 and the water meter system was purchased for $546,232.
Awards: continued from front page

Committee for their consideration. Awards will be presented at the MMUA Annual Summer Conference Aug. 17-19 at Breezy Point.

MMUA Honorary Lifetime Membership

This prestigious award symbolizes a long professional life dedicated not only to the advancement of municipal utilities locally, but also for the betterment of our industry on a statewide basis.

Eligibility: Individuals who have concluded or are about to conclude a long and distinguished career in the municipal utility industry.

Criteria: Nominees should have:
• a long professional life dedicated to the achievement of excellence in the municipal utility industry;
• a strong record of involvement in MMUA and efforts on behalf of the members of the industry on a statewide basis.

Public Service Award

This award is given to individuals who have performed outstanding service in support of the association and its goals.

Eligibility: Individuals who demonstrate leadership on various issues.

Criteria: Performance of outstanding service in support of the association or its goals.

System Innovation Award

This award is given to a utility that has demonstrated leadership and innovation in customer service, energy efficiency or renewables, technology, or other areas.

Eligibility: The utility must be an MMUA regular member system.

Criteria: Nominees should have achievement or sustained performance that:
• was widely recognized in the public power field;
• served to enhance public power’s prestige;
• improved service to their communities;
• represented an earnest, coordinated effort on the part of the system.

Nomination forms for each award are available in the ‘About’ section of the MMUA website. Forms may also be sent via fax to 763-551-0439, or mail to 3025 Harbor Lane N., Suite 400 Plymouth, MN 55447.

Three MMUA board members up for re-election

The MMUA Nominations and Awards Committee is accepting nominations for the MMUA board of directors. Board members traditionally serve two three-year terms. Three current board members are up for re-election for a second three-year term.

Current board members who will be up for re-election include: Elk River Municipal Utilities General Manager Troy Adams, Hawley Public Utilities Superintendent Kevin Berg, and City of Winthrop EDA Director Mark Erickson.

In selecting board nominees, the MMUA Nominations and Awards Committee will consider the following: personal integrity, independence and knowledge of the industry, providing a broad geographic balance on the Board representing all sizes and types of utility operations; a commitment to the promotion of municipal ownership of utilities; willingness to commit the time and energy necessary to the organization and the office; and a demonstration of interest in the affairs of the members and the Association through active participation and in furtherance of the goals and purposes of the Association.

Nominees must be designated representatives of member municipalities to be eligible for election. The Nominating Committee will not discriminate against age, race, sex, sexual preference or national origin in the nominating process.

Nomination forms are available in the ‘About’ section of the MMUA website. If you have questions, you may contact Troy Adams, MMUA President-Elect and Nominations and Awards Committee chairperson, at 763-441-2020. Nominations will be accepted through July 24, 2015.

Help sought for rodeo site preparation

MMUA and Shakopee Public Utilities have been in conversation with Canterbury Park in regards to construction of the linefield to be used for the 2016 APPA Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo. The preferred window for construction at this point is Oct. 12-16. It is a big job and along with labor there is an estimated need for 10 digger derrick and 10 bucket trucks (there will be approximately 125 poles set).

Once the dates are locked in, members can sign-up on the MMUA website. Interested people can also contact Mike Willett, MMUA Director of Training and Safety. The competition will be held April 2, 2016. MMUA and Shakopee Public Utilities are acting as hosts.

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Minnesotans bringing local flavor to APPA National Convention in Minneapolis

A once in a lifetime opportunity is coming up for Minnesotans municipal utility people, as the American Public Power Association (APPA) holds its annual meeting Tuesday, June 5-10, at the Minneapolis Convention Center. The National Conference helps utility leaders connect with partners and peers while learning about the complex issues facing public power utilities. The program features leading political, economic, business and public policy thinkers addressing the critical issues shaping our industry’s future.

MMUA members and staff will be well represented, and not just in the audience. APPA Executive Director Jack Kegel is chair of the Local Arrangements Committee and is working closely with APPA staff on a variety of details, including suggesting speakers for sessions, assembling the gift bag, and coordinating volunteers to work at the welcome desk.

Minnesotans speaking at the conference include MMUA director of engineering and policy analysis Bob Jagusch, Troy Adams of Elk River, Guy Swenson of Owatonna, John Crooks of Shakopee and MMUA associate member Dave Berg.

For program and registration information, see the APPA website.

Theresa Neddermeyer joins MMUA as newest administrative assistant

MMUA has hired Theresa Neddermeyer as an administrative assistant. Neddermeyer has a varied experience, including most notably with the Minnesota Turkey Growers Association/Brule and Egg Association of Minnesota, where she worked from 2002-2012 as promotions and member services coordinator.

At that Buffalo-based association, Neddermeyer developed membership campaigns and planned and coordinated activity for two state fair booths. She also organized and supervised association-owned property, and maintained membership databases. Neddermeyer prepared sales/revenue and expenditure spreadsheets and reported monthly to the board of directors.

Concurrently with that work, Neddermeyer served as exhibits manager for the Midwest Poultry Federation, where she coordinated all aspects of a regional industry trade show with 200 exhibiting companies. During her tenure of 2006-2012 trade show revenue increased annually.

Neddermeyer left the Turkey Growers Association to work as director of policies for Forsman Farms of Cokato. She authored, implemented, and reviewed operational policies. She also conducted monthly internal audits, prepared and submitted compliance reports, prepared and conducted training and assessed compliance with quality and safety regulations.

Neddermeyer has previous experience as a customer support representative and then as a marketing product manager for a Plymouth medical device company. She is a graduate of Litchfield High School and the College of St. Benedict. The Buffalo resident also volunteers for several church and community groups.

Neddermeyer replaces Susan Coe, who has retired.
The Itasca County Board of Commissioners, sitting in mid-April as the Itasca Regional Rail Authority, heard an update on a two-year project dubbed the Range Rail Initiative. Plan backers have met with Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) officials on a plan to extend an existing rail line west approximately 17 miles, giving industries in Grand Rapids and Cohasset access to a second rail line. Estimates call for shipping cost reduction of 20 to 25 percent for industrial customers.

The city of Grand Rapids and the county partnered to fund a feasibility study last year. An estimated $5 million is needed to move the preliminary engineering and permitting forward. According to published reports, a grant request will be submitted to the IRRRB in May.

The Clean Energy subsidiary of ALLETE Inc. (the parent company of Minnesota Power) has acquired a 97.5 megawatt (MW) wind generation facility near Lake Benton for $47.5 million. The company now owns 437 megawatts of recently-purchased renewable energy facilities.

**Bits & Pieces**

**Strong growth in the U.S. wind energy industry accelerated during the first quarter of 2015, with a near-record 13,600 MW of generating capacity under construction across 100 projects in 23 states, according to the American Wind Energy Association. The state with the most under construction is Texas, followed by Oklahoma, Kansas, New Mexico and North Dakota. More than half of the 750 MW of wind power contracted in the first quarter of 2015 was by four companies: Dow Chemical, Walmart, Kaiser Permanente and Google Energy.**

Xcel Energy April 28 filed regulatory documents that, if approved, would enforce size limits on solar projects. Proposals by large corporate entities to obtain all their electrical needs from solar projects is quite different than what was envisioned when Minnesota adopted community solar ‘garden’ legislation, said Xcel.

**The company is resisting developments that would cluster up to 40 adjacent solar developments on single sites. It wants to limit each solar ‘garden’ site to 1 MW, the maximum size set by law.**

District Cooling, an affiliate of District Energy in St. Paul, has reportedly signed a contract with Geronimo Energy and SunEdison to buy half its electric energy from new community solar installations. The agreements lock in projected energy savings per-iod from solar installations to be built in 2016.

**District Cooling cools more than 100 buildings in St. Paul’s downtown business district.**

Minnesota Energy Resources Corp., has purchased Alliant Energy’s natural gas distribution business in southeast Minnesota. The transaction was announced in 2013 and approved by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in 2014. The deal involves about 10,600 customers, the bulk of which are in Albert Lea.

**Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin, a Republican, on April 28 issued an executive order stating that Oklahoma will not file a state implementation plan with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulating carbon dioxide emissions produced by Oklahoma power plants. The move is in response to the EPA’s proposed Clean Power Plan, which was proposed by the agency in June 2014. It would require states to cut carbon dioxide emissions from existing power plants from 2005 levels by 30 percent by 2030. Under the EPA’s proposal, states would be required to submit state plans to the EPA in 2016 and to begin to meet interim goals in 2018.**

The executive order issued by Fallin said that the EPA has historically interpreted its authority under the Clean Air Act as only being able to regulate emissions from power plants. “However, the proposed regulations seek to go beyond the traditional authority and regulate all aspects of state energy systems,” the executive order said.

**The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) April 21 issued a report that raised a note of caution in regards to the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) ‘Clean Power Plan’ proposed changes to the nation’s system of energy generation, transmission, distribution and consumption.**

NERC emphasized the need for more time to develop and implement state compliance plans and for a reliability assurance mechanism, including time to plan, permit and build the infrastructure necessary to implement the Clean Power Plan.

**These and other concerns and recommendations in the NERC assessment line up with those of many states and industry stakeholders, including public power utilities, noted the American Public Power Association, which said, ‘The EPA cannot afford to curtly dismiss NERC’s assessment as untimely or incomplete. EPA must carefully review the recommendations and make appropriate adjustments to the Clean Power Plan proposal to preserve the reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible electric service consumers expect and deserve.’**

A study of 16 years of billing records from one South Carolina utility found that residential customers using automatic bill payments consumed 4 to 6 percent more power than those who did not. Commercial electricity customers used 8 percent more. And low-income residents who enrolled in budget billing to spread the cost of seasonal peak demand across the year used 7 percent more electricity.


President Barack Obama has signed the Energy Efficiency Improvement Act of 2015. The legislation includes a provision allowing the continued use of large, grid-enabled electric resistance water heaters. Without this measure, an energy efficiency standard developed by the Department of Energy that was scheduled to take effect in April would have prevented the manufacture of these water heaters.

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### HELP WANTED

**Journeyman or Apprentice Lineworker**

Brainerd Public Utilities is a municipal water, wastewater, electric and hydro utility seeking an experienced electric Journeyman or Apprentice Lineworker. Duties include performing construction and maintenance work on our de-energized and energized 110 volt to 34.5 KV underground and overhead distribution system. Minimum requirements for a Journeyman Lineworker: High School Diploma or equivalent; graduate of Electrical Lineworker program at a vocational or technical college; successfully completed a Lineworker Apprenticeship Program or equivalent Lineworker training courses; and must be a Journeyman Lineworker. Minimum requirements for an Apprentice Lineworker: High School Diploma or equivalent and a graduate of Electrical Lineworker program at a vocational or technical college. Prefer enrollment in a Lineworker Apprenticeship Program or equivalent Lineworker training courses. Special Requirements for both positions: Ability to obtain a Minnesota Class A commercial driver’s license with air brake endorsement within six months of hire. Prefer at least two years of employment with a utility or electrical contractor. This position is represented by IBEW Local No. 31 (Brainerd Public Utility) Union contract describing wage and benefits. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER.** Application packets are available at the Brainerd City Hall located at 501 Laurel Street; by calling 218.828.2307; or at www.bpu.org. Questions should be directed to HR Coordinator Kris Schubert. Complete application packet must be received by 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 26, 2015, at the Brainerd City Administrator’s Office, 501 Laurel Street, Brainerd, MN 56401.

**Electric Utility Director**

The City of Madison, South Dakota, a community with a population of 6,500, seeks an energetic, experienced and visionary public servant minded leader to serve as its first Electric Utility Director. Must possess a broad range of knowledge and experience of construction, operation, maintenance and sustainability of an electric generation, distribution and transmission system. Requires exceptional...
organizational and communication skills to direct and coordinate the work within the utility and engage, inform and correspond with the general public. Bachelor’s degree from an accredited university in electrical engineering or related field with three years’ experience in a comparable position or an equivalent combination of education and experience. Salary range $64,000 - $80,000 with an excellent benefit package.

Lineperson Position
BRIEF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: Under the direction of the Utility Foreman, performs skilled installation, construction, maintenance and repair of City electrical utility distribution and transmission systems; prepares and updates reports and records, including updating system information records; performs related work as assigned. This job includes power plant, water and wastewater Dept O&M duties. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS: High school diploma, graduated from a Power Lineman school, obtain a valid Minnesota State driver’s license with class “B” CDL endorsement upon hire date; obtain a First Aid Card, CPR Certification within three (3) months of hire date. DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS: 2-3 years on the job experience, ability to operate assigned equipment such as a bucket truck, boom truck, backhoe, and overhead and underground wire pulling equipment; knowledge of O.S.H.A. regulations and policies and procedures applicable to assigned tasks; ability to operate a computer system in a windows based environment with knowledge of Microsoft Office Software. Individuals interested in applying for this position should contact the Truman Public Utilities office 507-776-6501 for additional job description information and application forms or on our website www.trumannmn.us. Interested parties should submit an application, resume and 3 references by June 1, 2015, to: Truman Public Utilities, 202 West Ciro Street, Truman, MN 56088. EOE. For confidential consideration, send resume and letter of interest to City of Madison, Human Resources, 116 W Center St, Madison, SD 57042, 605-256-7600. Closes 05-20-15. EOE. For more information and application, send resume and letter of interest to: City of Jackson, Human Resources, 15 First Street, Jackson, MN 56088. EOE. For complete job description and application, send to City of Jackson, Human Resources, 15 First Street, Jackson, MN 56088. EOE. For more information and application, send resume and letter of interest to: City of Madison, Human Resources, 116 W Center St, Madison, SD 57042, 605-256-7600. Closes 05-20-15. EOE.

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Building Code Official/Zoning Administrator/Engineering Technician
The City of Breckenridge, population of 3559 located in West Central Minnesota, is searching for a Building Code Official/Zoning Administrator. The position is responsible for the inspection of properties for compliance with local and state regulations, codes, ordinances and laws. Will issue building permits and ensure they are accurately carried out. Will do some surveying, designing, and drafting of public improvement projects. Starting wage from $51,424 - $54,555 with a maximum salary of $61,403 negotiable upon qualifications and experience. Job description and supplemental questionnaire available upon request at lmauch@breckenridge.com or by phone at 218-643-1431. Position open until filled. EEO

For a complete and up-to-date listing, including For Sale and Wanted items, please go to the News section at www.mmua.org

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MMUA held its annual Underground School, in conjunction with the American Public Power Association and the Minnesota Rural Electric Association, May 5-8 at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall.

Approximately 85 people attended the school, including students, instructors and vendors. The school featured a variety of real-world training scenarios, put together by the MMUA Job Training and Safety Committee.

The school started Tuesday afternoon with a presentation by MMUA Regional Safety Coordinator Joe Schmidt titled Safety Rules & Regulations: Do We Really Need Them?

Vendors played a big role in making this school relevant. The first example of that came from Ron Cummings and Charlene Swenson of Border States Electric, who demonstrated Salisbury New Personal Protective Equipment Product/Care and Maintenance.


Wednesday and Thursday featured hands-on training breakout sessions at the Training Center. Jim Stephens of 3M and Bill Bumgarner, Austin Utilities, demonstrated Table Top Splicing and Terminations, assisted by volunteers who got their hands on the products being demonstrated.

Martin Meixell, Fairmont Public Utilities, along with Nick Hall and Sean McDowell, Rochester Public Utilities, demonstrated Proper Cable Identification, Testing and Grounding Methods. The students in this class trained in the use of standard operating procedures, switching procedures and proper personal protective equipment.

Kevin Kollos of Ditch Witch along with instructors Wade Williams of Fairmont Public Utilities, John Egan of Sauk Centre Public Utilities and staff from Marshall Municipal Utilities, led a class on Directional Boring with Conduit into a Substation Application. This class focused on directional boring multiple conduits from a newly installed cabinet to a riser.

The use of various pieces of equipment was a large part of the Underground System Maintenance and Repair class. James Monroe of New Ulm Public Utilities (pointing in the black shirt) was an instructor.

James Monroe of New Ulm Public Utilities, Brian Remme of Missouri River Energy Services/LaVerne, along with staff from the city of Pierre and Watertown, South Dakota municipal utilities led the Underground System Maintenance and Repair class. They shared their expertise to find and replace damaged or suspected problem equipment. A number of technical topics were covered.

At left: Sean McDowell of RPU (facing camera) talked with Joe Moore of Moorhead Public Service (yellow hard hat). Below: students and instructors gathered around a cabinet in preparation of a training exercise.

The school ended Friday morning following comments from presenters and participants and a presentation on Utility Damage Prevention by Mike Mendiola, Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety and Barb Cederberg, Gopher State One Call.

MMUA thanks all the instructors, vendors and member utilities that sent equipment and students for making this school a big success.

Kevin Kollos of Ditch Witch (brown coat) led a class on Directional Boring with Conduit into a Substation Application.