

# Former utility manager Kuntz embraces politics as vital endeavor

by Steve Downer

Politics is often a dirty word in the municipal utility industry.

Why? Because it is generally accepted that the enterprise is best operated as a business, and far from political considerations.

But the fact is, any utility, particularly a municipal utility, is dependent on politics for its very existence.

Nobody knows that any better than Owatonna Mayor Tom Kuntz.

Kuntz is now serving his 11th year as mayor. Prior to serving as mayor, Kuntz was general manager of Owatonna Public Utilities.

"A utilities manager is still in politics," Kuntz said. "Everything in the utilities business is driven by politics." The

utility industry, Kuntz said, is "at the mercy of state and federal governments. You have to be involved, know what's going on, and give them your opinions."

And, as has often been said, all politics is local.

When Kuntz retired as OPU general manager, the local chamber of commerce director called and asked him, "How retired do you want to be?"

Not very, as it turns out.

Along with remaining active locally and with MMUA on a statewide level, Kuntz annually attends the APPA Washington Rally and serves on the APPA Policymakers Council.

While recognizing the importance of political involvement, Kuntz has been adept at keeping



photos by Steve Downer

Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton addressed the Owatonna Rotary Sept. 14 at the Owatonna Country Club. Joining him afterward were Shelby Kuntz, left, and Owatonna Mayor Tom Kuntz, right. The governor and mayor have become friends over the years.

politics to a minimum on the seven-member Owatonna city council.

"It's a very united

council," he said. While its members don't always agree with each other, there is an understand-

ing that they working together to reach the best

**Kuntz: see next page**

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Stories

## Municipals gather to build national rodeo grounds

Minnesota municipal utilities gathered the week of Oct. 12 (after this paper's deadline) to build the rodeo grounds for the 2016 APPA National Lineworkers Rodeo. The rodeo grounds construction, coordinated by MMUA and Shakopee Public Utilities, was expected to draw approximately 100 lineworkers from 25 Minnesota municipal utilities.

In preparation for the October rodeo ground build, a meeting was held Oct. 1 at Shakopee Public Utilities. Approximately 50 municipal electric and MMUA personnel attended. The agenda included planning for the rodeo grounds construction.

The 2016 Rodeo will be held April 2, 2016 at Canterbury Park in Shakopee. At the Rodeo, journeyman and apprentice lineworkers practice essential skills in a safe environment while competing for professional recognition, attend training courses and network with other attendees. Each year the Rodeo attracts thousands of attendees from all across the U.S. and abroad. At the 2015 National Rodeo in Sacramento, a total of 12 teams and a number of individuals from Minnesota competed—our largest turnout ever.

2016 will mark APPA's 16th annual event, but this will be Minnesota's first national rodeo held in the state. And this "once in a lifetime" event is a big deal: the area of the rodeo grounds will be approximately nine acres (roughly the size of eight football fields), set with approximately 130 pole structures for the competition.

"We anticipate that this event will be a real source of pride for our state," said Ex-



## Overhead School

A pair of students performed a training task at MMUA's annual Overhead School, Sept. 15-18 at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. For more on the school, see page 7. For more photos, follow the links from the Events/Schools/Overhead School page of the MMUA website.

ecutive Director Jack Kegel. "We invite all municipal utilities to be involved."

Closer to the 2016 event, MMUA will be working with APPA and soliciting for volunteers to work the event and participants to compete.

## Willmar works hard to remain independent

by Steve Downer

Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU) is on the move.

WMU has charted an independent course for 124 years, and that continues today. It is one of the last municipal electric utilities of significant size that remains unaffiliated with a municipal power agency. Because of this independence, an influx of new employees and a need to keep ahead of a rapidly changing electric market, WMU has a sense of mission.

Wes Hompe has been WMU general manager since 2012. He joined the utility as its electrical engineer in 1989. The good news is that, with his background, he had a good handle on what needed to be done when he took over the reins. The bad news was that a whole lot of very important items needed to be taken care of, and very quickly.

It was too big a job for one person. The Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission allowed Hompe to assemble an upper management team to help handle the big picture items. He calls these people "priceless."

The biggest expense item—power supply—has taken the most attention.

WMU and Great River Energy (GRE) have had a longstanding power supply relationship. Willmar's transmission assets have been administered by GRE under a long-term power supply

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## Kuntz

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possible decision for the city and its citizens. That civility extends to the Owatonna Public Utilities Commission, an autonomous five-member board that governs the electric, gas and water utility.

As mayor, he recommends commission appointees to the council. After that, the council leaves the municipal utility

commission to its business.

The word ‘municipal’ is the key to the process,” Kuntz said. These are local decisions. The utility has no shareholders to satisfy—just a need to cover costs and provide excellent service.

### Mayor of his hometown

Kuntz was born and raised in Owatonna. He graduated from Owatonna Senior High School in 1963. He planned on

attending a technical school in Mankato to study drafting. As he was waiting to be accepted, he went and joined the Air Force. He worked on jet engines. He served for eight years, returning to Owatonna Dec. 10, 1971.

“I thought I would have Christmas off,” he said, but by Dec. 16 was working as a meter reader for OPU. That position afforded him no opportunity use his G.I. Bill educational benefits, so within a few months he applied for an opening as a power plant boiler relief operator.

He studied to obtain his various licenses and worked his way up the ladder: boiler operator, relief turbine operator, turbine operator. The downtown power plant operated round the clock. OPU also built an internal combustion turbine plant (using a jet engine—something Kuntz knew quite a bit about) in the industrial park.

With economies of power generation changing, Owatonna joined the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency and was firmly con-

nected to the regional power grid in 1983.

Kuntz capped his career at OPU with five years as general manager. It was in this position that the importance of politics to the utility was driven home.

Kuntz attended both the APPA Washington Rally and the MMUA Legislative Rally rallies, accompanied by then-Owatonna Mayor Pete Connor.

“It was evident as you talked, all (the House and Senate members’) attention went to the elected official, and not to the manager,” Kuntz recalled.

It was a lesson he never forgot. Both the city, and OPU, have benefitted as a result.

### APPA Policy Makers Council

Recognizing the importance of politics to OPU, the City of Owatonna and the municipal utility industry, Kuntz got further involved with APPA. He expressed his willingness to participate with the APPA Policymakers Council. He was “fortunate enough” to be selected for that position and is now its chairperson.

The Council is comprised of 40 locally-elected or appointed officials from 10 geographic regions. Members participate in meetings with elected representatives and congressional staff to advance

APPA’s legislative and regulatory agenda.

Along with the APPA Legislative Rally, held this year in March, the summer fly-in, in late July, is a big event. The fly-in meeting starts with updates from APPA legislative and regulatory staff, an overview of Capitol Hill meetings and issues, and dinner. The next day is filled with meetings and a Congressional Reception. Business concludes the next day with a debriefing and nomination of officers and business.

The other Minnesotan on the council is Larry Buboltz, who has served 12 years on the Detroit Lakes city council and 20 as mayor. Kuntz and Buboltz represent Region Three, which includes Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska and the Dakotas.

Kuntz values the Council as an opportunity to visit elected representatives from other states, particularly Congressional leadership. He also finds it helpful to meet people from around the country, both in Congress and with the APPA group. He finds that people from around the country often deal with the same issues. It helps to learn from others’ experience, he said, and you don’t get that knowledge without making those connections with people.

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# APPA fights costly capacity market proposal with renewed push for self-supply

by Paul Ciampoli  
News Director, American Public Power Association

The American Public Power Association in September took an all-hands-on-deck approach to drum up opposition to a legislative proposal—known as “performance requirements”—that would lock in high electricity rates that consumers pay in mandatory capacity markets operated by regional transmission organizations. At the same time, APPA continued to advocate for a proposal on Capitol Hill that would ensure public power utilities’ right to self-supply.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee was scheduled to consider the North American Energy Security and Infrastructure Act of 2015 on Sept. 17. The Committee subsequently postponed markup of the legislation. While the problematic “performance requirements” provision was not included in a revised draft of the bill released on Sept. 14, it was listed as a “placeholder” and

## Washington Report



merchant generators and other incumbents were said to be fighting hard for its inclusion. Supporters argue that the performance requirements are needed to ensure reliability under the Environmental Protection Agency’s final ‘Clean Power Plan’ rule on greenhouse gas emissions and other unexpected peaks in demand such as the “polar vortex” that occurred in the Northeast a couple of winters ago.

APPA believes that these requirements are unnecessary for reliability, would not maintain certain types of generation under the Clean Power Plan, and would significantly increase electric rates for consumers.

In the lead up to the Sept. 17 hearing, APPA rallied opposition to inclusion of the performance requirements proposal as an amendment to the energy legislation.

APPA has pointed out that electricity rates for consumers in mandatory capacity markets “are already far higher than rates in regulated states, and getting more expensive—under these markets, cost disparity is increasing, while new generation in these regions lags the rest of the country.”

The language under consideration mirrors the performance requirements established by PJM. Based on the experience in PJM and ISO-New England, APPA said it “believes the provision would make it needlessly difficult to maintain a diverse and flexible generation portfolio. In addition, such a strict requirement for capacity resources would create excessive costs to consumers and is not necessary to achieve a reliable supply of power.”

### APPA continues to advocate for self-supply

APPA sought to counter the “performance requirements” provision with an amendment that would reform capacity

markets for the ultimate benefit of consumers by ensuring public power utilities’ right to self-supply, i.e., to bilaterally contract for capacity or build their own generation.

APPA believes that self-supply for load-serving entities (LSEs) would increase fairness and reduce costs to consumers.

In May 2015, APPA and its members drafted a self-supply proposal, which would also require the unanimous consensus of states to create new mandatory capacity markets. Since then APPA staff has been working to educate lawmakers and staff.

Earlier this year, APPA President and CEO Sue Kelly Kelly used her testimony before a Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to detail the flaws of mandatory capacity markets and make the case for self-supply. Kelly said that APPA has recommended that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission phase out mandatory capacity constructs over time and replace them with volun-

tary, residual capacity markets.

“In the meantime, we propose two fixes,” Kelly told Senate committee members. “First, Regional Transmission Organizations that have not yet implemented mandatory capacity markets should not do so without unanimous support of the states in their regions. Second, RTOs that already have mandatory capacity markets should not impair the ability of retail utilities or states to self-supply their capacity obligations.”

## MMUA invites members to CIP Summit

MMUA invites its members to participate in a “CIP Summit” Nov. 4 at the MMUA headquarters in Plymouth (contact MMUA or see your utility’s invitation for more specific details).

During the 2015 Legislative Session, the House Job Growth and Energy Affordability Committee expressed a great deal of interest in reforming the Conservation Improvement Program (CIP). Chair Pat Garofalo (R-Farmington) asked MMUA for ideas on how CIP could be changed to benefit municipal utilities. MMUA Government Relations staff said there was not member consensus on reforms that should be made to CIP, and the Session ended without modifications to CIP.

Now, in the interim, Chair Garofalo continues to seek MMUA input on CIP reforms. MMUA seeks to engage our members in this conversation, so we can provide a response to the Chair and potentially pursue changes that municipal utilities can agree upon. We may come up with reform ideas or we may decide we prefer the status quo, but it’s important we have the discussion. We will discuss legislative proposals, in order to gain a strong sense of where municipals agree.

It would be very helpful to have the participation of municipal utilities of all kinds, particularly those struggling to cost-effectively meet the CIP requirements. All utility managers are invited and asked to bring or send staff members, if any, who deal directly with CIP.

We hope you are able to join us! Bill Black, MMUA Government Relations Director  
Amanda Duerr, MMUA Government Relations Representative

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This fall, thousands of wind turbines around the country will be idle more often than usual, helping to ensure that northern long-eared bats don't become victims of the wind energy industry. The voluntary plan by 17 different companies, which will idle turbines during periods of low production, was announced in September by the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA). According to IowaWatch.org, the average wind turbine kills as many as 18 bats each year.

New preliminary data from the China Statistical Abstract 2015 (CSA2015) show an upward revision to China's historical coal consumption and production. Energy-content-based coal consumption from 2000

### MMUA announces scholarship program in place for 2016

MMUA has urged its member utilities to bring materials to local high schools, in regards to the Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award program. MMUA has budgeted \$5,000 for scholarships.

This program was created as a public relations tool to increase the awareness of public power and create goodwill in your city for your utility.

The fund is split into various prizes and awarded to essay contest winners who plan to attend a post-secondary educational institution.

The local governing body of the utility picks a local winner. Every MMUA member may then enter the one local essay contest winner to the state contest. The deadline for having utilities forward submissions to MMUA is April 15, 2016. Local deadlines will need to be set earlier, to allow the local governing board time to review the entries.

Many members, with necessary local political support, award their own scholarships locally to encourage participation. A group of MMUA members and staff will select the first, second, third and fourth place winners state-wide. MMUA will announce the winners by mid-May.

Students can find resource materials at [www.mmua.org](http://www.mmua.org), the American Public Power Association website, and often from the local utility.

Please call Steve at MMUA if you have any questions or comments. MMUA thanks its members for helping make this program a success.

## Bits & Pieces



to 2013 is up to 14 percent higher than previously reported, while coal production is up to 7 percent higher.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) said Oct. 1 that its Office of Enforcement is looking into whether market manipulation, or other violations of

FERC rules, occurred during the 2015/16 planning resource auction held by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator earlier this year.

FERC will hold a technical conference on issues that have been raised in complaints about the MISO auction.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit granted EPA's petition to continue to provide, until May 1, 2016, an exemp-

tion to emission standards for Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engines (RICE) that allows backup generators to operate without emissions controls for up to 100 hours per year as part of an emergency demand-response program.

EPA will reportedly begin a process of drafting a new rule in light of the court's decision on demand response.

A temporary injunction issued in late August by a U.S. district court in Fargo, North Dakota against the "Waters of the United States" (WOTUS) rule applies only to the 13 states involved in the litigation, the chief district judge ruled on Sept. 4.

The injunction, issued on Aug. 27 by the U.S. District Court for the District of North Dakota, will temporarily block the WOTUS rule in the 13 states that filed suit





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## SMMPA breaks ground on big reciprocating engine power plant in Owatonna

ROCHESTER, MN- Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA) announced it broke ground Monday, Oct. 5 for the construction of its new Owatonna Energy Station, a 38.8 megawatt (MW) natural gas-fired power plant in Owatonna. Construction is expected to be completed in the fall of 2017. The total project cost is anticipated to be approximately \$44 million.

"We are pleased to begin

construction on this important resource for SMMPA and its Members. This project will help the Agency further diversify its resource mix with additional natural gas generation and will be an important asset to help manage future capacity and energy costs" said Dave Geschwind, Executive Director and CEO.

On Aug. 21, 2015, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency issued the required air permit for the new gener-

ating facility. The Owatonna City Council approved the purchase of the property for the plant located near County Roads 75 and 25 on the western edge of Owatonna earlier this year.

A primary factor for selecting this site for the new energy station in Owatonna was to replace the electricity generating capacity lost in September 2010 when the Straight River flooded downtown Owatonna.

"Locating the new plant in Owatonna will help assure reliability for the city since the only local generation we currently have in an emergency situation is a small gas turbine," said Mark Fritsch, General Manager of Owatonna Public Utilities and SMMPA Board Member. "In addition to further diversifying SMMPA's generation portfolio, the new plant will significantly increase the local resources available to help

Owatonna Public Utilities maintain reliability within the city."

SMMPA has selected Caterpillar, Inc. to install four of its reciprocating internal combustion engines at the new Owatonna power plant. SMMPA previously partnered with Caterpillar in the construction of SMMPA's 25 MW Fairmont Energy Station that was completed in 2014.

Ziegler, Caterpillar's local dealer, will continue to support SMMPA and Caterpillar on the Owatonna project. "We're happy to build on our long-standing relationship with SMMPA and its Members on this project, and we look forward to being a part of bringing this new energy asset to the region," said Bruce Erickson, Vice President of Ziegler Power Systems. Ziegler is a family-owned company employing more than 1,700 people in 27 locations throughout Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Missouri.

SMMPA is a joint-action agency which generates and sells reliable wholesale electricity to its 18 non-profit, municipally owned member utilities and develops innovative products and services to help them deliver value to their customers. SMMPA Members serve over 97,000 residential customers and over 12,300 commercial and industrial customers.

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### Associate News

Cargill has joined MMUA as an associate member. Contact person is Steve Korte, Commercial Manager. He is located at 9320 Excelsior Blvd Hopkins, MN 55343 and can be reached at 612-802-6930 or steve\_korte@cargill.com

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## Greenwald retiring after 20 years of training municipal electric lineworkers

Nobody knows Minnesota municipal electric utilities better than Gary Greenwald.

Greenwald, 65, has been in the utility industry since he was 18. He started his career as a lineman for Renville Sibley cooperative. He worked there 10 years, then went to Fairmont Public Utilities, where he worked another decade.

One day he saw, in the *Resource*, that MMUA had an opening for a Job Training and Safety (JT&S) instructor. After work one day, Leroy Vanderpool, then MMUA's director of training and safety, recruited Greenwald for the job.

After three years on the road with MMUA, he took a



Mike Willets, left, and Gary Greenwald, right, at the October 2 meeting of the MMUA safety staff in Plymouth.

job as a lineworker instructor at the Jackson technical college. It was a good job. He had the summers off. Mike

Willets, who had taken over as MMUA's director of training and safety, kept in touch with Greenwald.

"Mike asked me to do a rubber gloving class for the summer," Greenwald recalled. "I said I would if it was only for linemen."

Both men were happy with how it went. The next summer, Willets asked Greenwald, "How would you like to come back to MMUA?"

Greenwald's condition was the same—he only wanted to work with linemen. He thought about it, talked it

over with family, and after six years with the college, made the jump back to MMUA.

He has been with MMUA 17 years, this second time around. When he came back, the JT&S program, which works primarily with electric lineworkers, covered 47 municipal electric utilities. By 2008, Greenwald was working with 96 utilities. It was an unsustainable work load. With a growing MMUA safety compliance staff, some of the technical training was taken on by regional safety coordinators with a linework background. Greenwald now works with 36 utilities and nine more in the apprenticeship program. He makes three visits a year to each one.

"It's a lot of names to remember," he said.

He still speaks with enthusiasm about his time training municipal electric lineworkers.

Partly that is because his vision of the work coincided with that of Willets. Both were "willing to get outside the box," Greenwald said. If he had an idea, he could run with it.

"Mike could see exactly

what I could see" Greenwald said. "And he did everything in his power to make it happen."

It worked both ways.

The members were his business, Willets told Greenwald, and if the members were happy, he was happy.

Greenwald never forgot that.

"Towns have personalities," he said. "You are working for them."

He always had an idea of what he wanted to accomplish with a visit. But if the member had something pressing, Greenwald would do what he could to help them along, including getting his boots muddy on the job site.

The job isn't for everybody, Greenwald admitted, what with all the time on the road. But the good outweighed the bad.

"It was so much fun," he said. "I never considered this a job—I'm getting paid every two weeks to do something I love."

He won't miss the travel and nights away from home. He will miss the camaraderie, he said, and "believing that you've made a difference."

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## MMUA hires Gatchell as newest JT&S instructor

Art Gatchell will replace Gary Greenwald as MMUA's primary Job Training & Safety instructor. In the job, Gatchell will have the opportunity to share 36 years of knowledge, experience and wisdom.

Gatchell, a St. Peter native, started his utility career with the City of St. Peter. He worked there from 1978 to 1988 and left as Utilities Supervisor.

He moved to Elk River Municipal Utilities (ERMU), where he worked from 1988 to 2012 as lead lineman. At ERMU, Gatchell was the senior lead man, and duties included job training for apprentices, where he helped new graduates with a safe and successful transition onto the working crew. He oversaw safe practice for underground, overhead, bucket work and climbing.

During this time, Gatchell also instructed on overhead and underground safety training at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall.

Gatchell comes to MMUA from Xcel Energy, where he was responsible for orientation and safety compliance for all contractors and sub-contractors on the CapX Fargo-St. Cloud project.

Gatchell's work history includes a wide variety of responsibilities, including daily line work, training and man-

agement. He has experience in a supervisory role over water, wastewater and electric utilities. He has held water and wastewater operator licenses while in this role.

"Art brings to MMUA a commitment to maintaining and operating electrical systems for the community in the most efficient and safest

way possible," said MMUA Director of Training and Safety Mike Willets. "We are glad to have him on board, to contribute to the growth and development of the next generation of municipal electric linemen."

Gatchell's first day on the job with MMUA will be Nov. 2.

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## Greenwald cites Training Center, Apprenticeship Program as accomplishments

While the MMUA Job Training and Safety (JT&S) program—traveling around the state training municipal lineworkers—has been around a long time, Gary Greenwald also was actively involved in development and training at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall and with the MMUA Lineworker Apprenticeship Program.

“What we’ve accomplished at the Training Center is phenomenal, he said. “No other state can compete with MMUA. We’ve got the whole package.”

Greenwald, along with other MMUA staff and members serving on various training



Wherever you found Gary Greenwald, it was a pretty good bet that his coffee mug would be close by.

committees, always had to be creative from year to year. “It was challenging to get people to come back year after year,” Greenwald said. But the results speak for them-

selves.

His goals at the Training Center have been accomplished, with the completion of a second substation and building of a transmission line to tie the substations together. Work on the substation and the transmission line was completed “with a lot of help from apprentices” in September. In his view, many of the utilities he worked with will benefit from the substation training, especially working through procedures to tie substations together.

He is proud of the Training Center, but considers the apprenticeship program his biggest accomplishment.

That program is an attempt to address a big problem—small towns losing good linemen. The solution? Take a willing person, from another utility department, with ties

to the community and train them to become a lineworker.

Along with training lineworkers, the program has further built ties between neighboring utilities, in part because the utilities have often trained together and completed projects in each other’s cities. Help—be it from a neighboring utility or from MMUA—is only a phone call away. Networks have been established. Connections have been made. People got to know each other.

“When you look at all these things MMUA has done, the information, talent, experience, all the compliance people, you just call them up and can have conversation about this and that,” he said. “It is a tremendous benefit.”

It’s been a team effort, he said. He was glad to be part of it.

### MMUA hires Sewell to lead Safety Groups

MMUA has hired Mike Sewell as Regional Safety Group Program Leader.

In this program, MMUA partners with the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT) to deliver the Regional Safety Group option to members of the LMCIT Workers’ Compensation program. LMCIT helps coordinate the groups and covers a



Mike Sewell

portion of the training costs. MMUA, under the direction of Sewell, also conducts safety audits and inspections and provides one-on-one consulting.

Sewell was most recently a Job Training and Safety Instructor for the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities. In this job, he traveled and trained municipal and city workers throughout Iowa.

In addition, he has conducted mock OSHA inspections, completed safety program reviews, attended job shadows, advised with employee performance reviews, directed safety committee meetings, inspected equipment, and performed a wide variety of safety functions.

Sewell holds a B.A. degree in Business Administration from University of Northern Iowa.

He has city experience, having worked with the City of West Des Moines and the City of Milford, Iowa.

He is a Pheasants Forever local board member and a member of the American Society of Safety Engineers.

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## Lineworkers flock to annual MMUA Overhead School Sept. 15-18 in Marshall

MMUA held its annual Overhead School, in conjunction with the Minnesota Rural Electric Association and the American Public Power Association, Sept. 15-18 at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall.

A total of 64 people registered—most from municipals located in Minnesota, however two hailed from Watertown, South Dakota, two from Marquette, Mich., two from a construction company and four from a Minnesota cooperative.

A variety of courses were offered including Capacitor Bank Installation & Maintenance, which was led by Tyler Meiners and Todd Keach, Rochester Public Utilities.

The trouble call course participants were challenged with a real-world scenario they could encounter 'back home.' The class was led by Trent Hawkinson, Brainerd Public Utilities; Scott Thoreson, Elk River Municipal Utilities; Jeff Bechhold, MRES/Jackson; and John Egan, Sauk Centre Public Utilities.

Overhead Maintenance was led by instructors Roger Moltzan, Detroit Lakes Public Utility; Russ Nelson, Austin Utilities; and Gary Greenwald, MMUA

The advanced lineworker course was led by Bob Rumbaugh, American Municipal Power, Inc. He stressed leadership, system maintenance and best practices.

The Digger Derrick course enabled participants to take the first two phases of the qualification course before completing the testing on their own utility's equipment. Instructor was MMUA's own Al Czczok.

There was also a group of apprentices working on our second substation, which included setting poles for a transmission line.

In addition to the hours of hands-on training with our seasoned instructors, highlights of the four-day program included: the rodeo/obstacle course, Russell Good's arc flash presentation and meeting/networking with other professionals in the industry.

Other general sessions included Ryan Mihalak, of MMUA, a former Commercial Vehicle Inspector for the Minnesota State Patrol, who offered a refresher session on load securement, CMV regulations and CDL regulations.

MMUA JT&S Instructor Gary Greenwald also received a special award to commemorate his final Overhead School. Gary will be retiring in December.



MMUA could not offer the Overhead School, as it is planned, without the assistance of associate and regular members who bring people and equipment, including a large number of trucks. This photo shows a portion of the training field and equipment involved.



Sleepy Eye Public Utilities supplied a truck, at the right in this picture, to help with the digger derrick qualification course.



RPU supplied vehicles, and instructors, to enable the capacitor bank installation and maintenance class.



### This school couldn't happen without help

MMUA is very appreciative of the following utilities/companies that provided trucks for the Overhead School: Altec Industries, Inc., Austin Utilities, Blue Earth Light & Water Department, Brainerd Public Utilities, Elk River Municipal Utilities, Fairfax Municipal Utilities, Marshall Municipal Utilities, Missouri River Energy Services, Rochester Public Utilities, Sleepy Eye Public Utilities, Springfield Public Utilities, Terex Corporation.

MMUA also thanks the following companies for their support: 3M, Altec Industries, Border States, CHANCE, Electro Tech, Hubble Power Systems, Huskie Tools, Power Delivery Products/ElectroTech, PUPI/GEOTEK and TEREX.

Additionally, we were fortunate to have representatives from the following companies on-hand to talk about their products: Clint Bitting, Altech Industries, Inc.; Sean Dunham, ElectroTech, Inc.; Ben Pahl, Terex Corporation.

Additionally, we were for-



Roger Moltzan of Detroit Lakes Public Utility, third from left, was one of the overhead maintenance instructors.



At left and above: students worked on construction of the second substation at the Training Center.

## GRE is long on capacity but MPUC finds resource plan reasonable under the circumstances

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission Sept. 10 accepted Great River Energy's 2014-2029 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). An IRP, which proposes a set of supply- and demand-side resource options a utility proposes to use to meet its needs, is required from certain utilities every two years.

Two years ago, in an unprecedented action, the PUC rejected GRE's plan.

In its current plan, GRE said it will add wind and hydro power but will not retire any of its fossil fueled power plants.

GRE owns three coal-fired power plants in North Dakota: Coal Creek (1,163 megawatts), Stanton Station (187 MW) and Spiritwood Station (99 MW). Coal-fired electricity accounted for 67 percent of GRE's generation in 2013, with 11 percent renewable and 10 percent hydro.

According to regulatory documents, GRE's "capacity position is substantially long for the forecast period." GRE expects to sustain a capacity surplus of more than 500 MW until 2025.

A group of environmental intervenors argued GRE is

probably operating Spiritwood at a loss and that closing Stanton Station would be cost effective.

GRE said retaining the plants was its least-cost option, removing them from its system would expose its members to the wholesale market, and it had already invested more than \$1 billion in its coal facilities, much of that for emissions control equipment.

Two ethanol plants, in joint comments, noted that GRE has significant excess capacity, particularly since Spiritwood came on line in Novem-

ber 2014. They also argued the MPUC should deny the IRP because the utility did not appropriately contemplate plans to reduce existing resources.

GRE said its current position is beneficial to its members.

MPUC staff noted that GRE's action plan is to "maintain its existing baseload while shopping its significant amount" of resources. "While this may be an unusual action plan, depending on the circumstances, it may not inherently be an unreasonable one."

In regards to federal regulations, such as Clean Power Plan compliance, the MPUC reasoned that it was premature to contemplate compliance for this IRP.

GRE is Minnesota's second largest power supplier, serving 655,000 customers through 28 electric cooperatives. Twenty of these 28 distribution cooperatives have 'all requirements' contracts. The other eight have contracted to purchase a fixed amount from GRE and can seek additional supply from other sources.

## Xcel Energy announces it will retire Sherco 1 and 2

Xcel Energy announced Oct. 2 a proposal to accelerate the company's transition from coal-power to cleaner energy sources by retiring two units at its Sherburne County Generating Plant in Becker. The proposal, said the company, would protect reliability, jobs and community investments by advancing the company's shift to renewable energy and adding cleaner natural gas-powered generation to its system.

Xcel said its proposal for its Upper Midwest system would

deliver 63 percent carbon-free energy by 2030 "and protect reliability, jobs and economic vitality" by:

- Retiring two coal-fired units at Sherco in 2023 and 2026.

- Advancing the pace of integrating wind and solar resources so in five years, 28 percent of Xcel Energy's energy mix will be from renewable sources. By 2030, it will be 35 percent.

- Operating its carbon-free nuclear plants in Monticello and Prairie Island through

their existing licenses so they continue to serve as the region's reliable energy backbone.

- Developing new natural gas generation in the region, including natural gas generation at Sherco and in North Dakota.

- Continuing to help customers be even more energy efficient. By 2030 the company estimated its energy efficiency programs combined with renewable energy additions will allow it to avoid adding three more combined-cycle gas plants to its system.

Xcel Energy filed its proposal with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in Reply Comments to the 2015 Integrated Resource Plan that the company submitted on Jan. 2. It is currently under MPUC review.

Unit No. 3 at Sherco was not mentioned. It is the newest and largest unit, at 900 megawatts. Xcel owns 59 percent of Sherco 3. The Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency owns 41 percent. The unit provides approximately 85 percent of the energy production on the SMMPA system.

## Solar market grows

The residential solar market, according to the Solar Energy Industries Association, grew 70 percent year-over-year in the second quarter, with 473 megawatts installed.

The non-residential market finished the quarter down 33 percent from the same period.

With the federal solar Investment Tax Credit (ITC) scheduled to drop at the end of 2016, utility-scale development is reportedly at an all-time high with more than 5 GW of capacity currently under construction.




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see next page please

Center. Persons selected for an interview will be required to submit a cover letter, resume, and references. DEADLINE: October 30, 2015. Equal Opportunity Employer

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1895 and serves approximately 2,600 customers in the city of Vinton, Iowa. Vinton is located 35 miles northwest of Cedar Rapids, Iowa with a population around 5,300. VMEU revenues are around \$5,000,000 annually with a current workforce of 7 fulltime employees and one part time employee. Fulltime employees are part of IBEW Local 55 union. VMEU offers excellent benefits, a competitive salary and an excellent community to live in. VMEU will be accepting applications until November 30, 2015; however, individual screening and interviewing will begin as qualified applications are received. Candidates wishing to be considered for the General Manager position must submit a cover letter, resume, salary history, and a minimum of 4 professional references to [GeneralManager@vmeu.org](mailto:GeneralManager@vmeu.org)

For a complete listing, including For Sale items, see the News section at [www.mmua.org](http://www.mmua.org)

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13.) Publication Title:  
The MMUA Resource

14.) Issue Date for Circulation Data Below

15.) Extent and Nature of Circulation

	Average No. of Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	2096	2026
1 Mailed Outside-County Subscriptions	1911	1890
2. Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions	135	86
Paid Distribution Outside the Mails	0	0
Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail	0	0
Total Paid Distribution	2046	1976
Free or Nominal Rate Outside County Copies	0	0
Free or Nominal Rate Inside County Copies	0	0
Etc	0	0
Total Distribution:	2046	1976
Copies Not Distributed	50	50
Total	2096	2026
Percent Paid	100%	100%

## Willmar:

*continued from front page*

contract that supplied 30 megawatts to Willmar. GRE provides 72 percent of WMU's wholesale power needs. Other resources in the mix include 11.5 percent from the Western Area Power Administration, 8.6 percent from the local plant, 6.2 percent from a Wisconsin nuclear plant and 1.9 percent from two WMU-owned wind turbines.

The GRE-WMU power supply contract expires the end of 2015, but the parties recently agreed to a new contract that extends out to 2026.

While WMU was perfectly willing to continue to buy power from GRE, the municipal wanted to own more transmission. WMU owns 3.2 percent of the transmission assets in GRE pricing zone and comprises 4.2 percent of the total load.



The Willmar Municipal Utilities staff and commission members paused for a picture during the utility's public power week celebration Oct. 6. Half the staff is new to the utility in the last five years. Every senior level employee in 2011, with the exception of General Manager Wes Hompe (standing on the truck) has retired. The average age of a WMU lineman is now 27.

"Our goal has always been to net out our transmission cost to zero, so we're not making money but our ratepayers aren't paying more," Hompe said.

With that in mind, WMU in 2014 decided to follow the process to join MISO as a

transmission owner and is also building assets.

The WMU Commission in 2014 approved a new 115/69 kV Priam substation and associated transmission work. The approximately \$3.5 million project will remove a reliability concern of serving all

of WMU/GRE load from the single Willmar substation, which has been narrowly missed by tornadoes on several occasions.

A related issue is what to do with WMU's local power plant and district heating

system. Electric capacity, in the form of small, coal-fired power plants, is vanishing. The worth of the local plant was shown during the 'polar vortex' of 2014, when prices in the wholesale market skyrocketed.

The decision has been made to stay in local generation. Maintaining the economic viability of a local plant isn't any easier for WMU than anybody else, although few have been as creative. WMU is the first plant in the state to receive a permit to burn corn cobs. It has been shown to be technically feasible (Hompe calls his power plant employees "mechanical geniuses"). Prices in the wholesale market, however, have put that idea on the shelf for now.

The staff is talented but about half of the plant's 17 employees have turned over in the last three years.

## With power supply settled, a host of other issues remain for Willmar

While Willmar Municipal Utilities has largely settled its power supply issue for many years, the utility has scored several other successes while a host of other issues remain to be worked through.

Perhaps not urgent but constantly in mind is the utility headquarters building, which was built in 1956. The present Service Center, where the trucks are housed, originally was a MnDOT facility. WMU purchased and renovated the facility in 1984. The building presents a number of issues, not the least of which is most line trucks today can no longer fit in the garage.

Upgrades to the 20-year-old water treatment plant are in the planning stages, with

a potential price tag of \$8-9 million. (The city wastewater treatment plant cost \$82 million.)

### *Distribution project complete*

The utility recently completed a project to place its electric distribution system underground.

Of 224 miles of line, 191 are underground. The remaining consist of feeder lines that are the city's power backbone. Of 9,500 electric services, only 140 commercial accounts will be served by overhead lines.

New residential areas have been served underground since 1968. Now that the conversion is complete, the utility has started to replace some of that old underground line.

### *Unique territory agreement*

WMU and Kandiyohi Cooperative signed an unusual service territory agreement in 2008, and WMU exercised the agreement for the first time this year. Under terms of the agreement, Kandiyohi Power Cooperative can build the system to serve newly-annexed areas (in consultation with the municipal) and serve it for a number of years, depending on how quickly it develops. Once the area develops to 50 percent fill, the municipal can acquire the area 10 years later.

In the initial area of transition this year, the cooperative built the system and served the area for seven years after City annexation. The municipal



Willmar Municipal Utilities offices are housed in a building originally built in 1956 by the Minnesota Department of Transportation, on U.S. Hwy. 12. The municipal power plant is located behind the office building. The plant runs around the clock to provide electricity and district heating service.

then purchased the facilities. No payment was made for lost revenue, since the co-

operative had at least seven years of profit (margins).

## MMUA Technical and Operations (T&O) Conference

Dec. 15-17, 2015, Holiday Inn and Suites, St. Cloud

This important conference offers useful information to superintendents, managers, supervisors and crew leaders about upcoming challenges to municipal utilities. It is also designed to create great leaders within the municipal utility industry!

### *Tentative Program*

#### **December 15**

Building and Leading Successful Teams – Kit Welchlin  
New Product Demo  
Product Show

#### **December 16**

Error Management: What Safety Leaders Know—What High-Performing Employees Do!  
– Lisa Haen

#### *Breakout sessions:*

Developing and Maintaining Your Rate Structure – Dave Berg Consulting  
APPA Mutual Aid Plan Framework – Mike Willetts, MMUA  
Mutual Aid Asset Management, – Graham Nelson Veracity Group  
Energy Storage to Smooth Solar Power – Dave Wick, S&C  
Substation Security – TBA  
A Real-World Water and Electric

#### AMI Application

– Kirk Peterson, HD Supply

#### MPCA Clean Power Plan Update

– Bob Jagusch, MMUA

#### PCB Spills and Containment

– Joe Steffel, City of Buffalo

#### **December 17**

Safety and Leadership Lessons from the North Pole

– Polar Explorer John Huston

APPA Lineworker Rodeo

– Mike Willetts and

Rodeo Leadership Team

MMUA Update - MMUA Staff

For more information, watch your inbox or go to [www.mmua.org/](http://www.mmua.org/)!

## Cross Training school coming to Training Center

The MMUA Basic Cross Training School is set for Dec. 8-10 at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall.

This school is designed to create a competent ground person who is able to recognize tools, equipment and hazards, in an effort to help keep the lineworker, and the ground person, efficient and safe.

Cross Training is a program for a non-lineworker who desires a higher degree of skilled performance.

The class is designed for employees in other departments that would assist lineworkers on a call-out or in an emergency.

For more information, go to the Events/Calendar section at [www.mmua.org](http://www.mmua.org)