



Shakopee powers Substation School

Shakopee Public Utilities played a key role in MMUA's recent Substation School. Pictured here are Christian Fenstermacher, Greg Drent and Kent Sanders of Shakopee, from left to right, and Kevin Favero of Leidos. For more on MMUA schools, see pages 6-8 on this edition.

MERC cries foul over Xcel service to Vikings facility

Minnesota Energy Resources Corp., (MERC) April 19 filed, with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, a formal complaint and request for expedited action against Xcel Energy. MERC charged that Xcel was improperly serving a new natural gas customer in Eagan: the Minnesota Vikings new headquarters and training facility.

The Xcel service extension is duplicating its facilities, said MERC, and would be "a dangerous precedent" if allowed to stand. MERC requested the MPUC issue an order declaring that it has the exclusive right to provide natural gas to the Vikings' development.

Minnesota does not have natural gas distribution service territories, but MERC said it was "first in the field" and the Vikings' facility was in its "natural" territory.

MERC said its existing pipeline and other

Territory see page 8 please

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Winners picked in Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award essay contest

The MMUA Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award winners were selected Thursday, April 27. The top four essays in the 18th annual contest are:

- First Place: Brock Sycks, Rochester;
- Second Place: Hannah Hendrickson, Moorhead;
- Third Place: Courtney Wiese, Henning;
- Fourth Place: Mia Martinez, Detroit Lakes.

The first place scholarship carries an award of \$2,000, sec-

ond 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

Scholarship: see next page please

Utility's 'severe storm' response dramatizes essay contest winner

Editor's note: The winning essay in this year's MMUA scholarship contest was submitted by Brock Sycks, of Rochester. The following is the winning essay:

The lights flickered briefly before our entire house was engulfed in inky blackness.

Outside, the winds screamed as rain came down in sheets against the house, wave after wave, sounding

as if a madman were sandblasting the steel siding. The storm continued unabated as rain water quickly rose in the backyard until it reached the foundation of our house. Without power, the sump basket in our basement began filling with water. In just a matter of minutes, it would be overflowing into our newly

Essay: see next page please

Inside Stories

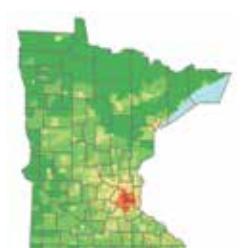
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Minnesota**
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Changing of the guard

Former city engineer takes over as general manager of Grand Rapids Public Utilities

It's the changing of the guard in Grand Rapids.

Julie Kennedy is the new Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission (GRPUC) general manager. She takes the reins from Tony Ward, who worked for GRPUC 41 years, the last 32 as general manager.

Kennedy is new to the utility, but no stranger to Grand Rapids.

Originally from Anoka, she earned her engineering degree from the University of Minnesota, before moving 'up north.' She worked as a consulting engineer in the Grand Rapids area, mostly on municipal wastewater projects.

At the engineering firm, she worked with Tom Pagel. He left engineering to become the Grand

Rapids city administrator.

Kennedy, meanwhile, branched out to teach Ethics at Itasca Community College, and went part time with the engineering firm. When the Grand Rapids city engineer's position opened, Kennedy was hired.

An outgoing person, she will be the first to tell you that relationships matter. She knows many of the players at the utility, the city, other cities in the area and various community and area organizations. In the transition from city to utility, she was praised for her public relations skills. She has a track record of working with government enti-

Grand Rapids: see back page please



Julie Kennedy is the new Grand Rapids Public Utilities general manager. She takes the reins from Tony Ward, who worked at the utility for over 40 years, 32 as general manager.

Essay:

continued from front page

finished basement, ruining my new gaming center and everything dad had worked so hard to build. Suddenly, without any indication, the darkness vanished and bright light instantly washed throughout the house as electricity was restored.

The sump pump popped back to life. Disaster had been averted!

Although I was only 9 years old at the time, I remember this event clearly as if it were yesterday. That August day in

2007 saw some of the heaviest and most concentrated rainfall ever to hit Rochester and Southeast Minnesota. A night of torrential rain left catastrophic flooding across the area with as much as 10 to 12 inches of rain falling in places. As a result, terrain was permanently altered, many families lost their homes and seven people lost their lives in the rapidly rising water. While flood victims and communities have moved on, no one who experienced it will forget the historic storm and the weeks and months that followed. It's in times of local disaster such as this that mu-

nicipal utilities really shine. Municipal utilities benefit people in many different ways, but perhaps the most significant advantage they offer is the aspect of local ownership and local control. Like community schools, parks and hospitals, public power utilities are local institutions working to meet local needs. Public power means homes and businesses run on electricity provided by a non-profit, locally owned utility. There are no stockholders to please or profits to make. Every dollar earned by a municipal utility goes back into the community to create jobs and support the local economy. It also means the community has more control, so the benefits produced by public power which include affordable energy costs, better service, and a focus on local goals are returned to the community. Utility rates are set locally, usually by citizen controlled boards in open meetings where community members can influence local energy policies. Local needs are considered when decisions are made

about rates and services, power generation and green alternatives. In this manner, public power revenues are reinvested in community programs and projects that benefit the common good. And because municipal utilities are located within the community, they are easily accessible and readily available to customers. If a customer has a complaint, they don't have to take it to a state agency or corporate headquarters in a distant city. The customer can simply discuss the problem locally with another member of the community and be assured the problem will be addressed.

Service, not profit, is a main tenet of the municipal utility. With electric, gas, water and sewer crews living in the community, citizens benefit from quick and effective local response to emergency situations and outages. It's precisely this local presence and mission of service that had such a profound impact and positive effect during those storms of August 2007. Rochester Public Utilities had been monitoring weather developments and began preparing their service crews and staff well in advance of the storm.

This preparation, along with the quick and decisive actions of their staff and service personnel, helped mitigate the storms disastrous effects. In the case of our house and many others in the affected area, power was quickly restored. In other areas not as fortunate, crews arrived quickly on the scene, working around the clock to minimize the outages. This amazing response and level of service during times of disaster is a benefit of municipal utilities that can only be fully appreciated once you experience such an event.

Municipal utilities are uniquely able to respond to the community's needs, build on the community's strengths, and reflect and advance the community's values. During times of natural disaster, their operating principles become an invaluable strength which cannot be understated. As someone who experienced the flooding of August 2007 in Southeast Minnesota, I will always be grateful to the people of our local municipal utility whose quick response helped avert greater disaster and restore our community to normalcy.

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Scholarship:

continued from front page

local contests were then entered in the statewide contest. Judges included five MMUA member utility representatives and one MMUA staff member. 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 thanks all its members who forwarded contest materials to their local schools and all contest entrants.

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Trump moves to roll back Clean Power Plan and review Waters of U.S. Rule

by Jeannine Anderson
American Public Power Association News Editor

With the stroke of a pen, President Donald Trump in recent months has moved to fulfill campaign promises to roll back the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan (CPP) final rule and revise the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) final rule.

But to a large degree, Trump's actions can be considered a starting point. The scrapping of either final rule is not likely to occur quickly or easily and the courts are expected to play a key role in determining the ultimate fates of the CPP and WOTUS final rules.

Trump in late February signed an executive order directing the EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to consider rescinding or revising their WOTUS rule.

A month later, the president signed an executive order directing the EPA to start the process of re-evaluating the EPA's rule, issued in final form in late 2015, to

Washington Report

reduce carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel-fired power plants.

The American Public Power Association (APPA) expressed support for Trump's call for a reexamination of the EPA's rules regulating greenhouse gas emissions from new and existing fossil fuel-fired power plants. The Association previously voiced concerns about the WOTUS rule when it was proposed in 2014.

WOTUS rule issued in final form in May 2015

The final WOTUS rule defines which streams, wetlands and other bodies of water are protected under the Clean Water Act. The rule was issued in final form in May 2015 and published in the *Federal Register* the following month. It went into effect in August 2015 but was put on hold by a court order soon thereafter.

In October 2015, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit issued a nationwide stay on the rule, pending the resolution of numerous challenges filed against it.

A 'destructive and horrible rule'

In signing the executive order, Trump said the directive was "paving the way for the elimination of this very destructive and horrible rule."

Under the Clean Water Act, the EPA can regulate navigable waters, the president said, but he said that the WOTUS rule "has truly run amok."

In that rule, he said, the EPA had decided "that 'navigable waters' could mean nearly every puddle or every ditch on a farmer's land, or any place else that they decide."

The executive order directs the EPA and the Corps of Engineers, in the event that they revise the rule, to interpret the term "navigable waters," as defined in the Clean Water Act, in a manner

consistent with the opinion of the late Justice Antonin Scalia in *Rapanos v. United States*. Scalia's interpretation would restrict federal jurisdiction.

Supreme Court continues to hear arguments on jurisdiction

Without providing an explanation, the Supreme Court on April 3 said that it would continue to hear arguments over the question of which court has jurisdiction to hear the merits of a case that involves a legal challenge to WOTUS.

Clean Power Plan executive order

Meanwhile, the CPP order calls for the heads of federal agencies to conduct an "immediate review" of all existing regulations, orders and policies "that potentially burden the development or use of domestically produced energy resources."

The order "will eliminate federal overreach," the president said in a speech at EPA headquarters in Wash-

ton, D.C., where he shared a stage with members of his cabinet and coal miners.

Among those attending the CPP executive order signing was Sue Kelly, president and CEO of the Association.

In a statement released shortly after the order was signed, the Association said it "supports President Trump's executive order calling for a reexamination of the Environmental Protection Agency's rules regulating greenhouse gas emissions from new and existing fossil fuel-fired power plants."

The Association noted that the public power sector "has previously voiced its legal objection to the rule for requiring utilities to fundamentally alter the way they generate electricity," adding, "In some cases, utilities would have been forced to abandon functional power plants while continuing to pay them off."

The Association also said the nation's transition to energy independence needs to be realized "in a manner that ensures a more diverse energy portfolio while still appropriately balancing affordability, reliability, and sustainability."

Public power utilities "will continue their substantial progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions through greater use of non- and low-emitting sources of electricity generation, such as hydro-power and other renewables, nuclear, and natural gas, and the implementation of affordable, common-sense energy efficiency and conservation programs," the Association concluded in the statement.

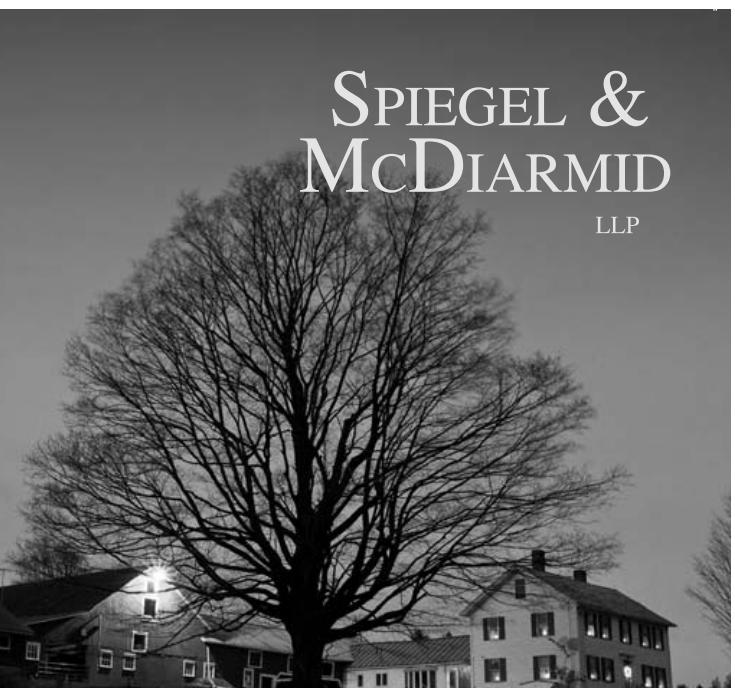
DOJ asks federal court to hold off on CPP litigation

Following fast on the heels of the CPP executive order, the Department of Justice asked a federal appeals court to put a hold on all litigation pending before it over the EPA rule.

In a March 28 document filed with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, Deputy Assistant Attorney General Bruce Gelber asked the court to "hold in abeyance," or suspend, its review of a prominent court case challenging the CPP. The EPA in the document also outlined its intent to review the CPP in the context of the EO's new policy.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt sent a letter to state governors reminding them that, at least for the near future, they do not need to take any action to comply with the plan.

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The Boulder, Colo., City Council April 17 voted to move forward with its effort to form a city-owned electric utility and take over electric service from Xcel Energy, rather than to pursue a settlement with Xcel.

The City Council had before it two settlement proposals from Xcel: to either create a partnership between the investor-owned utility and the city, or to let Boulder buy Xcel's system, for a price of up to \$900 million. The council rejected both settlement proposals and elected to go to hearing before the Colorado Public Utilities Commission, scheduled to start April 26. The Colorado city has been pursuing the public power option for several years.

A majority of electric customers in 10 Florida public power cities believe utilities should investigate solar power, but if solar power increases electric bills, only a small percentage of customers are willing to pay more, research sponsored by the Florida Municipal Power Agency reveals. While most residents (72 percent), want their community to investigate solar, one quarter of survey respondents have the impression that solar will

Bits & Pieces

lower electric rates. When customers understand that solar often adds costs to the electric bill, the percentage of customers who would willingly pay more for electricity decreased significantly, FMPA noted.

According to various sources, a 'third generation' nuclear plant recently started commercial operation in Voronezh, Russia. Meanwhile, about 10 percent of U.S. nuclear capacity will be retired soon and no new nuclear plant is being planned, mainly due to extremely high costs. Recently Westinghouse, one of the world's leading suppliers of nuclear

technology, filed for Chapter 11 protection.

The International Energy Agency released a report ranking the Japanese coal plants the most efficient, followed by the coal plants in China, the European Union and the U.S.

According to *Power* magazine, the total global wind power capacity was 487 gigawatts by the end of 2016. China has 34.7 percent of the global wind capacity and the U.S. has 3.0 percent.

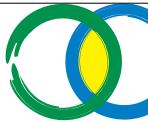
In its short-term energy outlook, released on April 11, the U.S. Energy Information Administration projected U.S. utility-scale electricity generation from natural gas to fall from an average of 34 percent in 2016 to 32 percent

in both 2017 and 2018 due to higher expected natural gas prices. Coal's forecast generation share rises from 30 percent in 2016 to 31 percent in both 2017 and 2018.

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission March

granted Otter Tail Power Company a 7.4 percent rate increase. The increase was necessary to pay for environmental technologies, infrastructure improvements, and rising costs associated with

Bits: see page 10 please

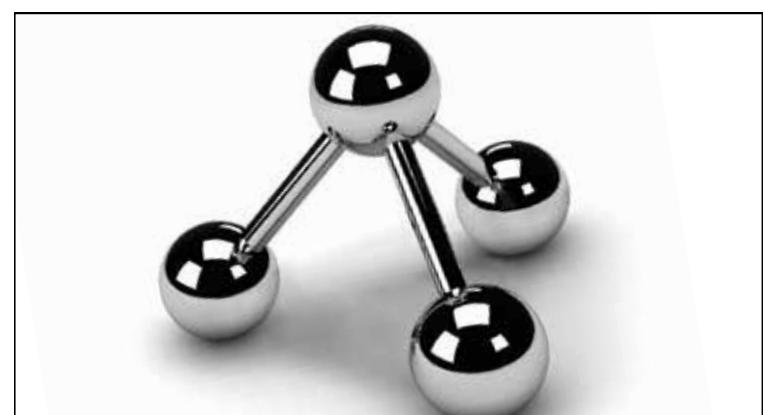


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Madelia rebuilds main street after fire; Legislature steps up with \$1.43 million in grants

Fires last year destroyed significant portions of two MMUA member city downtowns. One has been substantially rebuilt, while the prospects for another are less clear.

A Feb. 3, 2016 fire in Madelia destroyed or heavily damaged nine downtown businesses.

Gov. Dayton visited Madelia last February and pledged state help.

He proposed significant investments to help the community rebuild, including disaster relief to the city of Madelia and Watonwan County in his proposed tax bill, sales tax relief for local businesses as they rebuild, and Jobs Bill investments to rebuild essential public infrastructure in Madelia.

He recently followed up on his earlier pledge and signed legislation that provides the city \$1.4 million and Watonwan County nearly \$300,000 in grants to be used for disaster recovery, infrastructure and reimbursement for equipment and personnel costs and property tax abatements.

Thanking the Legislature

for its support, he said "I am pleased to say we have followed through on our word. This bill will help Madelia rebuild into the strong, enduring community it has always been."

A local non-profit group—dubbed Madelia Strong—formed quickly after the fire and raised \$400,000 in donations to jumpstart the recovery. Businesses started moving into new buildings late last year. Work is still underway.

Construction projects, whether finished or ongoing, will be funded by the state.

Melrose seeks fire relief

On Sept. 8, 2016, fire swept through a block of Main Street downtown Melrose, damaging or destroying 11 businesses and displacing about two dozen people who lived in the upper stories of the downtown buildings.

The state Senate tax bill appropriates \$1,296,458 to the city of Melrose, and \$95,800 to Stearns County to remediate the effects of fires in the city of Melrose. Final outcome



Madelia's Main Street was devastated by fire during the early morning hours of Feb. 3, 2016. While the embers smoldered, a grassroots group formed to raise rebuilding funds. The two-story building at the left in this photo survived the fire, as did the last building on the block to the right.

of the legislative proposals is unclear.

As part of a list of recent bonding projects, Governor Dayton is in support of giving Melrose just under \$4 million.

Prior to the September fire, in March 2016, a suspected arson, caused heavy damage to the beloved Church of St. Mary, a 118-year-old architectural marvel and a Melrose crown jewel.



This picture looks down Madelia's main street from the other direction. It was taken a few months before the fire.

Utility veteran Mike Taylor joins MMUA as Job Training and Safety and Apprenticeship Instructor

Mike Taylor has joined MMUA as a Job Training and Safety and Apprenticeship Instructor.

Taylor has 36 years of experience in the electric utility industry. He graduated from Wadena Area Vocational In-

stitute in 1981 and went to work for various electrical contractors as a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 160, and was enrolled in the Missouri Valley Lineman and Apprenticeship and

Training program.

After five years on the road, he went to work for Crow Wing Power & Light as an apprentice lineman in 1990. He moved to northeast Minnesota later that year, working as a lineman for Arrowhead

Electric Cooperative.

He joined Grand Marais Public Utilities in 1992 and worked there as a lineman until 2005. In 2005, he was named electrical superintendent. Among his accomplishments during his time



Mike Taylor

as superintendent was the demolition of the old lakeside power plant and the construction of a modern plant.

Taylor has been active in MMUA meetings, workshops and schools over the years, and credits MMUA with influencing his career. He said he is looking forward to being part of the MMUA team and getting to know the people and the various municipal utilities around the state.

He is a native of the Walker area, and enjoys fishing, hunting and photography.

Welcome aboard, Mike!

For more information on MMUA's On-site/On-demand lineworker apprenticeship training program, contact Mike Willets at 612-802-8474.

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PCB Management Workshop receives rave reviews

MMUA, along with the Minnesota Rural Electric Association, held a PCB Management & Record-keeping Workshop from April 10-11 at the Ziegler location in Shakopee.

Presenter was Mark Pennell, founder and president of Regulatory Compliance Services, Inc. The classroom at Ziegler was full, with nearly

40 people—from municipals, IOUs, cooperatives and a federal power administration—attending.

The workshop received high marks from attendees. Pennell was praised by one attendee for his “expert knowledge and ability to communicate - Well done!”

Another noted that Pennell covered “a large topic in



Mark Pennell and the PCB Management & Record-keeping Workshop received high marks from those who attended. Planning is underway to bring Pennell back for another workshop.

a very meaningful way.”

One criticism offered was that the workshop could have been longer! Another helpful suggestion was that MMUA bring in a federal or state regulator, to speak from their perspective. That suggestion is being taken to heart, as planning is already underway for a follow-up workshop.

The workshop began mid-morning with Foundational Training for New PCB Program Coordinators. This introduction emphasized helping “newbies” understand the basics. Following a break, the next hour was devoted to Clarifying Regulatory Language & Interpretations. Discussion with the class further developed navigating and understanding the PCB rules, conditions and prohibitions.

Following lunch, participants got out of their chairs with a quick tour of Ziegler’s Power Distribution Equipment.

After the walk-around, class was back in session with a look at Testing for PCBs vs. Following the “Assumption Rules.” This helpful discussion explored the threshold question: To test or not to test and how to consider Compliance vs. Liability.

Important procedures for line crews were covered with a look at Transformer Change-outs, Hauling and Drop-off, which covered the process “from pole to home.”

The first day’s programming ended with a look at common mistakes storing equipment for “Reuse” vs. “Disposal.” PCB Storage Options & EPA Notification Requirements were covered.

The fast-paced second day started with Selling, Scrapping &/or Disposing of Obsolete Equipment. Cautions in regards to sales pitches from rebuilders wanting obsolete transformers were explored.

The vital importance of quick response, containment and communication was covered in the next-to-last session: PCB & Non-PCB Spills—Federal vs. State Regulations

The workshop concluded with instruction on maintain-

ing compliant PCB records and EPA reports.

“Super job,” said one attendee. “Thanks MMUA and Mark – I found it all beneficial, entertaining too!”



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Dave Thom of East Central Energy (right), led a class on subs from a lineman's perspective.



Kevin Favero, center, discussed various aspects of the substation design.

Substation School held April 11-13 at Ziegler, Shakopee Public Utilities

MMUA held its annual Substation School April 11-13 at Ziegler Power Systems in Shakopee. Top-notch presenters and timely topics highlighted the school, which began on a Tuesday afternoon.

Charlie Blecke, P.E. and Darren Westby, of Power Systems Engineering, Inc., opened the school with a look at the Fundamentals of Sub-

station Equipment and Control Systems. Topics spanned the gamut from Safety on the Job to Protective Relaying and Control.

Jeff Kranz, of Rochester Public Utilities, followed that with a look at Substation Inspections and Maintenance. This session covered proper operations and maintenance. Kranz covered best practice on a variety of operational concepts and maintenance issues.

Wednesday morning was taken up with Substation Testing: How, When & Why, presented by Paul Schleis of Energis Inc. Among his topics were a variety of transformer-related issues, including oil, breakers, relays and regulators, controls and other items of interest.

Following lunch, students took a tour of Ziegler's Power Distribution Equipment.

The Ziegler tour was followed with talk on a Shakopee Public Utilities Substation Transformer Addition, by Kevin Favero of Leidos and Joe Adams of Shakopee Public Utilities. The group took a guided tour of the substation,

which was newly expanded with the addition of a 50 MVA transformer. Planning and design, equipment and arc flash considerations were among the topics covered. The field trip also allowed students an opportunity to discuss various aspects of their local substations.

Dave Thom, of East Central Energy, closed the workshop with a Thursday morning presentation on The 'Ins and Outs' of Substations, which approached the subject from a lineman's perspective. Participants were fully engaged during this hands-on demonstration of various tools, hardware and the latest in



Greg Drent of Shakopee Public Utilities led a substation tour.

SCADA systems.

One lineworker summed up the school in a written evaluation, saying, "I took something of value away from each class."



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Left: Jeff Crampton of Fairbanks Morse led a group through intricacies of the opposed-piston engine. Above Bob Heine of New Prague (far right) and Ralph Posusta of Glencoe (right) led an exercise on Cooper engines.

Day of training at Glencoe power plant highlights MMUA Generation School

Approximately 40 people attended the MMUA Generation School, held April 18-20 in Glencoe. Power plant operators came from Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois.

"Speakers were good and hands on in-plant class was very good, too," said one attendee.

The school gave another student "new ideas and new ways to check things on the engine—I learned a lot."

The most popular part of the program was Hands-On Training, April 19 at the Glencoe Light & Power generating plant. Instruction focused on Cooper and Fairbanks Morse engines.

Our scheduled Cooper instructor had to cancel out due to a family emergency. In a testament to the knowledge and skill of the assembled municipal operators, Bob Heine of New Prague Utilities Commission and Ralph Posusta, Glencoe Light and Power, led the learning on

Cooper engines.

Fairbanks Morse factory representatives Steve McLennanen and Jeff Crampton led the learning on the FM opposed-piston engine. They handled a variety of topics, including engine timing.

The day concluded by starting up the #5 OP engine.

The workshop opened the afternoon of April 18 at Glencoe City Center. The main topic was Advantages of Retrofitting PLC Electronic Engine Control Panels by Lester Wheeler of Exline, Inc. The group also toured a local industrial customer's plant.

A reception was held that evening at the Glencoe Country Club. Everybody appreciated this event, which was generously sponsored by Fairbanks Morse Engine and



Operators had ample opportunity to visit and learn from each other.

Ziegler Power Systems.

The school moved back to the Glencoe City Center for a half day on April 20. Dean Schauer, of GNB Industrial Power talked about battery

types. Matt Schwartz and Dave Wood, Ziegler Power Systems, spoke on Switchgear Maintenance, Testing & Calibration. Kevin DeValkenaere, Farabee Mechanical

and Travis Zipf, Emanuelson-Podas, discussed Catalytic Converter Applications. Bob Jagusch, MMUA, discussed rules and regulations in a changed political landscape.

While a lot of information was presented from speaker to listener, there was also a lot of informal learning from one person to another. One student said he appreciated "knowing problems other operators had and how they solved them." Another said the school was a "great time to network" with people from other power plants.

MMUA was glad to sponsor the school. We thank our students, the utilities that sent them, our presenters, and everyone at Glencoe Light & Power for helping to make the training a success.

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The Marshall Municipal Utilities Commission April 19 voted to accept a bid for a new advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) system. Under the proposal, all electric and water meters in the city will be replaced in the next two years. Four different bids were considered. Total project cost is estimated at just over \$3 million.

Crews are replacing one of two **City of Windom Municipal Utility** substation transformers. In the meantime, the utility will distribute power from a transformer purchased in 1986. The transformer being

Around the State

replaced was purchased from a Pittsburgh steel mill in the 1990s. When complete, either transformer will be able to carry the city load, but the load will be distributed between them. Related equipment will also be upgraded.

The \$2.5 million project, being funded out of utility reserves, should be complete by the end of the year.

Work is nearing completion on a new **Spring Valley**

Public Utilities substation. Distribution voltage is also being upgraded. Plans call for electric distribution lines to be placed underground in the next few years.

The Rochester Public Utilities board is considering further investment in a study of a municipal broadband system. According to published reports, the further study would investigate whether a city-owned internet service could be sustained in the current market and what options exist for operating the service, which could include adding it to RPU's lineup, creating a new department or seeking a private entity to provide oversight.

The city council considered investing in further study at its April 17 meeting but tabled the issue.

Three new **Hibbing Public Utilities Commission** members attended their first meeting as a group April 11. Larry McGuire rejoins the commission and was joined by newcomer David Rian and City Administrator Tom Dicklich. McGuire was elected chair.

A solar energy forum was held March 21 in **St. Peter**. The meeting brought a number of parties together, including officials from the city and its wholesale power supplier—the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA). Part of the discussion at the meeting was the opportunity to buy a portion of a SMMPA solar plant being constructed near Owatonna.

come back to the board with a specific project outline and formal abatement request.

The Coon Rapids city council March 28 considered a reduction in the city's franchise fee, to benefit large commercial and industrial customers. The city has charged electric and natural gas companies a fee on their sales to customers in the city since 1969. The three percent gross earnings tax, now called a franchise fee, was increased to 4 percent in 1991. Concerns were raised in 2015 and the council is considering the issue. The fee was generating over 11 percent of the

city's general fund revenue.

The city is served by three different electric utilities: Xcel, Connexus and the City of Anoka.

Natural gas service is coming to the **City of Gary** this summer. The service will be provided by Community Co-op of Detroit Lakes.

The Springfield Public Utilities Commission is surveying its customers to determine their level of interest in a community solar project.

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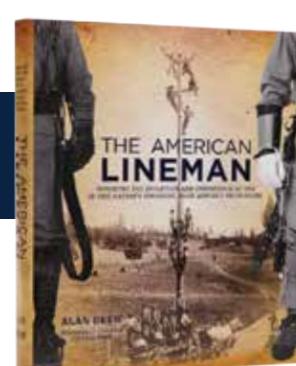
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The City of Cohasset has requested a 30 percent tax abatement for a period of 10 years from the Itasca County board, in an effort to keep Lake Country Power from moving its headquarters to Cloquet. The city and the electric cooperative will

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Bits

continued from page 4

providing safe, reliable and environmentally responsible electricity.

A ribbon-cutting was held April 13 at the Camp Ripley solar array. The development is a partnership between Minnesota Power and the Minnesota National Guard. The 63-acre plant contains more than 120,000 panels, capable of generating 17,000 megawatts per year.

About a quarter of the nearly completed development was destroyed last fall by a severe storm.

The Minnesota Department of Commerce April 3 said that more time was needed to complete a draft environmental impact statement for the proposed Enbridge 'Line 3' replacement project. The Department said it anticipated releasing a draft in mid-May. Enbridge said it was disappointed with the delay.

Site trackers and ancillary mechanical equipment in isolated areas was reportedly damaged in early March at the Aurora Solar site near Annandale. Similar damage was reported at sites in Albany and Paynesville.

City of St. Paul officials have negotiated an agreement to supply 25 percent of the city's buildings with electricity from community solar gardens. The energy will come from solar 'gardens' located in Dakota and Washington counties.

Xcel Energy in late March said it planned to add 1,550 megawatts of new wind generation in the Upper Midwest, including seven wind developments in Minnesota, Iowa and the Dakotas.

Discounted APPA safety manual available now

The American Public Power Association (APPA) recently released its updated Safety Manual for an Electric Utility, 16th edition.

MMUA has made a bulk purchase of the new Safety manual is making them available to our members for \$24 per book, plus applicable sales tax and shipping.

For more information, contact rkelley@mmua.org or order here.

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Ads

HELP WANTED
Electric Lineworker

The City of St. James has an opening in the Electric Department for a line person. Applicant should have at a minimum one year of lineman school at a technical school or 3 years of experience with an electrical department. Class A- CDL or ability to obtain a Class A- CDL within six months of date of hire. Anticipated start date of June 12, 2017. Five miles response time, pay ranges \$24.73 to \$29.32. Job description and application form is available at City Hall, 124 Armstrong Blvd. S., PO Box 70, St. James, MN 56081 or online at www.ci.stjames.mn.us. Applications close on May 22, 2017, at 4:00 pm.

Journey Line Worker

Austin Utilities is seeking a talented and self-driven Journey Line Worker to join our Electric Distribution team. The successful candidates will perform construction and maintenance work on de-energized and energized 13,800 volt underground and overhead distribution system in a progressive community, serving approximately 12,300 customers. Please visit our website at www.austinutilities.com for additional information regarding this position and to download the application package (application, supplemental questionnaire, and job description). Review of applications will begin May 31, 2017 and continue until the position is filled. Please forward your application package and resume to: E-mail: kimd@austinutilities.com or Mail: Austin Utilities, Attn: Human Resources, 1908 14th Street NE, Austin MN 55912. EEO

Electrical Superintendent
The City of Arlington, South Dakota (population 925) is seeking an Electrical Superintendent to manage the municipal electric system. Candidates for this position must have successfully completed an approved Electrical Line Worker program and have Journeyman experience. This position requires a strong working knowledge of a municipal electrical system, departmental budgeting and a vision for long range electrical system planning. Applicants must be proficient

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ary history and three work-related references to Sue Falconer, Finance Officer, City of Arlington, SD Email: cityofarlington@arlingtontsd.com or mail to: PO Box 379, Arlington, SD 57212. For more information or questions related to this position contact Marshal Mix (Utility Supt) @ 605.203.1121 or Sue Falconer @ 605.983.5251.

Director, Outside Distribution

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projects is preferred. The job description, along with application form can be found at: www.vpuc.com. Please mail resume and completed application to: Virginia Public Utilities, ATT: HR & Safety Director, 618 South 2nd Street, Virginia, MN 55792 or e mail: nancees@vpuc.com

For a complete and up-to-date listing, see the News/Classifieds section at www.mmua.org

Alternative energy options studied by Grand Rapids PUC and customers

Energy supply partnerships are being explored in Grand Rapids.

Last fall, GRPUC surveyed its 7,000 electric customers in regards to their interest in renewable energy, including solar or biofuel options. The Itasca Clean Energy Team hosted a September informational session and the GRPUC hosted an October open house, where customers learned more about, and provided input on, how local renewable energy programs could be structured and operated.

Even with the survey data, "it's kind of a chicken and egg" situation, said utility General Manager Julie Kennedy: Prices depend in part on the size of the project; and the size of the project depends on how many people can pay the price. Still, the utility hopes to present a plan by the end of this year for development in 2018. Several community options are being explored.

Clean Energy Team mem-

bers have enthusiastically supported the community solar garden concept and are thankful that the city and the GRPUC have been open and supportive. In turn, the utility values the partnership, as the Clean Energy team can do a lot of the outreach and selling.

The utility has several solar customers, some quite large. Another renewable option is a forest-derived biomass-fueled facility, which could be similar to the Rapids Energy Center (REC), which provides Blandin Paper Company with steam, compressed air and electrical energy.

Wood waste material (biomass) from the paper mill and local forest product companies is burned in conjunction with coal in two high pressure boilers to produce steam. On an annual basis approximately 80 percent of the fuel utilized is biomass.

The facility, owned and operated by Minnesota Power, has two steam turbines and



The Blandin UPM facility, located on the Mississippi River, dominates central Grand Rapids. The plant includes biomass and hydro electric generation.

two hydro units for a combined generation capacity of 28.6 megawatts. The ash generated at Rapids Energy Center is distributed for agricul-

tural uses. Studies show the REC facility is capable of producing additional energy that could be distributed through the GRPUC electrical system.

Itasca Community College has expressed an interest in development of a similar project.

Grand Rapids:

continued from front page

ties and community groups to achieve desired outcomes.

While teaching at the community college, she got to know Glenn Hodgson, who taught there and served on the utilities commission. One day, they ran into each other at a local sandwich shop. As they were talking, Hodgson asked Kennedy if she would be interested in the utility manager's position. That was intriguing. Kennedy was also aware that she was "a bit out of the mold" for the job.

Ward brought an accounting and business background to running the utility. He left the business in a strong financial position, according to all accounts. He also worked hard to maintain the Commission's autonomy from the City. Kennedy is the former City engineer.

Most people consider the selection a good fit, however.

The Commission and Council have held several amicable joint meetings. Kennedy seems well-equipped to wade through the political waters while guiding the utility.

"You don't want everybody that thinks like you do in your group," she noted.

People, not projects

Managing people, not projects, is now a larger focus. That seems more interesting, and perhaps a bigger challenge.



The Grand Rapids PUC service center houses the utility electric, water and wastewater collection departments. The City of Grand Rapids leases a portion of the building that is used by the Public Works Department.

She calls managing the utility "a great opportunity," and is committed to its success.

The fact that the utility has many talented, experienced department heads, will help with that goal. The utility is also shepherded by a veteran Commission. That strong experience, however, leads to a big challenge.

Succession planning, for the various departments, is a priority. Numerous key personnel are approaching retirement. Others are relatively new to managing, including Electric Department Manager Jeremy Goodell (a former student of Kennedy's).

The Commission itself is changing, too. Several long-time policymakers plan on leaving in the next couple years. Rick Blake, the council liaison and an electrical engineer, is expected to provide

continuity.

Kennedy was still getting settled in her office when MMUA paid an April 15 visit. She is getting familiar with the accounting and various business aspects of the organization. The auditors had just left—a new experience for her. New file cabinets were being moved into her office.

Strategic planning, integrating technology upgrades and work flow processes are expected to occupy much time and thought. GRPUC is also looking at a capital expansion project with the utility's largest wastewater customer, UPM Blandin Paper, located on the Mississippi River in the heart of the city.

The utility is in the midst of a major technology upgrade. Staff is almost done installing electric automated metering infrastructure (AMI).

When that is done, the water department will install new AMI meters. The utility is preparing a request for proposals for a water leak study, but staff is hoping some of the "missing" water might reappear in the pipes with more accurate metering. Working through that process is ex-

pected to take two years.

After working diligently with its commercial customers, the utility is also working this year with a third party to conduct residential energy audits.

"I'm learning as I go," Kennedy said. "It seems to be working really well."

Upcoming MMUA Events

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 at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. Deadline to register was April 24.

Annual Summer Conference

August 21-23, Madden's Resort, Brainerd

Our Summer Conference offers networking, educational and social time for municipal utility leaders from around the state. The program is still being developed but we will let you know what we have planned soon!

Overhead School

September 12-15, MMUA Training Center, Marshall

MMUA and our partners—the Minnesota Rural Electric Association and the American Public Power Association—are pleased to offer the 2017 Overhead Lineworker School. The class lineup is under development.



Watch your email for full details later this month.