

Mayor's Column for the October 9, 2013 edition of the Evansville Review

Energy Efforts in Evansville

The American Public Power Association is celebrating this week, October 6-12, as Public Power Week. Evansville is one of the more than 2,000 municipally-owned electric utilities in the U.S. Evansville Water & Light Utility was established in 1901 and has proudly served us for 112 years!

Our utility became a member owner of WPPI Energy in July 2006. WPPI Energy, the fifth-largest electric utility in Wisconsin, is a joint action agency composed of 51 municipal electric utilities, 41 located in Wisconsin and the remainder located in Iowa and Michigan. Our relationship with WPPI Energy is immensely valuable to us. It reduces volatility in local energy costs, provides cost savings through joint purchasing, assists with rate filings to the Public Service Commission, provides information and advocacy on important energy policy matters at the state and federal levels, and is a rich source of energy expertise for smaller communities.

Alderman Jim Brooks and I serve on the new, nine-member Policy and Communications Leadership Council of WPPI Energy, whose mission is to provide guidance on policy issues and increase grass-tops outreach on legislative and regulatory issues impacting our public power utilities and customers.

In mid-September, Mark Sendelbach, Nicole Sidoff, Jim Brooks, and I attended the WPPI Energy annual meeting in Middleton. Lauren Azar, until recently Senior Advisor to Secretary Steven Chu of the U.S. Department of Energy and a former member of the Wisconsin Public Service Commission, was a featured speaker at the meeting. She spoke about the transformation occurring in the electric utility industry.

Ms. Azar identified a number of "game changers" on the horizon. Current work on electrical storage technology will have significant impacts on electrical distribution. She spoke of Hurricane Sandy as a transformative event in the eastern United States, discussing the devastating loss of power for days, except for a number of microgrids. She posits that the future of the electric utility business will be very different because of these technological advances and ever changing economic conditions.

Azar argued that electric utilities must adapt operations to handle the recent increase in severe weather activity, regardless of the debate about global warming. Evansville Water & Light is addressing weather events in a number of ways. Our utility is in the midst of a multi-year project to bury existing urban electrical lines. The utility regularly trims trees that could impact power lines. The utility improvement plan includes projects that add additional looping, line segmentation, to reduce the number of customers impacted by a specific outage.

Emeritus Professor Robert Lasseter of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the UW-Madison was another speaker at the annual meeting. He provided

an in-depth look at microgrids and suggested that electric utilities could offer microgrids to customers as a service in the future.

Evansville Water & Light was recently designated a Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) by the American Public Power Association. Our utility is among the top 10% of public power utilities in the U.S. for providing customers with the highest degree of reliable and safe electric service. RP3 involves peer review of a utility's adherence to industry best practices. Our utility received the highest rating in the systems improvement category, which includes energy conservation and energy efficiency outreach implementation, as well as long-term distribution projects and operational improvements planning.

The Evansville Common Council has recently indicated its interest in reactivating the Evansville Energy Independence Team. The Team met monthly during the grant period for the 2009 Pilot Wisconsin Energy Independent Community 25x25 Planning Grant, and quarterly in 2010 and 2011. A reconstituting meeting of the Team will be held this week to review past actions, discuss status of our 25x25 plan, and identify potential future efforts to increase energy conservation and efficiency throughout our community.

The first planning meeting for the 2014 Evansville Energy Fair is being held this week. The Fair is scheduled for Friday, April 25, 2014, and is also Arbor Day 2014.

Evansville Water & Light is an important asset to our city. Utility staff works for us and are quickly on the scene when needed. We are their number one priority. Over time, our electric rates are lower than those of investor-owned utilities. Our publicly-owned utility provides local jobs, with positive local economic impacts. Our utility provides local contributions, including scholarships, funding for our nationally-recognized annual energy fair, and support for activities such as the 4th of July celebration and hanging of holiday lights and street banners. In 2012, the Evansville Water & Light Utility payment in lieu of taxes to the city general fund was \$423,695.

Our community has actively embraced past energy initiatives, from geothermal heating and cooling at Evansville High School to solar hot water heating at the city outdoor swimming pool. Our utility will continue to engage in industry best practices in the future and the Evansville Energy Independence Team will champion additional projects that serve the interests of our citizens. I am excited by and proud of Evansville's growing energy reputation. We will all be beneficiaries of additional community endeavors.

Community Announcements

Eager Free Public Library has two Kill-A-Watt electricity monitors, as well as instructions for use, available for checkout by patrons. A monitor can be used to measure the amount of electricity used by different appliances and electronics in your home.

In conjunction with Public Power Week, Evansville Water & Light is giving away LED holiday lights at City Hall from October 7 through October 11. Lights will be distributed

one to a customer on a first come, first serve basis until gone. Customers must present a utility bill at the service counter to document that they are utility customers.

This week, October 7 through October 11, is the final curbside yard waste collection of the season. The city yard waste facility at 465 Water Street will remain open through Thanksgiving to drop off brush and yard waste. Hours are Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and Wednesdays from 5-7 p.m., weather and daylight permitting.

Leaf collection will begin shortly. Leaves only should be raked into the gutter, taking care to keep storm water catch basins open. Please do not include brush and garden debris with the leaves.

October 6-12 is National Fire Prevention Week. Please take a moment to review fire prevention and safety with your families.

Park enhancement work is occurring this week in Evansville. Allen Creek wall restoration and installation of the disc golf course are taking place in Leonard-Leota Park and the first phase of development of the Evansville Peace Garden, a central walking path at Seminary Park, is underway.

The Evansville Farmers Market will include a Fall Craft Show on Saturday, October 12. The Market is held adjacent to Creekside Place, 102 Maple Street, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The Evansville Police Department and Building A Safer Evansville (BASE) will participate in the National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on Saturday, October 26, from 8-11 a.m. at the Evansville Police Department, 10 West Church Street. Unneeded prescription and over-the-counter drugs, in original containers with personal information removed, and sharps in containers will be collected. The drug drop-off box (no sharps) at the Police Department remains available for drop-off at your convenience. Help keep our ground water free of drug contamination and our youth safe.

Community Thanks

Evansville thanks the volunteer members of the Evansville Fire District for their continuous dedication to local fire protection.

We thank the many contributors and volunteers that have supported the citizen-driven Evansville Peace Garden and disc golf course projects. These community enhancements will be enjoyed by individuals of all ages in the coming years.