

# LIVE Lines

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## Munis, co-ops network, learn together at EOCE 25

The annual Electric Operations Conference & Expo (EOCE) brings together municipal and electric cooperative employees from across Wisconsin, and this year's gathering — which took place Jan. 15–17 — drew nearly 500 utility attendees and exhibitors to the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells. Asked what they “liked” about the conference, those who responded to a post-event survey highlighted the opportunities for networking, the great tradeshow, and a very “well-balanced” set of topical presentations.

Attendees and exhibitors alike provided positive feedback on the event, with 92% of those who responded to a post-event survey saying they were “quite” or “extremely satisfied” with the conference, and 97% said they are “very” or “extremely likely” to attend next year.

The conference agenda offered something for everyone — municipal and cooperative leaders and employees of all experience levels and backgrounds — including a wide

range of timely and relevant presentations. Wednesday's session included an appearance by Commissioner Marcus Hawkins of the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC). Hawkins shared his background and focus areas, including regional grid reliability, wholesale electricity markets, and transmission planning.

Dave Krause, PE, a recognizable face and regular presenter at the conference, shared his insights about how utilities

can improve their systems and also his “keys to better sleep,” which included a recommendation to “cut, cut, cut, and cut some more trees.” MEUW Director of Legislative and Regulatory Relations Tyler Vorpagel led a panel discussion about the importance of political advocacy, which included highlights from Rep. Rob Summerfield (R-Bloomer) who talked about how much lawmakers

depend on feedback from their constituents, especially when considering controversial pieces of legislation.

Stuart Campbell, Director of Strategic Relations & Commercial Marketing with Irby Utilities, reflected on hot topics within the utility industry, including load forecasts, impacts of supply chain time-

*Continued on page 3*



*Top:* New this year, cohort discussions gave participants a chance to share and learn with each other in a smaller discussion setting, like these folks in the “Future Workforce” cohort group. *Bottom left:* FBI Supervisory Special Agent Amanda Knutson shared information critical to maintaining grid security. *Bottom right:* Expo attendees got a chance to talk directly with representatives from more than 110 utility suppliers, and get “hands-on” exposure to their products and services.

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# Scenes from EOCE 25



This year's trade show, which sold out more than a month before the event, allowed attendees plenty of time for networking with vendors and with each other. The day included one-on-one connections, as well as vendor demos on the "Supplier Showcase" stage. A group of CVTC lineworker apprentice students helped staff their booth and experience the show. Playing "Expo Bingo" encouraged interactions between the utility attendees and suppliers.



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## Special thanks

*to these exhibitors who provided door prizes for the Expo Bingo*

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Continued from page 1

lines, and world trade implications, wrapped up day one of the event.

Thursday’s session kicked off with two informative sessions focused on reducing risk and damage. Supervisory Special Agent Amanda Knutson at the U. S. Federal Bureau of Investigation shared information about what the federal government is doing to reduce and address



cyber risks and attacks on the electrical grid and how utilities can aid the effort. Mike Meyer from Digger’s Hotline, returned again this year to provide an update on the Wisconsin Damage Prevention Council’s progress toward improving utility locate deficiencies and problems. And Ben Bella, Electric Co-operative Safety & Loss Control Manager, explained how the “devil is in the details” when it comes to working with and sharing responsibilities with electrical contractors. Breakout sessions gave attendees an opportunity to learn about ATC’s recent activities and future plans, how global navigational satellite technology can be used to more accurately locate utilities, and how local nuances can impact the Department of Transportation’s flagging rules and safety

requirements. Much of the program ran concurrently with the Expo that featured more than 110 exhibitors showcasing a wide variety of utility-related services and supplies. This year, the Exhibit Hall had a “Supplier Showcase” stage (see photo at left), with vendors demonstrating new tools, processes, and services for Expo attendees. Cohort discussions were also new, giving both muni and co-op attendees the opportunity to participate in facilitated discussions on a topic of interest — mutual aid, new facility construction projects, and planning for the future workforce. The program concluded with a keynote presentation by Green Bay Packers legend Gilbert Brown (below), who entertained the audience with tales from his time on the team and with his teammates, and since his retirement. ●





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# EOCE 2026

## JAN 14, 15, 16

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# MEUW NEWS Monitor

## Keep up with the rules to stay a well-run utility

Understanding the complexities of utility regulation and the variety of rules required to comply with state and federal safety and employment laws is essential to effectively managing a utility every day. As part of MEUW's "Fundamentals of Utility Management" training program, this one-day course explores the rules and regulations, the reasons many of those rules exist, and the risks and consequences when utilities fail to follow them. The class will be held in Mauston on Wednesday, Feb. 12. An outline of the training topics, the instructors, and registration details are [here](#).

## Apparatus Workshop scheduled for mid-February

Learn new skills through classroom and hands-on training at this two-day workshop, co-presented by MEUW and Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC). Scheduled for Feb. 18 -19 at the CVTC campus in Eau Claire, planned topics include jobsite safety, capacitors, voltage regulators, reclosers, trip savers, meters, and connectors/connections. Registration information can be found [here](#).

## Credit and Collections Seminar is March 19

Every other year, MEUW hosts a seminar to share information about the rules and regulations for utility collections and provide attendees with tips and techniques to make the process more effective and efficient. The program is designed to help strengthen the public power utilities' collection process, with timing targeted at the end of the cold weather moratorium on electric service disconnections.

This year's seminar is planned for Wednesday, March 19 in Mauston. The agenda includes a refresher from the Public Service Commission (PSC) about disconnections, deferred payment agreements, deposits, and foreclosures. There will be updated details about resources available to help customers who qualify for energy assistance, and discussions of best practices. Details and registration are available [here](#).

## Mark your calendars for April 2 "coaching" class

High performing leaders develop the skills to coach others effectively. Knowing how and when to coach is an essential leadership quality that can benefit both you and your organization. Save the date for the next class in MEUW's "Municipal Utility Leadership Certificate Program"— Leading Through Coaching — which will be held Wednesday, April 2. Registration and details are available [here](#). ●

## Virtual training session will explore the value of Emotional Intelligence

How strong is your "Emotional Intelligence"? Interacting with people can sometimes be challenging — we all have different personalities, perspectives, and emotional triggers. But by developing your Emotional Intelligence (EI), you can strengthen your ability to connect with others on a deeper, more empathetic level. This not only helps you navigate difficult conversations with ease, but it also fosters trust and collaboration, leading to more positive, productive relationships both personally and professionally.



Join this 90-minute virtual workshop planned for Thursday, Feb. 20, at 10:00 a.m., focusing on building self-awareness, recognizing and understanding the emotions of others, and effectively managing emotional responses in various situations.

Through this session, participants will gain valuable insights into how emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in personal and professional interactions. You'll learn techniques to manage emotions, ask thoughtful questions, and approach challenges with empathy and understanding.

The Feb. 20 session is the second of six in the Power of One training series, which explores essential skills like EI that contribute to a positive work environment and successful interactions with both internal and external customers. You can choose to enroll in this session alone or commit to the full series, and there are options to participate individually or register for small group viewing from your municipality.



The Power of One emphasizes the impact of each person's emotional awareness and how individual actions can make a difference in creating a positive impression and experience for others. This program is open to employees at all levels, regardless of their role or department.

For more details, including registration options and fees, visit [www.meuw.org/powerofone](http://www.meuw.org/powerofone).

## Share and learn at Foreman's Roundtable on March 19

The foreman role is important to safety and efficiency when operating a utility. The people leading utility line crews face common challenges and often don't have an opportunity to talk with others facing those same challenges. This meeting will enable electric utility foremen to share ideas, learn from one another, and develop leadership and communication skills, especially regarding safety.

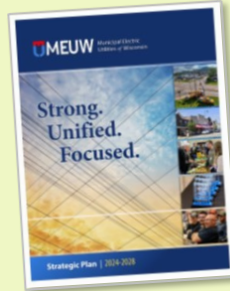
The Roundtable will be held at [Milford Hills](#) in Johnson Creek on Wednesday, March 19. Following the discussion, attendees will have the chance to take part in an optional teambuilding and networking activity at the hunt club. Registration and details are [here](#). ●



**MEUW  
Community  
Spotlight**  
will return to the next *LIVE LINES*

## Board approves "refresh" of MEUW long-term strategy

During the last year, MEUW has dedicated resources to revisiting the mission, vision, and strategic priorities that will guide the association through to the 100th anniversary of MEUW's founding in 2028. The Board of Directors formally approved the updated strategy at its Jan. 17 meeting.



The plan is intended to guide the collective work of staff, member committees, and the Board of Directors, and was developed collaboratively with input and direction from members, staff leadership, and the full Board, with guidance from a professional facilitator. This plan will serve as a dynamic, "living document," regularly reviewed and adjusted to reflect the evolving needs of MEUW members and the industry.

The updated plan includes a large number of action items. In the short term, the plan calls for the formation

of two ad hoc committees: one will focus on developing a three-year member engagement campaign to foster higher levels of participation and the second will develop targeted advocacy training.



Marshfield Utilities Commission President Mike Eberl and Stoughton Utilities Director Jill Weiss were among those who took part in a strategic planning prioritization exercise during MEUW's Annual Conference in May 2024.

In addition to a revised vision statement, the plan highlights three key priorities for MEUW:

- Maximize value to our members
- Maintain operational excellence and continuity
- Elevate and advocate for the value of public power

The updated strategy document is available for download [here](#).



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## LIVE Lines

Official monthly publication of **Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin, Inc.**, the statewide trade association representing the interests of Wisconsin's public power providers since 1928.

This e-newsletter is distributed to more than 1,200 utility professionals and leaders throughout Wisconsin and the Midwest on the first Tuesday of every month.

*LIVE LINES* has been published continuously for many decades and provides useful information, news on emerging utility issues and legislation, updates on events, training programs and member services, as well as engaging feature stories spotlighting utilities, communities and leaders.

Reader comments and suggestions are welcome — send by email to [news@meuw.org](mailto:news@meuw.org)

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An archive of past issues of *Live Lines* is available at [www.issuu.com/meuw](http://www.issuu.com/meuw)

## MEUW Safety Award applications due March 3

**W**orker safety is a focus of the services and support MEUW provides its members, so it's only fitting that the association recognizes municipal utilities for taking steps to improve their overall safety performance. MEUW is currently accepting applications based on 2024 performance measures. Each utility is asked to take time to compile the necessary information and submit the application spreadsheet, which is available [here](#), along with step-by-step instructions. (Note: Utilities that are part of MEUW's Regional Safety Management Program can expect to have their Regional Safety Coordinator complete the application spreadsheet.)

The MEUW Safety Achievement Award was developed to recognize safety performance and to encourage proactive safety activities by member utilities; awards are given based on voluntary reporting. Utilities receive recognition for their dedication to employees' on-the-job focus: following safety rules, using safe work practices, and watching out for one another. MEUW has been providing safety awards for more than a decade. In 2024, MEUW recognized 43 municipal utilities for their individual 2023 safety records.

The Award also acknowledges the commitment of management and the utility governing board to ensuring an environment that supports safe operations. This includes providing employees with the equipment they need to do the job safely, as well as the training to maintain or improve skills.

Award recipients are placed in categories — gold, silver and bronze — based on scoring against key criteria that promote a strong safety culture. The criteria were developed several years ago and have remained constant. The deadline to submit the application spreadsheet and the required documentation is March 3. Awards will be presented at MEUW's Annual Conference in May.

If you have questions about the Safety Awards, please contact Director of Safety Services and Operations Mike Czuprynko at [mzczuprynko@meuw.org](mailto:mzczuprynko@meuw.org).



Menasha Utilities General Manager Melanie Krause (left) accepts the utility's Safety Achievement Award from MEUW's Mike Czuprynko at the 2024 Awards Ceremony.



# PSC Chair reflects on an eventful and productive 2024

By Summer Strand, Chairperson  
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

2024 was an eventful and productive year at the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) that included leadership changes, the addition of new team members, robust stakeholder and public engagement, historic project approvals, and abundant grant funding awards in new and existing programs. Diligently working together, we achieved significant accomplishments that align with the PSC's mission to ensure the provision of safe, reliable, affordable, and environmentally responsible utility services and equitable access to telecommunications and broadband services.

In early 2024, I was honored to be appointed PSC Chairperson by Gov. Tony Evers. I am very grateful for the opportunity to lead the agency and work with my colleagues to reach our goals, deliver impactful results, and help move Wisconsin forward.

Gov. Evers also appointed two new commissioners to our three-member panel early last year. Commissioners Kristy Nieto and Marcus Hawkins both possess the requisite experience and sound judgment necessary for this important role. Their expertise and professionalism have helped foster constructive open meeting discussions and decisions, and the Commission and our state are fortunate for their commitment to public service.

In 2024, the Commission reviewed and issued decisions in the public interest on approximately 500 dockets that included construction projects, rate cases, the development of new programs, grant funding awards, and more. Throughout these proceedings, new and recurring stakeholders alike had a seat at the table, providing valuable input and feedback. Our process also benefited from testimony and written comments provided by members of the public. This robust

stakeholder and public engagement helped guide and inform our decision-making and led to balanced and reasonable decisions in the cases before the Commission.

For example, in December 2024, the Commission approved the application for the Vista Sands Solar Project — the largest solar project ever approved in Wisconsin. Stakeholder and public engagement were essential to the development of the project's voluminous record which ultimately included over 1,100 public comments, and helped demonstrate the clear economic, environmental, and reliability benefits the project will provide the state.

In our rate case proceedings, we heard from customers about the importance of keeping the lights on, bolstering affordability, and meeting shared sustainability goals. In issuing decisions that reflect those priorities, the Commission took reasonable steps to control costs while ensuring utilities continue to strategically invest in safety, reliability, and environmental responsibility. In 2024, the Commission completed 10 municipal electric and natural gas rate cases. In addition, the Commission approved several new or expanded tariff programs for municipal utilities related to time-of-use rates and electric vehicle charging.

I am grateful for the extensive stakeholder engagement and public involvement that occurred last year and look forward to similarly high levels of participation in 2025.

In August, I was honored to join Gov. Evers and U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm for the roll out of the Inflation Reduction Act's Home Efficiency Rebate (HOMES) Program. Wisconsin became the first state in the nation to launch the HOMES Program, which delivers rebates to households undertaking whole-home, energy-saving improvements. In De-

cember, the Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate (HEAR) Program, which provides instant discounts to eligible households installing energy-efficient appliances and equipment, also became available in Wisconsin. Both of these important new programs help reduce energy usage, which in turn will lower energy bills for participating residents.

In addition, the Commission awarded grants across the state to help bolster clean energy, resiliency, and reliability. In March, the Commission awarded more than \$1 million under the Rural Energy Startup Program (RESP) to support rural local governments implementing comprehensive energy planning, renewable resource planning, and energy efficiency audits and projects. In April, Gov. Evers and the PSC announced the award of \$7.8 million from the Energy Innovation Grant Program to 28 projects that will expand access to clean energy and invest in the adoption of innovative technologies and processes. And in May, the Commission awarded \$8.5 million under the Grid Resilience Program to 19 projects to improve the resiliency and reliability of the electric grid, with an emphasis on projects that support small utilities and improve service in rural areas.

In 2024, the PSC successfully navigated change and worked tirelessly and collaboratively to achieve significant accomplishments. While we have a lot on the horizon this year, I am confident that the same drive and determination will lead us to continued success in 2025. ●

**Summer Strand** was appointed by Gov. Tony Evers to a six-year term as a PSC Commissioner in March 2023, and was appointed Commission Chair in January 2024.



*The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Public Service Commission or any other individual Commissioner.*

# Help MEUW honor those who help public power thrive

By Brian Rhodes

For nearly three decades, MEUW has recognized a variety of industry leaders for contributions to the success of public power in Wisconsin. These individuals have come from utilities both small and large, and from outside the membership as well. The list includes member employees, governing body officials, partners, and legislators.

Since the mid-1990s, when MEUW provided its first and highest honor, the Donald L. Smith Distinguished Service Award, an emphasis has been placed on honoring key contributors to public power. In the years that followed, other categories were added and some awards have come and gone. Through it all, the goal of the awards program has not

changed — we want to celebrate people for their key contributions to public power in our communities, the state, and for some, at the national level as well.

Each award has criteria that should be achieved for a candidate to be considered for the award. The criteria includes: (1) achievements or sustained performance in showing commitment to their community and/or MEUW, (2) exceptional leadership and substantial contributions toward attaining the vision and mission of MEUW, (3) enhancing the public image of public power, (4) recognition by peers of work completed for public power, and (5) key involvement in local, state, and national industry issues benefiting public power.

In recent years, we have experienced a decline in the number of nominations submitted. As Awards Committee Chair, I have been on a mission to reverse that trend. I know from talking to my peers that there is much good happening among our municipal utilities — in all corners of the state and by a wide variety of individuals who support public power.

I believe it's important to recognize people for their contributions to public power. There is no cost for members to apply for the awards; all that is needed is some time and a little commitment to complete the relatively easy and short application forms. You don't even need to worry about selecting the right category — simply submit the information and the

Awards Committee will determine which award fits best. I encourage you to look at your utility, your public power peers, and our business partners for potential nominees.

The full list of awards and criteria are posted on the MEUW [website](#), along with the easy-to-use application form. Nominations for this year's awards are due by March 31. Honors will be presented during a special luncheon at the Annual Conference on Thursday, May 15 in La Crosse. Thanks for helping us honor the individuals who keep our municipal utilities going strong!



**Brian Rhodes**  
is Utility Director  
for Hartford  
Utilities and  
serves on  
MEUW's Board.

## MEUW is seeking nominations for these awards by March 31:

### *To recognize municipal utility leaders*

**Distinguished Service Award:** The highest honor bestowed by MEUW, the award recognizes exceptional leadership in and dedication to public power. A nominee must be an employee of a MEUW member system and active in MEUW for at least 10 years.

### *To recognize public officials*

**Public Official Award:** Presented to individuals who have made a significant impact on public power through an extraordinary commitment to service. Recipients are honored based on years of service.

**Pillar of Public Power Award:** Presented to individuals who have served a minimum of 10 years as a member of a public power governing body (e.g., utility com-

mission, city council, or village board). Recognizes those who support public power ideals, but do not directly work in or for a public power utility.

### *To honor service by municipal employees*

**Exemplary Service Award:** Recognizes outstanding service/achievement or other recognizable acts, including contributions to MEUW through committee meetings and groups. Awarded to a municipal utility employee who has made substantial contributions toward the overall success of their member utility.

**Excellence in Line Work Award:** Celebrates individuals who consistently demonstrate dedication to linework.

### **Next Generation Leader Award:**

Recognizes employees who may be relatively new to public power and have made significant contributions to their municipality; awarded to individuals with fewer than eight years of service to their utility to showcase emerging leaders.

### *To honor others*

**Friend of Public Power Award:** Honors individuals and organizations whose work supports the principles and ideals of public power, but who do not work in or for a community-owned utility.

**MEUW Meritorious Service Award:** Presented to individuals to recognize outstanding service/achievement, or other recognizable acts while an employee of an MEUW member utility, or in service to MEUW.



# Graduating apprentices honored at January banquet

Each year, the municipal and cooperative utilities in Wisconsin honor the apprentices who have completed their training and graduated to journeymen. At a special banquet held in conjunction with the Electric Operations Conference & Expo on Jan. 16 in Wisconsin Dells, the Class of 2024 was recognized. MEUW's Randy Larson served as

master of ceremonies for the banquet, which included a talk by Jason Bessette, General Manager of New London Utilities, who reflected on his long career and offered advice to the new group of individuals who have earned their journeyman cards (portions of Jason's speech are excerpted below). ●

## Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC)

### Electric Line Apprenticeship

Nathan C. Borofka – Marshfield Utilities  
 Benji Ronald Gindt – Jump River Electric Cooperative  
 Lane Henneman – Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative  
 Trevor J. Koopmann – Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative  
 Austin P. Miller – Push Inc  
 Quentin J. Muska – Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative  
 Nathan C. Radtke – Rock Energy Electric Cooperative  
 Collin Riley – Dunn Energy Electric Cooperative  
 Peyton Rupp – Maquoketa Valley Electric Cooperative  
 Brad Schowalter – Dairyland Power Electric Cooperative  
 Zachary Sonntag – Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperative  
 Tyler B. Strey – New London Utility  
 Trent Thole – Barron Electric Cooperative

## Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC)

### Lineworker Apprenticeship

Leo Berg – Upper Peninsula Power Co.  
 Nathan Boehnlein – New Holstein Utilities  
 Logan Boldt – Hustisford Utilities  
 Bailey Buschke – Waunakee Utilities  
 Derek Draganowski – Rice Lake Utilities  
 Kyran Horkan – Reedsburg Utility Commission  
 Nathan Kaczmarek – Sturgeon Bay Utilities  
 Alexander Karsten – Boscobel Utilities  
 Jessie Knoll – Taylor Electric Cooperative  
 Terrence Kuenzel – Superior Water, Light & Power Co.  
 Trent Lehrkind – Kaukauna Utilities  
 Orion Loukopoulos – Cedarburg Light & Water  
 Jack Nytes – New London Utility  
 Marcus Perkins – Rock Energy Cooperative  
 Nathan Porter – City of Elkhorn Electric Dept  
 Tanner Riley – Oconto Falls Electric Cooperative  
 Taylor Robinson – Vanguard Electric Commission  
 Tim Will – Oconomowoc Utilities

*When I started working for New London as a lineman, I never imagined the path that lay ahead of me. My primary focus back then was simple: do the job right, get the lights back on, and contribute my best. It was the kind of work that was very rewarding, the kind of work that allowed me to learn, grow, and understand the value of teamwork.*

*For the first few years, I was just like everyone else—learning the ropes, developing my skills, and slowly earning the trust and respect of my peers. But as I spent more time on a pole or in a bucket, I started to realize something important. I realized that being a lineman was just the beginning of my journey — not the end. I understood that to truly make an impact, I needed to think bigger, to look beyond my day-to-day tasks and start understanding the bigger picture. ...*

*Along the way, I embraced every chance to learn — whether it was picking up new technical skills, pursuing safety training, or tackling another journeyman card. Each experience taught me something invaluable about not just how things worked, but how people worked — how different departments, personalities, and challenges all had to come together for the greater good. ...*

*[Becoming] General Manager wasn't just a personal achievement; it was a reflection of the values that New London Utilities had instilled in me. ... If I have one message I want to leave with you today, it's this: No matter where you start, or where you are right now in your career, your potential is limitless. The road to leadership is not always straightforward, and it doesn't come without its challenges, but with determination, the willingness to learn, and the courage to step outside your comfort zone, you can achieve things you never imagined.*

*Embrace every opportunity to learn, to grow, and to contribute. And always remember, leadership isn't just about a title. It's about how you inspire and elevate those around you.*



**Jason Bessette**

started his career at New London Utilities in 1997. He became a Journeyman Lineworker in 2002, completed his Metering Apprenticeship in 2009, and Substation Electrician Apprenticeship in 2018. Jason then became Assistant General Manager in 2019 before being named General Manager in 2020.

# Get to know a little about some Wisconsin lawmakers



*This regular feature helps readers get to know Wisconsin elected officials and better understand their views on policies that may impact municipal utilities.*

## Rep. Brill represents 27th Assembly District



Lindee Rae Brill (R-Sheboygan Falls) is Representative for Wisconsin's 27th Assembly Dis-

trict. She was elected in 2024, and now represents portions of Sheboygan, Fond du Lac, Calumet, and Manitowoc counties, including the cities of Sheboygan Falls, Plymouth, and Kiel.

Brill replaced Amy Binsfeld in the Wisconsin State Assembly. Due to the 2024 redistricting act, the districts in the Sheboygan area were dramatically redrawn, and Binsfeld was drawn out of the district.

Brill serves as the Vice Chair of the Assembly's Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention. She is also a member of the Committee on Children and Families, Constitution and Ethics, Consumer Protection, Education, and State and Federal Relations.

Brill was born and raised in Kohler and graduated from Oostburg High School in 1999. She earned her bachelor's degree in management and Span-

ish from Hope College in Holland, Mich.

After college, Brill had a successful career in marketing and human resources. She worked in various roles for several businesses and nonprofits in the Sheboygan area. Some of her notable positions included working in marketing at Oostburg State Bank, Anchor of Hope Health Center, and Samaritan's Hand. She was also Human Resources Director for Dutchland Plastics.

Brill's campaign was built on a foundation of conservative values. She is pro-life and a strong advocate for economic responsibility, public safety, and election integrity. As an adoptive mother, she is also passionate about supporting families and removing financial barriers for those looking to adopt.

Brill has been married to Eric Brill since 2013. They live in Sheboygan Falls with their three school-aged children.

## Sen. Feyen serves as Vice Chair of Utilities and Tourism Committee



Daniel Feyen (R-Fond du Lac) has been a member of the Wisconsin State Senate since

2017, representing the 18th Senate District until 2025, and now representing the 20th Senate District, which includes portions of Dodge, Fond du Lac, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, and Washington Counties. This change was a result of the redistricting process implemented in 2024.

Feyen is serving as the Assistant Majority Leader of the Wisconsin State Senate for the 2025-2026 legislative session. He was unanimously re-elected to this leadership position by his Republican Senate colleagues.

He serves on several Senate committees, including the Vice Chair of the Utilities and Tourism Committee. He is also the Chair of the Committee on Economic Development and Technical Colleges, Vice Chair of the Committee on Shared Revenue, Elections, and Consumer Protection, and member of the Committee on Organization. Furthermore, he is a member of the Joint Committee on Legislative Organization and the Joint Survey Committee on Retirement Systems.

Feyen says his approach to utility and energy-related policies balances the need for sustainable energy solutions with practical regulatory measures to ensure reliable and efficient utility services.

Born and raised in New Holstein, Feyen credits his strong sense of community and values to growing up in a small Wisconsin town. He graduated from New Holstein High School in 1986 and earned a diploma in printing from Fox Valley Technical College. For nearly 30 years, he built a successful career in the printing and bindery business. Feyen's involvement in local organizations, such as the United States Junior Chamber (Jaycees), and his leadership role in the Fond du Lac County Republican Party laid the foundation for his political career.

Feyen currently lives in Fond du Lac with his wife, Lori. They have two adult children.

## Rep. Subeck is ranking member of Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities



Lisa Subeck (D-Madison) has represented the 78th District in the Wisconsin State Assem-

bly since January 2015. This district is in south-central Wisconsin, covering central Dane County. It includes parts of Madison, the city of Monona, and most of the village of McFarland.

Subeck is the Chair of the Assembly Democratic Caucus and is the ranking member on the Committee on Energy and Utilities. She is also the ranking member of the Committee on Health, Aging and Long-Term Care, and is a member of the Committee on Rules and the Joint Committee on Legislative Organization.

In her work on the Energy and Utilities Committee, Subeck has supported efforts to expand renewable energy sources and improve energy efficiency in Wisconsin. She has also worked to enhance the infrastructure for electric vehicles across the state. She has emphasized the importance of transitioning to clean energy to protect the environment and public health.

Before joining the State Assembly, Subeck served two terms on the City of Madison Common Council.

*Continued on page 11*

# Understanding ECM pumps and how they save energy, money

**E**lectronically Commutated Motor (ECM) pumps are a type of water pump using advanced motor technology to improve efficiency and performance. Unlike traditional pumps operating at a constant speed, ECM pumps can adjust their speed based on the demand, leading to significant electric energy savings. These pumps are equipped with a built-in microprocessor that continuously monitors the system's requirements and adjusts the motor speed accordingly. This not only reduces electric energy consumption but also extends the lifespan of the pump by minimizing wear and tear. ECM pumps are becoming increasingly popular in various applications due to their ability to provide optimal performance while reducing operational costs. Eligible customers with a well pump, boiler pump, or pool pump in their homes can help lower their energy and water bills by taking advantage of the Focus on Energy efficient residential water pump rebate. Focus on Energy offers up to \$320 in rebates for ECM variable-speed water pumps to help customers improve their efficiency with upgraded equipment.

## Well Pumps

In Wisconsin, roughly 900,000 households rely on private wells for drinking water instead of a municipal water supply. This means about one-third of Wisconsin residents get their drinking water from private wells, with many of them located in rural areas. A well pump extracts water from the underground well and pumps it into a home's plumbing system. Efficient well pumps with ECM technology can adjust their speed to match the water demand. This means the pump only uses the necessary

amount of energy to deliver the required water, resulting in energy savings. Additionally, efficient well pumps often come with features such as variable frequency drives (VFDs) to further enhance their performance and efficiency.

## Boiler Pumps

A boiler heats water, which it then circulates (often as steam) through conventional radiators, baseboards, or underfloor radiant heating. Boiler systems are common in Wisconsin homes, especially in multifamily buildings. The boiler pumps circulate hot water or steam throughout a building heated by a boiler. Traditional boiler pumps can be energy intensive, especially if they run continuously at a fixed speed. Efficient boiler pumps adjust their speed based on the heating demand. This allows the pump to operate more efficiently, reducing energy consumption and lowering heating costs. Efficient boiler pumps also contribute to a more comfortable indoor environment by ensuring consistent and even heating.

## Pool Pumps

The days of lounging by a pool in the hot sun may seem a lifetime away in these frigid winter months. However, it is never too soon for customers to start thinking about how to save on energy costs when warmer days arrive. One of the biggest opportunities for customers with a pool to save electricity is with their pool pump. Pool pumps are crucial for maintaining clean and safe swimming pool water. However, they can also be one of the largest energy consumers in a household. Efficient pool pumps with ECM technology, can adjust their speed based on the pool's filtration needs and use 60% less energy than their single-speed counterparts. This means the pump can run at a lower speed when less filtration is required, significantly reducing energy consumption. Efficient pool pumps also tend to be quieter, require less filter replacements, and have a longer lifespan compared to traditional pumps.



Investing in efficient water pumps can lead to significant energy and cost savings for customers. Whether it's a well pump, boiler pump, or pool pump, these advanced pumps can adjust their speed based on demand, reducing energy consumption and operational costs. Eligible residential customers can apply for Focus on Energy's efficient residential water pump rebate [online](#) or with a [paper application](#) found on the Focus [website](#). •



## Political Profiles

*Continued from page 10*

Prior to entering politics, Subeck had a career in social services and advocacy. She worked on programs for children and young mothers as a Dane County program director for the Head Start and Early Head Start programs. She helped start Hope House, a housing program for young mothers of infants and toddlers in Madison. Subeck also taught early education courses at Madison Area Technical College and later became a program coordinator for the Madison YWCA.

She was born and raised in Chicago and graduated from Rich Central High School in Olympia Fields, Ill. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1993.

Subeck now lives in Madison, where she's an active community member. She also enjoys spending time outdoors, taking advantage of Madison's natural beauty. •

# Wisconsin UTILITY NEWS Digest

## Utility owners announce plans to extend life of state’s largest coal-fired generating plant

The three investor-owned utilities that own the Columbia Energy Center made public their plans to delay until 2029 the suspension of coal operations at the facility in Portage. This shift from the previous date of 2026 provides the plant’s co-owners — Alliant Energy, Madison Gas and Electric Company (MGE) and Wisconsin Public Service Corp. (WPS) — with more time to explore converting at least one of Columbia’s units to natural gas before the end of 2029.

The detailed plan was announced in December 2024 and allows the companies to continue leveraging current generation assets to enhance system reliability while addressing changing market conditions, and maintaining the co-owners’ commitment to carbon reduction goals. Multiple reports have documented the industry is facing unprecedented circumstances, including changes implemented by the Midcon-

tinental Independent System Operator (MISO), the regional system operator. Recently, MISO changed the accreditation levels for different generation resources and made the direct recommendation that there’s a “need to accelerate resource additions, monitor large load additions, and delay resource retirements to reliably manage the anticipated growth in electricity demand” to support reliability and load growth.

## Xcel Energy exploring plans for large-scale solar farm

Minneapolis-based Xcel Energy said it expects to file an application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW) in mid-2025 for its Ten Mile Creek Solar Project in St. Croix County, Wisconsin. The project includes an up-to-650-megawatt solar farm along with an approximately 15-mile transmission



line to connect to the existing grid. Ten Mile Creek is expected to be built in phases, with the first phase being up to 350 megawatts.

The proposed project will connect to the existing regional power grid connection at the Allen S. King Power Plant, which is located across the river in Bayport, Minn., and is scheduled to be retired in 2028. Xcel said it is in the process of working with private landowners interested in participating in the project. If eventually approved, the first phase of the project could begin in late 2027, with a goal of starting service by late 2029.

The St. Croix County Board of Supervisors held an informational session regarding the project during its regularly scheduled meeting on Jan. 7. Among other issues, area landowners and residents expressed concerns about wildlife, the loss of agricultural land, and possible impacts to property values, during the packed, two-hours-plus meeting. Nearly 5,000 people have signed an online petition opposing the project.

## LIVELines Classifieds

MEUW is pleased to promote job openings with its member utilities across Wisconsin. New positions are regularly added to our website — check them out [here](#). Here are some current opportunities available:

**City of River Falls**  
[Journeyman Lineworker](#)

**City of Lake Mills**  
[Utility Billing Clerk](#)

**Waupun Utilities**  
[Accounting Coordinator](#)

When your utility is hiring, be sure to email the job posting to [office@meuw.org](mailto:office@meuw.org).

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