

POWER CONNECTION

Indiana Municipal Electric Association



**Pride in People that Work in Public Power:
Why are Public Utilities Important to Society?**

Public utilities are meant to supply goods and services that are considered essential; water, gas, electricity, telephone, waste disposal, and other communication systems represent much of the public utility market. There are many different types of public utilities. Some, especially large companies, offer multiple products, such as electricity and natural gas. Other companies specialize in one specific product, such as water. **(Pages 1 - 3)**

Good Governance: How Boards Help Public Power Succeed

Governing boards — whether a city council or an independently elected or appointed group — are a valuable link in ensuring that public power organizations operate and move forward in ways that represent the desires of their communities.

(Page 5 - 11)

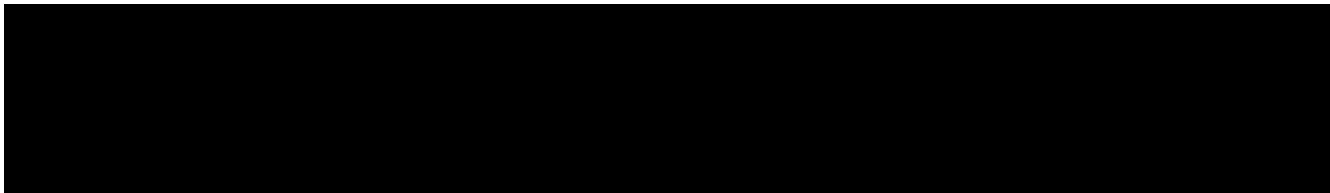
2024 IMEA Lineworkers Rodeo

Mark Your Calendar. 2024 IMEA Lineworkers’ Rodeo held on Friday – Saturday, September 27 – 28, 2024. Thank you to our host The City of Lawrenceburg and Lawrenceburg Municipal Utilities.

(Pages 13)

The People Behind Public Power: Celebrating Employees in Public Power

To honor the occasion in this first quarter Power Connection, we have highlighted Indiana Municipalities that make public power possible – our workforce. The past three years have been a whirlwind of highs and lows, challenges and successes, but through it all each have remained determined to serve their communities as well as keeping the lights on. **(Pages 15 - 19)**



CONTENTS



- 1** Pride in People that Work in Public Power : Why are Public Utilities Important to Society? *(Continued, Page 3)*
- 3** Pride in People that Work in Public Power : Why are Public Utilities Important to Society?
- 5** Good Governance: How Boards Help Public Power Succeed *(Continued, Page 7)*
- 7** Good Governance: How Boards Help Public Power Succeed *(Continued, Page 9)*
- 9** Good Governance: How Boards Help Public Power Succeed *(Continued, Page 11)*
- 11** Good Governance: How Boards Help Public Power Succeed
- 13** 2024 IMEA Lineworkers' Rodeo
- 15** The People Behind Public Power: Celebrating Employees in Public Power *(Continued, Page 17)*
- 17** The People Behind Public Power: Celebrating Employees in Public Power *(Continued, Page 19)*
- 19** The People Behind Public Power: Celebrating Employees in Public Power
- 21** A Recipe to Ring in Spring: A Glazed Easter Ham

IMEA

Pride in People that Work in Public Power

How Does Power and Utilities Contribute to a Community?

A public power utility provides long-term value to its community and citizens. The benefits are manifold, including (to name a few) rate stability, support for jobs, policies that are in line with community priorities, and financial support for local government functions.

Given the essential role of the power grid, electric utilities are in a unique position to lead disaster mitigation and preparedness. Alongside medical care, water, and food, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) identifies access to energy as one of several community lifelines, which “are the most fundamental services in the community that, when stabilized, enable all other aspects of society to function.” This points to a vital and often unrecognized role of utilities in supporting economic resilience before, during, and after disasters. In particular, providing sustained access to energy can decrease the cascading social consequences that often drive a disaster’s negative economic impact.

Electric utilities play a critical role in powering economic development as well. They provide the essential infrastructure that supports industrial operations, attracts and retains businesses, and improves the overall quality of life for all local residents. As the demand for clean, sustainable energy sources increases, electric utilities must continue to invest in new technologies and infrastructure to meet the changing needs of their customers. By building strong relationships with electric utility partners, economic developers can help ensure development timelines and project success while also highlighting the utility’s role in economic development and the value they bring.

(Continued, Page 3)



Trevor Ayres, *Employed with Flora Utilities since March of 2017 makes great efforts to assist his employees to grow and connect with one another as a team. Focusing on making sure that all team members play a versatile role in multiple projects during all their day- to-day operations. Flora Utilities serves approximately 1,200 customers and provides electric , water, wastewater services.*

Trevor and the Flora Electric Utility crew take pride in the community they serve. Making sure that the Town of Flora residents and businesses all remain safe from harm as well as keeping the lights on. IMEA Board of Directors & Staff appreciate all that you do and the efforts you make in Flora, Indiana.



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ABOUT THE IMEA

IMEA has operated as the statewide service association representing the issues and concerns of municipally owned and operated electric utilities while promoting the benefits and public power business model since 1941.



(Continued, Page 1)

Public power helps communities thrive.

There is tremendous value in public power, and it's so much bigger than just energy. It's the lifeblood that enables growth within communities, driving them towards progress, while helping them celebrate their rich histories.

It provides local control that allows them to prioritize local needs when making important decisions. It also connects them to the network of public power communities across the country, giving them a broad support system and access to greater resources than they would otherwise have on their own.

With access to these resources, public power communities pride themselves on delivering the exceptional reliability and superior service that their customers expect.

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(Continued)

Good Governance: How Boards Help Public Power Succeed

Governing boards — whether a city council or an independently elected or appointed group — are a valuable link in ensuring that public power organizations operate and move forward in ways that represent the desires of their communities. Being a utility board member or commissioner requires getting up to speed on a lot of technical topics and balancing several roles. We asked public power leaders what makes for good governance.

Keys to success

Ron Skagen, a commissioner for Douglas County Public Utility District in Washington state, stressed that it is important to have good rapport with fellow board members, to support each other — and utility leadership — in being successful. “No one person should dominate the commission,” cautioned Skagen. “As you’ve been there awhile, you have to work at making sure new commissioners are equal. It doesn’t mean we have the same skill or interest, but we have the same authority.” Skagen is serving his 14th year on the commission; he noted that he has the longest tenure of the current slate of commissioners for the PUD.

“Never forget that you are serving the public, and they ultimately do want the utility to be successful,” said Randy Smith, a commissioner for Chelan County Public Utility District in Washington state and chair of the American Public Power Association’s Policy Makers Council. “When they get frustrated, quite often it means there is an issue out there.”

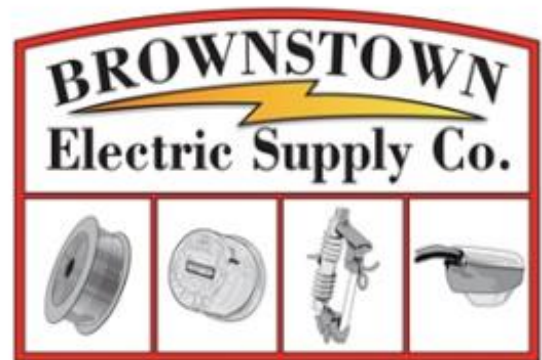
Both Skagen and Smith credit the nonpartisan nature of the roles as helpful in discussions. “We don’t talk in terms of party; we talk in terms of what’s best for our county,” said Smith.

Smith recalled a contentious meeting shortly after he started on the board that concerned the PUD’s strategic plan. He recalled that the meeting had many citizens in attendance and lasted for more than six hours. “It was painful, but it was a necessary part of us growing into who we are today, which is a commission who really steps back and tries to do our homework and think through our pluses and minuses of the decisions we make.”

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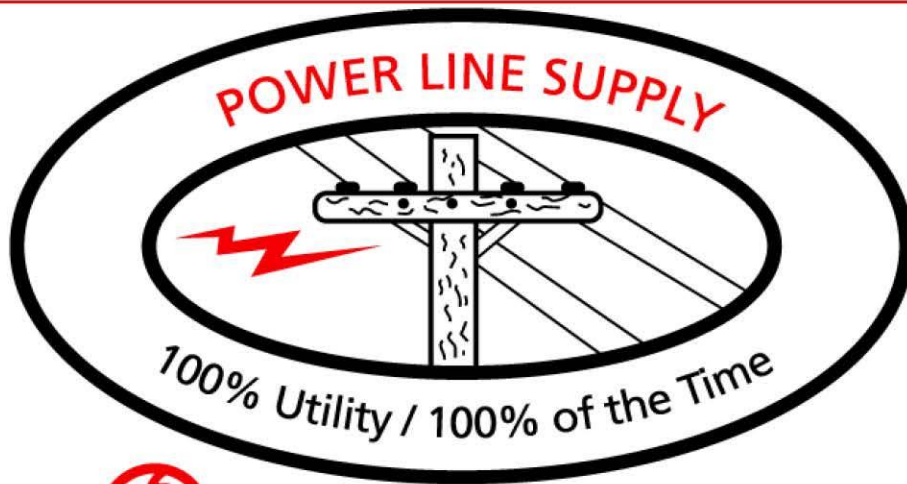
Doug Middleton, Argos Utilities (Left), & Randy Ennis, Washington Electric Light & Power (Right)



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(Continued)

“[We have] two eyes, two ears, and one mouth — and there’s a message there. Good governance starts with good observation and good listening skills, and a lot less with your ability to speak,” added Smith.

“We all have a background in our community; we all attempt to represent not only that constituency, but how those constituencies work together,” said Smith, who noted that he was elected to represent the agricultural community in the district. “They are not always going to agree, but if there is trust between me and the people who have elected me, that goes a long way to maintaining good governance.”

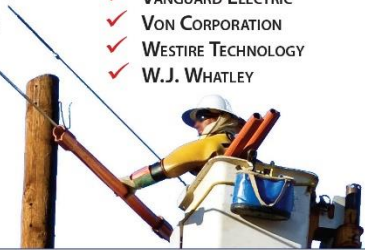
Randy Howard, general manager of the Northern California Power Agency, also pointed to the value of having a board that brings a broad set of interests. The joint action agency has 16 members throughout northern California, including utilities serving urban areas in the San Francisco Bay Area and rural areas that have a strong agricultural industry.

“The governing board being that diverse — regionally and in the types of communities they serve — creates some really good dialogue and discussion,” said Howard. “We tend to get to some very good decisions.” (Continued, Page 9).

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(Continued)

Staying in your lane

Knowing who you serve as a governing board member can also be different than who you serve in other roles.

“When we get a new governing board member, they feel strongly that their role is to represent their utility and their consumers within that community,” said Howard. “When they are on our governing board, they need to be concerned about their community interests, but they also need to recognize they are part of a much larger group of entities that are very diverse and representing the interest of our entity, not just their community.”

“With good intentions, it is easy to drift into what is not your responsibility, and that can be very disruptive to the utility,” said Skagen.

“Commissioners need to stay in their lane and not try to be the manager. Some might come to the role as a small business owner and come in with the mindset that they are a manager ... but we should expect the GM to do the job.”

“[Our] two most important jobs are who we hire as our manager and making sure the budget we approve reflects the wishes of our constituency,” noted Smith. “I see my job as one of understanding what we are doing and looking down the road for speed bumps and potholes to make sure we can navigate them with the least possible damage to the utility.”

“Our role is to look down five to 10 years or longer, while our manager’s role is to execute on a much shorter time frame,” explained Smith.

Staying informed

Smith advises other governing board members, especially those in their first few years in the role, to “go to every educational meeting you possibly can think of and take the information in like it’s through a fire hose. You may not need it all, but it will help clarify for you what the issues are and help you identify what you are really interested in working on in your time as a commissioner.”

He mentioned that Chelan PUD commissioners attend APPA events for the education and to “expand their horizons” on what issues other utilities are dealing with and how they are meeting any challenges.

Skagen and his fellow commissioners also look to APPA and state associations for training both new commissioners and longer-term commissioners to get up to speed on the latest issues and to network with other utility governors.

“We look to these associations to help us and to provide continuity. Elected folks, we come and go. By definition, we should not be there forever,” he said.

While governing board members don’t have to be technical experts to do their job, Skagen noted that members are more effective when they “understand some of the nuts and bolts of utility operations.”

“You are expected to make yourself qualified through training. You are expected to ask tough questions of management,” shared Skagen. He said that the commissioners attend a monthly training session on topics that include both industry updates and governance processes and issues.

“Do not be afraid to demonstrate what you don’t know by your questions. Most likely, if you have a question, someone else does, too,” said Skagen. From the public power organization side, Howard noted that NCPA also makes an effort to write articles and social media posts for its member utilities that highlight the work that goes into being a board member to help educate community members on how much time and effort the role requires.

Strengthening relationships

In addition to staying up to date on utility issues, Smith also advises that governing board members take the time to build relationships with other elected officials outside of the utility focus. Chelan PUD commissioners, for example, get together with port commissioners and other local authorities for a monthly meeting.

“Having those relationships across the elected lines of your responsibility, recognizing that you serve the same constituency, can really pay dividends in working together,” he said.

Howard stressed the importance of offering this connectivity through utility meetings. NCPA hosts regular roundtable sessions for board members in its events, which Howard said gives members the opportunity to connect and discuss community issues — utility related or not.

“Within your agendas, try to ensure that you provide and schedule those types of roundtable times,” said Howard. “These people are busy. You want to make it a valuable time for them as well. When you have those kinds of forums and their access to others, that becomes really valuable to some of them.” *(Continued, Page 11)*

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(Continued)

Howard noted that some of the hot topics brought up in virtual events in 2020 included strategies for deferring payments and eliminating shutoffs to support customers experiencing hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the long term, having these relationships also helps with being good advocates.

“[Board members] have the ability to open doors that I don’t normally have the ability to open,” noted Howard. “A lot of congressional members started off as a mayor or city council member or county supervisor within these communities, and so a lot of our elected officials know them well.” Having the relationship is one piece of advocating; the other is learning how to be an effective ambassador for the utility.

“Part of becoming a good elected official is learning how to advocate on behalf of the utility and being comfortable serving in that capacity,” said Skagen. That learning process happens, in part, through having connections with other utility board members and working through associations to effectively advocate and share resources, he said.

One message is conveying what distinguishes public power from other utility types. While Skagen admitted that there’s a strong public power presence in Washington state, and that many legislators understand the benefits of community ownership, he shared that there can still be times when the PUD message gets “lumped in” with other utilities, even if its stance on an issue differs.

Howard underscored how education is helpful in ensuring that board members have a full picture of how a legislative or regulatory change or policy goal might affect residents and city budgets. As an example, Howard mentioned that if a city has an ambitious emissions reduction goal, then board members can provide informed details about the financial impact of stranded assets when questioned at city council meetings.

Motivated to serve

Both Smith and Skagen felt compelled to take on the roles through a sense of civic duty.

“I think all of us should find ways to reinvest in our community. You have to look at your interests and skill sets and see how you can do that,” said Skagen. He also noted that being part of a group that shares values in giving back to the community is fun.

“We have a free country, and in order for it to continue to be a free country, we all have a responsibility to seek out those areas where we can give back to make it better or at least maintain what we have,” said Smith. “If you remember who your electorate is — and listen and try to navigate the needs and wants with what’s best for the utility — it’s hard to imagine not being successful at the end of the day.” — *American Public Power Association, Susan Partain*



*Jeff Greeno, Lebanon Utilities
(IMEA Board of Director Secretary Treasurer)*



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To honor the occasion in this first quarter Power Connection, we have highlighted Indiana Municipalities that make public power possible – our workforce. The past three years have been a whirlwind of highs and lows, challenges and successes, but through it all each have remained determined to serve their communities as well as keeping the lights on.

Public Power employees take pride in their work because they know their customers are their family, friends and neighbors. Public power utilities provide a direct benefit to their communities in the form of payments and contributions to state and local government.

Public power: A rich history, a bright future

The public power business model – also known as municipal ownership – is an American tradition rooted in community. In place since the 1880s, the model is simple: distribute electricity to local customers on a not-for-profit basis. The focus is on customers. Rates are cost-based. Service is reliable. Dollars spent on electricity stay in the community and are re-invested there. Customers are the owners and – through elected or appointed governing boards or city councils – the decision makers for their utilities. Where economies of scale are helpful for meeting energy needs, public power utilities form joint action agencies serving a single state or region.

Today, public power – locally owned and controlled electricity service – is as relevant and valuable as it was over 100 years ago. Public power utilities have survived frequently unfavorable political and economic environments. Municipal utilities established in the 19th and 20th centuries still stand today as continuing testament to the value of public power.

Public power utilities are deeply rooted in the history of the United States.



Brad McBride, Logansport Electric Utility

They are an expression of the American ideal of local people working together to meet local needs. Like schools, parks, libraries, police, and fire protection, public power utilities are part of local government. They are governed locally and operated to provide an essential public service at a reasonable price.

Several factors led to the establishment of public power utilities. In some communities it was simply a practical decision made by community leaders who wanted to improve the quality of their citizens' lives. In the early days of the electricity industry, smaller communities were not attractive to private electricity companies. When the private sector failed to meet their needs, these communities took matters into their own hands.

The first public power utility was born on the evening of March 31, 1880, in the farm community of Wabash, Indiana.

(Continued, Page 17)



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(Continued)

Shortly after 8 pm that evening, mechanics hitched a threshing machine engine to the west wall of the Wabash County Courthouse and sent motive power to a generator in the basement. Within minutes, lights atop the courthouse bathed downtown Wabash in brilliant light.

One eyewitness account described the scene in Wabash that night as follows: People stood overwhelmed with awe, as if in the presence of the supernatural. The strange, weird, light, exceeded in power only by the sun, rendered the square as light as midday. Men fell on their knees, groans were uttered at the sight and many were dumb with amazement. We contemplated the new wonder in science as lightning brought down from the heavens.

(Museum of Electricity, Brush Arc Lamps, Wabash, Ind. 1880, citing an excerpt from a newspaper account in Men and Volts: The Story of General Electric).

The Wabash City Council's decision to own its electric lighting system instead of franchising the new utility to a private company created America's first municipal utility. Wabash later relinquished the title of America's oldest public power community to Butler, Missouri, when it sold its electric utility to a private company. But Wabash created a model in 1880 that would be adopted by thousands of American communities since, a model that still thrives. Butler prides itself on being known as "electric city" because it was the first city west of the Mississippi to have electric power. It is also the oldest continuously operated public power utility in the United States, running since 1881. Early in the 20th century, public power utilities were being formed at a rapid pace. The golden days of public power came in the early 1920s when more than 3,000 municipal systems were in operation, according to David Schap in *Municipal Ownership in the Electric Utility Industry: A Centennial View*. Public power utilities were becoming a real threat to private electricity companies.

Then, the number of public power utilities shrank under the pressure of an aggressive private industry and rapidly changing technology. By 1930, the number of public power utilities fell to approximately 1,900, according to Schap.



Logansport Electric Utility Line Crew

In the early 1930s, this downward spiral was reversed, and by the end of the decade there were approximately 2,000 community-owned and operated electric utilities. Several factors contributed to this second, more modest, wave of municipal ownership. One was the development of diesel technology, which made small-scale municipal generation more efficient. Another factor was growing resentment against private utilities, with excessive rates and absentee owners who exported the profits at the expense of the utility systems.

Increasingly, active federal involvement also played a major role. The administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Tennessee Valley Authority to develop hydroelectric power. In his famous "Portland Speech," on September 21, 1932, Roosevelt said that inexpensive public power would serve as a "yardstick" against which to judge private utilities' rates and service. "The very fact that a community can, by vote of the electorate, create a yardstick of its own, will, in most cases, guarantee good service and low rates to its population," he said. "I might call the right of people to own and operate their own utility something like this: a 'birch rod' in the cupboard to be taken out and used only when the 'child' gets beyond the point where a mere scolding does no good." *(Continued, Page 19)*

2024 IMEA Workshops

April - May

April 1 – 5 IMEA 611 Basic Workshop Scottsburg 032023

April 15 – 19 IMEA 613 Advanced Workshop Scottsburg 041921

April 29 – May 1 APPA Legislative Rally Washington

May 6 -17 IMEA 610 Wood Pole Climbing Workshop Scottsburg 050624

May 20 – 24 IMEA 612 Intermediate Workshop Scottsburg 050222

June

June 5 – 6 Line Clearance Arborist Certificate Frankfort

June 19 – 21 IMEA 212 Transformer Theory & Connections Scottsburg

July -August

July 23 – 24 Insulate & Isolate Scottsburg

August 5 – 9 IMEA 612 Intermediate Workshop Scottsburg 082222

September

September 9 – 13 IMEA 613 Advanced Workshop Scottsburg 092721

September 20 -21 Lineworkers' Rodeo Lawrenceburg

September 23 – 27 IMEA 611 Basic Workshop Scottsburg 102323

October - November

October 8 – 10 Annual Business Meeting & Tech Expo Bloomington

October 21 – November 1 IMEA 610 Wood Pole Climbing Workshop Scottsburg 102124

November 28 – Thanksgiving Holiday

December

December 24 – Christmas Holiday

(Continued)

Public power utilities in the 21st century still are an integral part of the nation's electric utility infrastructure. They have capitalized on new techniques and technologies to provide low-cost, superior service to their communities and citizens. Public power systems have consistently served as a benchmark, or yardstick, by which the performance of other utilities have been measured.

Notwithstanding public power's many successes to date, "munis" must continue to adapt and change with the times. At the same time, they must not forsake traditional values. They must make the most of their unique characteristics to enhance their competitive position in an ever-changing market. Through the ongoing efforts of dedicated public power boards and city councils, employees, citizen owners, and advocates, public power utilities must continue to lead the industry by acting in the best interests of their customers and reflecting the needs of the communities they serve.

Public power has the potential to remain the strong competitive force that provides a "yardstick" for customers and regulators to measure the performance and rates of private electric companies for decades to come. This continued competition benefits all electric customers, not just those served by public power. ___ *American Public Power Association, Delia Patterson.*



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A Recipe to Ring in Spring!

Glazed Easter Ham

Ingredients

- 1 whole fully cooked bone-in ham (15 to 18 pounds)
- whole cloves
- 3 c. brown sugar
- 1/2 c. spicy brown mustard
- 1 can Dr Pepper or Coke
- 3 tbsp. apple cider vinegar

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F.
2. Score the surface of the ham in a diamond pattern about 1/8-inch deep. Place cloves in the middle of each diamond. Place the ham in a large roasting pan with a rack, tent it with foil, and bake for 2 to 2 1/2 hours—or longer, depending on the package directions. (Some hams may require 3 to 3 1/2 hours at a lower temperature; just check the package.)
3. In a small saucepan, heat the brown sugar, mustard, vinegar, and soda until bubbly. Cook until reduced and a bit thicker, about 15 minutes.
4. After about 2 hours of baking time, remove the foil and brush the glaze on the ham in 20 minutes intervals (put the ham back in the oven, uncovered, in between) until it's nice and glossy. Remove from the oven and allow to rest 15 to 20 minutes before carving.



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