

LIVELines

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Municipal Utility Leaders Voice Concerns with Sale of Municipal Water/Sewer Utilities Legislation

Advocates for municipal electric, water and wastewater utilities from across the state headed to the Capitol Feb. 17 for the annual Municipal Utilities Legislative Day in Madison, WI. Approximately 75 municipal utility officials, utility managers, commissioners and mayors attended the event. The event provides a great opportunity for municipal utility leaders to advocate for their issues to the state legislature. Attendees received a legislative update from The Kammer Group - MEUW's lobbying firm, and discussed initiatives at the Public Service Commission with Bob Seitz, executive assistant



Senators Cowles and Roth answer questions and share insight during the event.

to PSC Chairperson Ellen Nowak, and Jeff Stone, administrator of the PSC's Division of Water, Telecommunications and Consumer Affairs. Senator Rob Cowles and Senator Roger Roth, chairmen of legislative committees that deal with issues affecting municipal utilities, also shared their insights on a variety of topics.

Representatives from electric (Matt Bromley, MEUW), water (Dave Lawrence, WRWA and Lawrie Kobza, MEG-Water) and wastewater (Vanessa Wishart, MEG-Wastewater) associations briefed attendees on their respective policy issues. Topping the list of issues that attendees raised with their state legislators was legislation to make it easier to sell a municipal water or sewer utility to a private out-of-state company. State legislators were asked to oppose the legislation because it removes the requirement that local referendum be held before a municipal utility can be sold. Other issues discussed included multi-discharger variance and groundwater legislation, and proposed changes to funding for the Focus on Energy program.

To view a copy of the information papers given to attendees, which include the issues for each sector (electric, water and wastewater), [click here](#).



MEUW Executive Director's Corner

By Matt Bromley, MEUW Executive Director

Legislative advocacy is one of the primary purposes of MEUW and its effectiveness depends on having informed and engaged members, respected opinions and the ability to build coalitions with other organizations and stakeholders. Our advocacy efforts were put to the test recently as MEUW weighed in against legislation to privatize municipal water utilities. In December, a private out-of-state water utility began pushing for legislation (Assembly Bill 554/Senate Bill 432) in the state Capitol to make it easier for private companies to purchase Wisconsin's municipal water and sewer utilities. The legislation does two things. First, it relaxes the state's signature utility ratepayer protection law - the Wisconsin Public Utility Holding Company Act - to allow an out-of-state company to own and operate a utility in the state. Second, it eliminates the requirement that a local referendum be held before a municipal water or sewer utility can be sold to a private company, making it more difficult for citizens to have a voice in an important decision affecting their utility.

MEUW viewed the legislation as a significant threat to what it means to be a community-owned utility. We joined our water/wastewater utility friends and consumer advocates to oppose the bills. Indeed, much of our Municipal Utilities Legislative Day on Feb. 17 in Madison, hosted by MEUW, Wisconsin Rural Water Association, Wisconsin Water Association, and the Municipal Environmental Group - Water and Waste Water divisions, was focused on the water utility privatization legislation. In the weeks leading up to our legislative day, our organizations' members had been actively engaged in expressing their concerns through emails and phone calls to state lawmakers. The event provided another opportunity to reinforce our message as members met with legislators and staff in the Capitol.

Our efforts have been successful. While AB 554 passed the Assembly in January and was on the verge of being voted upon by the Senate, our grassroots member contacts to lawmakers, the hard work and skill of our lobbyists at The Kammer Group, and the help from many other groups and organizations that shared our concerns with the legislation, helped stop the vote from happening, and likely killed the bill for this year.

We should all be proud of our efforts, but we can't let down our guard. It is expected that the privatization bill, or something very similar, will reappear next year. Therefore, it is important that our advocacy not end when the state legislature officially adjourns for the year later this month. We must use this summer and fall to keep our elected officials informed and aware of the tremendous value municipal utilities provide to the citizens and communities of Wisconsin. Please contact us if we can be of any help in facilitating a meeting or discussion with your elected representatives in the state Legislature or Congress.

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MEUW JT&S Underground Facility Locating Workshop

Registration Open!

The MEUW JT&S Underground Facility Locating Workshop will be held April 12-13 in Oconomowoc, WI and will be taught by Christopher Koch. With twenty years in damage prevention, Koch has served as secretary, vice president, and president of the National Utility Locating Contractors Association where he worked to develop the current Professional Competency Standard for Locate Technicians.

The workshop will cover information found in Units 1-3 of the National Utility Locating Contractors Association (NULCA) Professional Competency Standard including locating theory, use of the transmitter and use of the receiver. Participants will enjoy an engaging and entertaining classroom session and then have the opportunity to practice locating outdoors using a variety of instruments and techniques. Several written exams will be included as well as a hands-on skills assessment. All learners will receive a certificate documenting the training received. [Click here](#) for registration materials and more information.

Coming Events

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Mar. 7-9 | APPA Legislative Rally, Washington D.C. |
| Mar. 28-31 | MEUW JT&S Watt-Hour Meter Workshop, Green Bay
Register to Attend!
Register to Exhibit at the Trade Show! |
| April 12-13 | MEUW JT&S Underground Facility Locating Workshop, Oconomowoc
Register to Attend! |
| June 1-3 | MEUW Annual Conference, Elkhart Lake |
| June 8 | MEUW Management Training Program - Session E, Wisconsin Dells |

Mark your calendar! Visit the MEUW [website](#) for a full list of events scheduled through 2016.

Management Training Program: Session D Wraps Up

The Feb. 10 Management Training Program: Session D covered the topic of utility accounting and finance. There was a total of 33 attendees at the seminar, representing 19 member utilities.

Accurate and timely financial reporting is critical to the effective and efficient operation of a utility. Presenters Jodi Dobson and Tom Unke from Baker Tilly Virchow Krause, LLP explained that all employees have a role in the financial reporting process, and while not all need to understand the details of the utility's accounting system, they should recognize their duties in gathering and reporting financial information. The program reviewed the concepts of financial statements, the rate-setting role of the Public Service Commission, and how to report the costs of construction projects. The presenters also emphasized the importance of preparing budgets and benchmarks, and shared keys to successful budgeting.

There was a total of four graduates recognized this session for completing all six sessions of the Management Training Program. Congratulations to the following graduates: Jim Henthorne, Black Earth Electric Utilities; Curt Kreilkamp, Hartford Electric; Kelvin Schlagel, Juneau Utility Commission; and John Schuh, Oconomowoc Utilities.

The MEUW Management Training Program consists of six sessions and has been a successful effort in providing education to create "home grown" management personnel. This program is designed for both existing management and future management prospects offering relevant and engaging sessions. Participants may start at any point in the six-session (A-F) program, which is scheduled over a two-year period. MEUW will recognize those who complete the program. [Click here](#) for more information on the program.



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Member News & Tidbits

MEUW is Now Accepting Nominations for the 2016 MEUW Awards!

Now is the time to nominate a mayor, city council representative or utility commissioner for the Philip La Follette Public Official Award. Consider nominating someone who has significantly contributed to the betterment of public power for the Donald Smith Distinguished Service Award. And, don't forget governing board members with ten or more years of service (as of April 2016) who qualify for The Charlie Bradburn Pillars of Public Power Award! This award recognizes governing board members for their years of service, and those that serve must be nominated or re-nominated every year. For more information [click here](#).

MEUW Safety Achievement Award; Apply Today!

Deadline Extended Until March 7

The MEUW Safety Achievement Award Program is designed to recognize and reward MEUW members who create, improve or maintain a safe workplace through safety compliance and awareness measures. When employers recognize safety compliance responsibility and expect accountability from their employees, it positively reinforces safe behavior and creates a proactive safety culture in the workplace. This award recognizes and encourages employers who make a difference in their efforts to continuously improve the safety behavior of employees and their work environment.

We invite all MEUW members to submit your application for the 2015 Safety Achievement Award! Award information and application can be found on the [MEUW website](#). Recipients of the award will be recognized at the MEUW Annual Conference in June. If you have questions regarding the completion of the application, please contact Chris Schlechta at 608-837-2263 or cschlechta@meuw.org.

Municipal Electric Utility Reporting Requirements

As we enter 2016, please be reminded of the upcoming reporting deadlines. [Click here](#) for a list outlining the various reports required with the applicable due dates and contacts.

Send your member news and tidbits to Rachel Stephenson at rstephenson@meuw.org.



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Classifieds

MEUW is hiring a job training and safety instructor. This position will provide professional development, continuing education, and safety training services to apprentice and journeyman lineman at 15-20 locations statewide. The deadline to apply is March 4, 2016. [Click here](#) for a complete job description and application details.

Oconto Falls Municipal Utilities seeks a customer service representative. Applications will be accepted until March 18. [Click here](#) for a complete job description and application details.

Manitowoc Public Utilities (MPU), is seeking applications for the position of journeyman line technician. This is a full-time position and requires constructing and maintaining electric power facilities up to 69 kilovolts. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. [Click here](#) for a complete job description and application details.

Send your employment opportunities to Rachel Stephenson at rstephenson@meuw.org.

Connect with MEUW on LinkedIn! Stay up-to-date on the latest news, insights and opportunities from MEUW. [Follow us](#) today!

Continuing Education Opportunities:

Advancing Compressed Air Systems

March 8 | 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. | Pewaukee, WI

March 10 | 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. | Appleton, WI

Cost: \$199

Take a look at the real costs associated with running compressed air systems. Review case studies and actual compressed air system components. A systematic approach to enhance system performance will be discussed and detailed actions will be outlined in order to identify opportunities to save energy, such as heat recovery and increase productivity. A management program, including leak management, will be addressed to ensure these systems continue to operate at their optimal level of performance. [Learn more and register today.](#)

Municipal Broadband Conference

March 30-31 | Des Moines, Iowa

Cost: \$129

The Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities is holding its annual Municipal Broadband Conference March 30-31, in Des Moines, Iowa. This year's conference has numerous workshop sessions for municipal broadband systems. Newly added are track sessions designed for communities that are exploring municipal fiber networks. [Learn more and register today.](#)



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- Governance Series: Legal Obligations, Duties and Responsibilities of Public Power Governing Boards **March 10**
- Electric Utility 101 Series: Substations **March 15**
- Rating Agency Outlook for Public Power **March 16**
- Cyber Insurance Series: Cyber Insurance Primer **March 22**
- Cyber Insurance Series: What You Should Know When Purchasing Coverage **March 30**
- Governance Series: Federal Legislative and Regulatory Issues for Boards **April 7**




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