

# LIVELines

Volume 75, Issue 3 • March 2026

## Utility leaders “rally” in nation’s capital

**P**ublic power leaders from across the country gathered in Washington, D.C., in late February for the annual Legislative Rally organized by the American Public Power Association (APPA). More than 60 people representing nearly 25 Wisconsin municipalities registered to attend this year’s gathering.

Travel disruptions caused by winter weather prevented some from making the trip, while others joined more than 600 fellow mayors, alders, commissioners, general managers, and utility employees. Rally attendees took part in group meetings to educate federal lawmakers about the work their utilities do to support thriving communities. Discussions also centered on APPA’s policy priorities, including affordability, energy permitting reform, and support for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), among other key topics.

Meetings took place Feb. 24 and 25 inside the U.S. Capitol complex and in nearby

congressional office buildings. Those attending from Wisconsin met with six of the state’s eight Members of Congress and their staff. Fresh off President Donald Trump’s Feb. 24 State of the Union address, the group met separately with U.S. Senators Ron Johnson and Tammy Baldwin the following morning and heard firsthand from the Senators about their views of the administration’s policy priorities.

“Lawmakers always enjoy hearing from their constituents, and the APPA Rally is a great opportunity to have focused discussions about issues that matter to municipal utilities,” said MEUW President and CEO Tim Heinrich. “I am proud to say that Wisconsin always has an impressive turnout, and the level of engagement makes a real difference in APPA’s efforts to influence legislators.”

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More photos from the Rally on page 2.



Members of the Wisconsin delegation posed for a group shot inside the U.S. Capitol.

## Data shows municipal utility residential rates are lowest in Wisconsin

As energy costs capture headlines and state and federal politicians debate affordability in general, statewide data reveals residential public power customers in Wisconsin benefit from electric rates that compare favorably to those of other utilities. Comprehensive analysis shows, on average, residential customers served by the state’s 81 municipal electric utilities pay the lowest per-kilowatt-hour rates in Wisconsin. Municipal utilities represent approximately 10% of Wisconsin’s total residential electricity sales, with investor-owned utilities and electric cooperatives selling the remainder. *Full story on page 3.*

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Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin’s mission is to **strengthen and unify community-owned utilities**. Since 1928, MEUW has been the trade association for Wisconsin’s 81 public power communities and is affiliated with the American Public Power Association (APPA) — [www.publicpower.org](http://www.publicpower.org)

# Scenes from the 2026 APPA Legislative Rally in Washington



Public power leaders from Wisconsin took part in events surrounding the annual APPA Rally in late February. (1) MEUW Director of Legislative and Regulatory Relations Tyler Vorpapel talked through logistics during MEUW's Rally Kickoff held Feb. 22 at the Black Finn Pub; (2) Municipal leaders posed for a photo at the U.S. Capitol; among those present were Hustisford Village President Joshua Prescher, and Mayors Todd Coppernoll of Richland Center, Steven Stocker of Sun Prairie, Joe Hammer of Columbus, Dale Oppermann of Jefferson, Rohn Bishop of Waupun, Ann Groves Lloyd of Lodi, Danny Helgerson of Westby; (3) Mark Herter of New London and Tony Penterman of Kaukauna; (4) Marshfield Utilities officials met with Rep. Tom Tiffany (R-Wis. 7th); (5) Leaders from Evansville, Stoughton, Sun Prairie, as well as WPPI Energy and MEUW met with Rep. Mark Pocan (D-Wis. 2nd); (6) MEUW members representing Kaukauna, New London, and Sturgeon Bay met with Rep. Tony Wied (R-Wis. 8th); (7) Sen. Ron Johnson addressed the group inside a meeting room at the U.S. Capitol; and (8) Sen. Tammy Baldwin took questions from the audience inside a Senate hearing room at the Dirksen Office Building.

*Continued from page 1*

APPA stages the rally every year to advocate for public power utilities and provide a forum to engage legislators and policymakers about topics important to municipal power companies. Wisconsin's delegation — which also includes representatives of WPPI Energy and Great Lakes Utilities — is typically among the largest from any state to participate.

Aside from meetings with legislators and their staff, the Rally also features topical breakout sessions and the APPA Legislative and Regulatory Luncheon. This year's program featured a presentation from Nathan Gonzales, Editor and Publisher at Inside Elections, on the federal political environment and the issues shaping public policy.

▶ The 2027 Rally is set for March 1–3. ●



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# Statewide data shows municipal utilities deliver lowest average residential electric rates

Contributed by WPPI Energy staff

Statewide data confirms what many local municipal utility leaders already understand: Wisconsin's not-for-profit municipal utilities remain competitive on electric costs.

## Wisconsin's lowest average residential electric rates

Based on publicly reported retail sales and revenue for 2024, the most recent year for which full data has been published, municipal electric utilities in Wisconsin compare favorably to other utilities in the state.

As shown in the chart at right, on a statewide aggregate basis, on average, residential customers served by Wisconsin's municipal electric utilities pay the lowest per-kilowatt-hour (kWh) rates in the state. Municipal utilities represent about 10% of Wisconsin's total residential electricity sales, and the remaining 90% of statewide residential sales occur at higher average per-kWh rates.

The comparison includes every major retail utility category in Wisconsin: investor-owned utilities and electric cooperatives. Across those groups, municipal utilities show the lowest average residential rate on a statewide, load-weighted basis.

Commercial and industrial (C&I) data points in the same direction. On a statewide, load-weighted basis, approximately 66% of Wisconsin's C&I sales occur at higher average per-kWh rates than municipal utilities charge.

## Expanding on previous analysis

During his nearly 20 years at WPPI Energy, Director of Rates and Contracts Peter Shatrawka has routinely delivered competitive analyses covering WPPI's 41 Wisconsin member utilities using publicly available reporting from the U.S. Energy Information Administration and the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. For MEUW's purposes,

the same approach has been applied statewide to include all 81 Wisconsin municipal utilities.

Dividing total reported revenue by total kilowatt-hour sales for each customer class produces an average per-kWh cost that reflects what customers actually paid over the course of the year and gives municipal leaders, policymakers, and regulators a reliable basis for comparison.

## What the numbers mean

Competitive performance does not happen by accident. Wisconsin's municipal utilities operate on a not-for-profit basis. Financial decisions are made locally and long-term investments are evaluated with community impact in mind. The Public Power model includes a built-in focus on managing costs responsibly over time.

Wisconsin electric utilities also face growing capital demands, rising infrastructure costs and changing market conditions. At the same time, customers expect clearer communication and greater transparency. Maintaining competitive performance in that environment requires steady planning and financial discipline.

## Communicating the value of public power

Electric costs remain a visible issue in many communities. When questions arise about how a local utility compares, statewide benchmarks provide perspective.

"Customers expect their local utility to manage costs carefully and to com-

Wisconsin Residential Electric Rates and Load Share (2024)

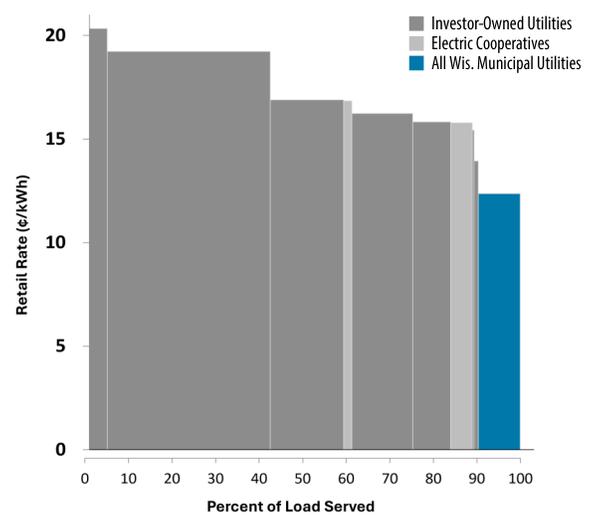


Figure 1. Residential Service Comparison

On average, residential customers served by Wisconsin's municipal electric utilities pay the lowest per-kilowatt-hour rates in the state. Municipal utilities represent approximately 10% of Wisconsin's total residential electricity sales; the remaining roughly 90% of statewide residential sales are served at higher average per-kilowatt-hour rates.

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) Form 861 and Public Service Commission of Wisconsin Annual Reports. Figures reflect 2024 total revenues divided by total kilowatt-hours sold for each customer class, based on utilities with publicly reported data. Percentages reflect statewide residential electricity sales.

municate clearly about performance," said Jake Oelke, Senior Vice President of Member Relations, Communications and Services at WPPI. "Statewide data shows Wisconsin's municipal utilities compare favorably, and that gives local officials credible information to support conversations about electric costs."

Oelke notes that a growing number of municipal utilities are incorporating similar comparisons into bill inserts and other community outreach efforts. Clear, consistent data helps ground those conversations in facts.

**The Bottom Line:** Wisconsin's not-for-profit municipal utilities continue to deliver competitive electric service as industry conditions evolve. Statewide data supports that conclusion. ●

# Inside 725 Insights from the MEUW Office



By Tim Heinrich,  
President and CEO

Feedback is a gift. I believe that. Like many of you, I receive any number of “presents” on any given day. Some of the gifts come from my wife or my daughters or even in the form of a middle finger from a perfect stranger on the highway. I’ve learned to filter the feedback and can generally accept there’s probably at least a kernel of truth in the “gifts” I receive. As you might expect, I get all sorts of feedback from our members about the work MEUW does (or doesn’t do). I really do enjoy hearing from the people we’re privileged to serve. In fact, I think it should be called “feed-forward” because the constructive input and new ideas are an opportunity to do even better moving ahead.

We collect formal and informal feedback from our members all the time. Whether it’s a post-event survey, discussions at committee and Board meetings, or through one-on-one interactions, every one of those gifts is helpful to us.

One recurring theme over the years has been the need for MEUW to do more to engage with the folks who govern their municipal utilities. Elected officials and those appointed as utility commissioners play a critical role, and many of our stakeholders think MEUW could do more to help them. I had a chance to visit with a number of these like-minded individuals during the APPA Legislative Rally in Washington, D.C. I learned about some of the local challenges they face and how support from MEUW can help them to make more informed decisions to improve their local utility. The gift of such feedback over the years led us to organize the upcoming **Utility Governance Roundtable** session planned in conjunction with the 96th Annual Conference happening in May.

Recognizing that many of these individuals have difficulty getting away for education and networking, we’ve tried to build a program that fits nicely alongside other worthwhile events. The program is designed to bring municipal leaders together for a practical, peer-driven discussion on the fundamentals of utility governance, including regulatory considerations, rate setting, and a plain-language overview of municipal utility finances. We’ve designed it for both new and experienced officials, with the opportunity to get real-world insights, shared experiences, and leading practices that strengthen oversight and support reliable, financially sustainable utility operations.

From feedback I receive, I know our utilities share *LIVE LINES* in the packet of materials distributed prior to Commission meetings. I hope those reading this will accept the invitation and plan to join us in Sun Prairie on Wednesday, May 13, beginning at noon. Full details about the program are available [here](#).

There are plenty of times when we don’t know what we don’t know. MEUW is fortunate to have an active and engaged group of individuals — through our Board of Directors and committees — who help our small staff execute on the association’s mission to “unify and strengthen” municipal utilities. With regular (and often unsolicited) feedback from those we serve, we can be more effective in delivering the services and providing the support that’s needed.

There’s no need for ribbons or bows, but the gift of your feedback is really vital to keeping MEUW moving forward and delivering for you. Thanks for your continuing support.

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## Nominate individuals and groups for recognition

Each year, MEUW honors utility leaders and elected officials at a special awards ceremony held in conjunction with the Annual Conference. The association is currently accepting nominations to honor individuals in a variety of categories.

For 2026, the Awards Committee has created a new award designed to recognize a MEUW member utility that has demonstrated exceptional collaboration, partnership, and mutual support in advancing the goals of public power. The aptly-named Public Power Partnership Award highlights the spirit of cooperation that strengthens Wisconsin’s municipal utilities and exemplifies the values of shared expertise, resourcefulness, and community-minded service.

All nominations are submitted using a simple online form. Nominators share information about the person deserving recognition, and the Awards Committee determines the appropriate award category. Eligibility details and the nomination form are available at [www.MEUW.org/awards](http://www.MEUW.org/awards), with all submissions due Monday, March 30.

## MEUW Board of Directors elections coming soon

Nominations for individuals interested in serving a two-year term on the association’s Board of Directors will be accepted beginning March 23. Self-nominations are welcome. To be eligible, a nominee must be employed by a member utility. This year’s election will be for Directors and Alternate Directors in [even-numbered districts](#). Additional information is available at [meuw.org/elections](http://meuw.org/elections).

## Annual Conference has something for everyone

Municipal employees, elected officials, governing body members, and public power enthusiasts will gather in Madison and Sun Prairie for MEUW's 96th Annual Conference May 12–14. Stretched over three days, this year's event features a refreshed schedule designed to enhance member engagement. The schedule promises something for everyone, including education, networking, and information-sharing among utility professionals and industry partners.

Based on member feedback, MEUW is holding a “Day at the Capitol” on Tuesday, May 12, providing members the opportunity to share the public power story with lawmakers and hear from government affairs experts about policy activity at the federal and state level.



Events on Wednesday, May 13, include a golf outing at The Oaks Golf Course in near-by Cottage Grove. A special Utility Governance Roundtable session will take place between noon and 3 p.m. at the Sun Prairie Utilities (SPU) facility. Later, SPU — this year's host utility — will welcome attendees for a tour of its new 83,000-square-foot office, warehouse, and garage. In addition, MEUW is organizing a trade show to complement the traditional activities, offering utility suppliers and consultants a new opportunity to engage with MEUW members in a casual setting. The trade show runs from 4–7 p.m. The conference Welcome Reception begins at 5 p.m.

The main program will happen on Thursday, May 14. The day begins with MEUW's Annual Business Meeting and includes a full program highlighting timely topics affecting municipal utilities, both locally and nationally. The agenda includes a mix of large-group general sessions designed to bring everyone together on broader issues, as well as small-format breakout sessions and cohort discussions to enable every attendee to get the most out of the conference. The Awards Ceremony will happen over lunch.

The conference program will be held at the DoubleTree Hotel Madison East (off both I-39/90/94 and Highway 151), which is the official lodging site.

Each of the three breakout sessions will be presented twice. The back-to-back 45-minute presentations will cover service territory issues, relocating utility facilities, and mutual aid. After lunch, small groups will gather to discuss one of three topics — the affordability of public power, cyber and physical security, and lineworker safety and education. The full program — including detailed descriptions of the topics planned for breakout and cohort sessions — is available at [www.meuw.org/96thagenda](http://www.meuw.org/96thagenda).

Thursday's program wraps up with a Keynote Address by legendary broadcaster Wayne Larrivee, the “Voice of the Green Bay Packers.” The Closing Reception will conclude at 7 p.m.

Conference registration is now open [here](#). An “early-bird” discount is available for registrations received on or before April 1. New this year, MEUW will award complimentary registration for the Annual Conference to an eligible policymaker — an elected official serving on a city council, village board, or commission of a Wisconsin public power community, or an elected or appointed member of a governing body with oversight of a Wisconsin municipal electric utility. Details about the registration grant program are provided [here](#). ●



Larrivee

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)

## Municipal employees complete management training program

Six MEUW utility employees recently took the next step in their professional development journeys. Pictured at right are (back row,

from left): **Joe Vance** (Customer Service Manager, Marshfield Utilities), **John Giese** (Customer Account Specialist III, Marshfield), **Kamren Seefluth** (Utility Engineer, Marshfield), **Ryan Roehrborn**



(Electrical Operations Manager, Plymouth Utilities), **Ashley Kuechenmeister** (Accounting Assistant, Marshfield), and **Danielle Doelle** (Utility Clerk, Trempealeau Municipal Utilities), who were recognized at a recent training session.

Each of them has now completed MEUW's four-part Fundamentals of Municipal Utility training program. The series is designed to explain specifics that are relevant to public power utility employees and leaders, with an emphasis on detailing

## In case you missed it ...

### New Cyber/Physical Security working group seeks input from MEUW members

MEUW recently formed a new Cybersecurity/Physical Security working group to support Wisconsin's municipal electric utilities as they navigate evolving security risks. The group was formed at the suggestion of a member utility and is intended to be a peer-driven resource for MEUW members, particularly smaller utilities that may have limited staff, budgets, or technical capacity.

To help guide the effort and areas of focus, the group is seeking input through a [brief survey](#). Employees from member utilities are encouraged to take time to complete the survey and anonymously share cybersecurity and physical security topics. Those who may be interested in joining or learning more are encouraged to contact working group Chair [Don Krause](#) at Kaukauna Utilities or email the [MEUW office](#).

the "why" behind each of the topics. Municipal workers of all skill levels and backgrounds can benefit from the training, which provides a solid foundation for understanding the public power industry. To learn more, visit [meuw.org/dp](http://meuw.org/dp). ●

## Wisconsin UTILITY NEWS Digest

### Wisconsin lawmakers advance data center regulations

Wisconsin legislators have introduced several bills aimed at increasing oversight of large data centers amid concerns about energy demand, water use, and cost impacts. Lawmakers on both sides of the political aisle and in both the Assembly and State Senate have introduced bills to address constituent concerns. One proposal would require construction wage standards, sustainability measures, water-use regulations, new fees for large energy users, and expanded reporting. Another, already passed by the Assembly, would prohibit shifting infrastructure costs to other customers and mandate on-site renewable energy, closed-loop cooling, and water-use reporting. A third proposal would create a statewide planning authority, require 100% new renewable energy, and mandate local referendums. MEUW is monitoring all developments.

### City of Superior considering municipal ownership of utilities

Wisconsin Public Radio reported that a new study estimates it could cost the City of Superior \$300 million or more to acquire the electric, water, and gas systems currently operated by Superior Water, Light & Power (SWL&P). The analysis, commissioned by SWL&P, was released as the city awaits its own independent valuation. In 2024, the city began exploring a potential takeover of the state's only private water utility after SWL&P proposed a double-digit increase in water rates. Superior officials have since widened the scope of community discussion to include all utility types, including electric. State law allows municipalities to acquire a utility, but the sale would require approval from utility regulators. Prior to seeking regulatory approval, the city must first put a referendum before voters.

Superior Mayor Jim Paine called the estimates "significantly inflated" and accused the company of overstating costs to discourage a purchase. SWL&P officials disagree, arguing the findings show a takeover would place an unnecessary financial strain on residents.

The potential purchase would involve years of costly legal proceedings. Additional startup and transaction expenses, including legal fees and staffing, are estimated at \$84 million, with another \$3.1 million needed to separate systems shared with Minnesota Power.

Community reaction to the proposed buyout has been mixed. Some groups warn that the city could burden residents with unsustainable debt, while others — concerned about rising rates — support municipal ownership for greater accountability. Any acquisition would require voter approval via referendum before state regulators could consider the proposal.

# MEUW NEWS Monitor

## There's still time to register for upcoming Leadership Workshop

Investing in leadership development delivers measurable returns — stronger teams, better communication, improved operational efficiency, and more effective change management. MEUW's upcoming "Practical Leadership Strategies for Utility Managers" workshop is designed to provide practical tools that create real value for your organization. This two-day interactive Leadership Workshop will be led by two long-time utility industry leaders and focuses on communication, leadership skills, and managing change. Participants will learn strategies to build trust, communicate effectively, and strengthen team collaboration. Full details are [here](#). Join us March 12–13 at Great Wolf Lodge in Wisconsin Dells.

## Don't miss the annual Foreman's Roundtable happening March 25

The third annual Foreman's Roundtable will take place on Wednesday, March 25, at Pin-Seekers in DeForest. This forum was created to support utility line crew leaders who often face similar challenges and can feel isolated in their roles. The event provides an opportunity to exchange ideas, learn from peers, and strengthen leadership and communication skills, with a particular emphasis on safety. Discussion topics are driven by those attending, so participants can take away as much as they put in. After the event, those in attendance can take part in an optional team build-

ing and networking activity at the hybrid golf facility. Learn more and register [here](#).

## Underground Facility Locator Workshop planned for spring

A one-day Underground Facility Locator Workshop will be offered on Wednesday, April 1, in Spooner. The workshop will include both classroom instruction and hands-on practice, covering information found in Units 1–3 of the National Utility Locating Contractors Association (NULCA) Professional Competency Standard including use of the transmitter and receiver. All learners will receive a certificate of completion. Registration is available [here](#).

## Workshop focused on collaboration planned for April 2

Truly collaborating is much more than working side-by-side with another person — it also involves using influence and persuasion to drive outcomes from a high-performance team. Being collaborative can help leaders get the most out of others. Registration is now open for "Leading Through Collaboration," a one-day training offered through MEUW's three-part Municipal Utility Leadership Certificate Program. Training will take place on Thursday, April 2, in Mauston. Registration and details are available [here](#). ●

## Make plans to join a Customer Service Roundtable

Member utilities will gather to exchange ideas and learn from one another about leading practices, service trends, and emerging issues affecting municipal electric utility customers. Everyone is welcome!

A member of MEUW's Accounting and Customer Service Committee moderates each session, which are sponsored by Focus on Energy. There is no cost to attend; lunch is provided. Roundtable dates and locations are:

- Wednesday, March 18: *Rice Lake*
- Thursday, March 19: *Wisconsin Dells*
- Wednesday, March 25: *Oconomowoc*
- Thursday, March 26: *Menasha*
- Wednesday, April 8: *Stoughton*
- Tuesday, April 14: *Merrillan*

Pre-registration is required. Sign up at [meuw.org/csr](http://meuw.org/csr) ●



MEUW is introducing a one-day pre-conference workshop on utility cost-of-service and rate design as part of this year's **Accounting and Customer Service Seminar**. Members have consistently expressed interest in a foundational session on electric rate setting, and this training is designed to meet that need. The full-day workshop will provide practical insights for municipal employees, as well as help local utility commissioners and governing body members gain a clearer understanding of the rate-making process. Mark your calendar for Tuesday, Sept. 22, in Mauston (and stick around for the next day's seminar).

Your source for the most up-to-date information about MEUW news, training seminars and programs

[MEUW.org](http://MEUW.org)

# Sturgeon Bay Utilities supports a thriving waterfront community



By Karen Whitmer

A welcoming city at the entrance to destination Door County, Sturgeon Bay has grown from its modest maritime roots into a community shaped by tourism, shipbuilding, commercial fishing, and outdoor recreation. For 122 years, Sturgeon Bay Utilities (SBU) — the city's municipal utility — has supported that growth by providing reliable energy and water to homes, small businesses, and the industries that power the local economy. Its work helps ensure Sturgeon Bay remains both an inviting place to visit and a strong place to live and work.

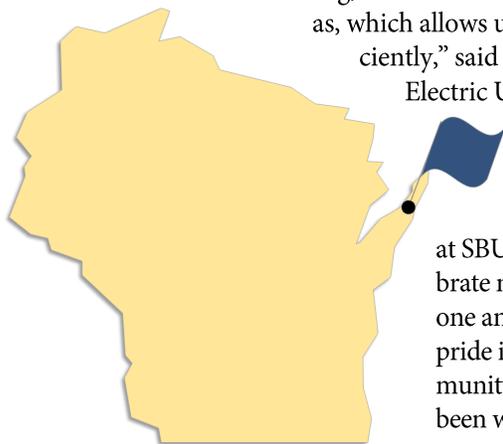
Roughly 10,000 people call Sturgeon Bay home year-round, a number that swells each summer as seasonal residents, boaters, and tourists arrive. SBU serves a wide range of customers, from permanent and seasonal households to local businesses and industrial facilities. The electric utility powers about 9,800 meters, with 35 percent residential, 38 percent commercial, and 27 percent industrial.



**Stawicki**

“We have a really balanced mix of customers,” said SBU General Manager Jim Stawicki. “That puts us in a good position to plan ahead and keep service affordable and reliable for everyone. As Sturgeon Bay grows — with new businesses and more housing, including affordable housing — we’re making sure the infrastructure is there to support it.”

SBU operates its electric, water, and wastewater utilities with a lean staff of 18, including seven lineworkers, with plans to add an eighth. Later this year, the electric utility expects to bring on an apprentice, continuing its long tradition of developing skilled, cross-trained personnel. “Our team is talented, hard-working, and trained across multiple areas, which allows us to operate efficiently,” said Jason Bieri, SBU’s Electric Utility Manager.



A strong family culture underscores the work at SBU. Employees celebrate milestones, support one another, and take pride in serving the community. Stawicki, who has been with SBU for 22

years, noted, “We’ve built a team that truly cares about each other — about the work we do and the people we work with. It’s not just a job; it’s a community within a community.” Bieri, with 25 years at SBU, is one of several long-tenured employees whose deep knowledge and dedication help keep operations running smoothly every day.



The historic Third Avenue district in downtown Sturgeon Bay is home to art galleries, specialty shops, and unique dining establishments along the waterfront. At right, SBU General Foreman Scott Hoffman works on a downtown streetlight, part of SBU’s commitment to delivering safe and reliable service to power a thriving community.



## From Waterfront Roots to a Thriving Hub

Sturgeon Bay is located at the southern end of Wisconsin’s “thumb” — the 90-mile Door Peninsula. The community developed along the bay from which it takes its name, historically known for its world-class fishery and thriving maritime activity.

Nestled between Lake Michigan and Green Bay, the waterfront community was established in 1850 with one residence, and by 1862, its population had increased to over 200 individuals, supporting three active sawmills. Later in the 19th century, Sturgeon Bay became a regional center for limestone quarrying, shipping stone across the Great Lakes to help build harbors and piers.

The city’s defining transformation, however, came in 1881 with the completion of the Sturgeon Bay Ship Canal. Cut through the peninsula after years of planning and debate, the canal provided a safer, more direct route to and from Lake Michigan, allowing vessels to bypass the notoriously dangerous *Porte des*

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Shipbuilding is a cornerstone of the economy of Sturgeon Bay and has been for more than a century. The top photo offers a glimpse into the past, capturing the bustling shipyards that helped shape commerce on the Great Lakes. That same tradition continues today, as shown in the bottom image.

Wisconsin's "Shipbuilding Capital." This legacy is evident, as Stawicki pointed out, in SBU's largest electric customer: Fincantieri Bay Shipbuilding, a facility belonging to a major Italian shipbuilder and one of only two such sites on the Great Lakes.

### Powering a Growing City

SBU delivers electricity not only to the city but also to the adjacent townships of Clay Banks, Nasewaupée, Sevastopol, and the Town of Sturgeon Bay, encompassing an expansive urban and rural service footprint. The utility operates and maintains over 260 miles of electric lines and four substations, capable of delivering more than 122 megawatts of energy throughout its complex territory.

Adding to the challenge, the Sturgeon Bay Ship Canal divides the city into north and south sides, requiring two separate distribution systems. "We have two substations on each side," Bieri said. "Maintaining redundancy, coordinating load transfers, and monitoring voltage stability on both sides requires careful planning and a skilled staff."

Converting overhead lines to underground is another key priority, helping ensure reliable service in all kinds of weather. "It's an ongoing process that will take many years," Bieri added.

The crew is also busy installing infrastructure for new apartments, condos, and single-family homes. Although the city has long had a "grey" population, with many residents over 59, its

Morts, or "Death's Door," strait to the north. By shortening the distance between Green Bay and southern Lake Michigan ports by 50 to 75 miles, it quickly became a vital artery for regional commerce. The surge in maritime traffic spurred Sturgeon Bay's population growth and economic development.

The canal remains a vital part of shipping and commerce today, upholding Sturgeon Bay's reputation as

scenic surroundings, waterfront access, and employment opportunities are drawing in newcomers who live there year-round. Since 2019, the city has added more than 400 new residential units, with zoning changes encouraging more affordable housing.

"Every connection we make means more than just adding a meter," Bieri explained. "It's about helping the city expand and prosper while ensuring that everyone receives safe, dependable, and affordable service."

### Guiding Innovation and Collaboration

SBU has long been a steady leader in the municipal utility sector and is a founding member of both MEUW and WPPI Energy. Stawicki, known for his collaborative approach, inquisitive nature, and broad utility knowledge, currently serves as chair of WPPI Energy's Board of Directors. With over 20 years of service to the organization, he has represented Sturgeon Bay on the WPPI Board since 2004 and has been a member of its Executive Committee since 2006.

In this role, he helps guide WPPI's strategic direction to ensure it remains closely aligned with the needs of member utilities, while also providing SBU with early insight into emerging technologies and regional best practices.

"Through collaboration with other public power professionals via WPPI," Stawicki said, "SBU has been in a position to adopt



emerging technology early, such as advanced metering infrastructure, which ultimately helps strengthen our reliability, efficiency, and customer service."

Continued on page 10



The Sturgeon Bay Utilities team helps the community thrive.

Continued from page 9

### Commitment to Sustainability

The City of Sturgeon Bay and SBU continue to strengthen and expand their environmental initiatives. In 2023, the city joined Wisconsin's Green Tier Legacy Communities program, a voluntary DNR initiative recognizing local governments committed to going beyond basic environmental standards.

SBU offers customers the option to purchase renewable-energy blocks under WPP's Choose Renewable program, which help fund additional investment and advancements in renewable energy opportunities across its membership. The utility also features "solar flairs" prominently displayed in front of its office, making sustainability a visible, community-centered priority. Stawicki noted, "While the solar array isn't a major source of energy, it stands out and serves as a reminder to Sturgeon Bay residents and visitors that our beautiful environment deserves protection."

As part of its broader sustainability efforts, the city is also working to establish a stormwater utility to better manage runoff and protect local waterways. While this initiative is separate from SBU's operations, the utility collaborates closely with city leadership to ensure infrastructure planning supports long-term community needs.

"Our focus is on delivering reliable, safe service for residents and businesses while helping the city grow responsibly," Stawicki said. "Providing essential utility services and supporting economic development — all while protecting Door County's natu-



To demonstrate its commitment to environmental sustainability, the City of Sturgeon Bay installed several Solar Flair™ photovoltaic systems as both functional infrastructure and educational tools to promote renewable energy awareness. Three flairs are located in front of the Sturgeon Bay Utilities headquarters. Pictured here is the "Constellation" Solar Flair near the planetarium at Crossroads at Big Creek, a local nature preserve.

ral resources — is simply good utility and city management."

### Festivals, Waterfront Life, and the Utility Behind It All

Sturgeon Bay's energy extends beyond its waterfront and maritime heritage. The city hosts numerous festivals and entertainment options throughout the year, including Steel Bridge Songfest, Harvest Fest, and the winter Fire and Ice Festival, which attracts thousands of visitors. Weekly Concerts in the Park, tall-ship visits, and programs at the Door County Maritime Museum celebrate the city's rich maritime history.

Sturgeon Bay features waterfront resorts like Stone Harbor, Bridgeport, Bayshore Inn, and Westwood Shores, as well as historic hotels like White Lace Inn. The

local dining scene ranges from Wisconsin supper clubs to upscale waterfront restaurants, many serving the region's signature fish boils — a quintessential Door County experience.

Stawicki, who has lived in Sturgeon Bay for over 35 years and jokes that he's "almost a native," prefers to stay out of the spotlight, letting the work of SBU and the community speak for itself. "This is a community with world-class entertainment and restaurants, vibrant arts, and a beautiful waterfront," he said. "It's a special place — and it's a privilege to live and work here."

And there's no question the community of Sturgeon Bay is stronger because of SBU. Behind the scenes, the utility steadily and quietly powers homes, businesses, and public spaces, keeping the area vibrant, strong, and welcoming for residents, businesses, and visitors alike. ●

*Karen Whitmer is a regular contributor to LIVE LINES; she is a freelance communicator based in the Fox Valley.*



This month's profile of Sturgeon Bay is the last in a series of **Community Spotlight** articles that began with a feature of the Village of La Farge in the August 2018 edition of *LIVE LINES*. Since then, MEUW has profiled all 81 cities and villages across Wisconsin that own and operate a municipal electric utility. Each of the articles is available in the archive of *LIVE LINES* accessible from MEUW.org. A listing of each community and the month it was featured is [here](#).



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## Wisconsinites received millions in rebates through IRA Home Energy Rebate Programs

Wisconsin closed 2025 on a strong note in its efforts to support residential energy efficiency. Since the launch of the first federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Home Energy Rebate program in 2024, residents across the state have received more than \$7 million in rebates for improvements that reduce energy use, boost comfort, and help lower energy costs.

Participation has been widespread, with projects completed in 67 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. The broad geographic reach underscores the value these rebates provide for all types of households, whether owned or rented, in urban centers, rural communities, or anywhere in between.

Continuing into 2026, both rebate programs remain active, and with significant progress already achieved. This year offers even more opportunity for Wisconsin households to participate in the IRA Home Energy Rebate programs as the number of participating IRA Registered Contractors continues to grow. Funding continues under two distinct program tracks, each supporting different types of energy-saving improvements.

### Home Efficiency Rebate Program (HOMES)

Wisconsin became the first state in the nation to launch their HOMES in August 2024. HOMES rewards whole-home energy savings. Rather than offering rebates based on specific equipment, this program provides incentives tied to achieving 20% or greater reduction in energy use achieved by the project. This approach requires an Energy Assessment and gives households the flexibility to pursue multiple upgrades at once and to take on deeper energy-efficiency improvements. Eligible projects include insulation upgrades, air sealing, heat pump heating and cooling systems, and heat pump water heaters.

More than 96% of HOMES rebates have been distributed to low-income Wisconsin residents, underscoring the program's

role in expanding access to meaningful energy-saving improvements. HOMES projects often align well with utility energy-efficiency goals, reducing both household expenses and strain on the electric grid.

### Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate Program (HEAR)

HEAR supports households choosing efficient, modern electric appliances and equipment. Rebates are available for:

- ENERGY STAR® cold-climate heat pumps;
- ENERGY STAR heat pump water heaters;
- ENERGY STAR heat pump clothes dryers;
- ENERGY STAR electric ranges and cooktops;
- Electrical panel and wiring upgrades; and/or
- Insulation and air sealing.

HEAR rebates can be accessed in two ways, either through installations completed by IRA Registered Contractors, or (for certain products) through purchases at retail stores. This makes the program accessible to households pursuing major system upgrades as well as those making smaller, incremental improvements.

The \$7 million milestone since August 2024 demonstrates strong public interest in making homes more energy-efficient, comfortable, and affordable to operate. Wisconsin's utilities are well positioned to maintain this momentum by continuing to share information about available rebates, encouraging residents to explore upgrade options, and helping direct customers to trusted contractors and retailers.

To explore available rebates, learn about eligible upgrades, or find an IRA Registered Contractor or participating retailer, visit [focusonenergy.com/home-energy-rebates](https://focusonenergy.com/home-energy-rebates). ●

*MEUW provides Focus on Energy the opportunity to regularly contribute content to LIVE LINES because of the organizations' shared support of municipal utilities.*



## Mutual Aid Hotline

When you need help, call MEUW – 24 hours a day, seven days a week – for help coordinating mutual aid assistance

1-844-MEUW-911

(1-844-638-9911)



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## Calendar of Events

- March 12-13 Workshop: “Practical Leadership Strategies for Utility Managers” — *Wisconsin Dells*
- March 18 CS\* Roundtable — *Rice Lake*
- March 19 CS\* Roundtable — *Wisconsin Dells*
- March 25 Foreman’s Roundtable — *DeForest*
- March 25 CS\* Roundtable — *Oconomowoc*
- March 26 CS\* Roundtable — *Menasha*
- April 1 Underground Locating — *Spooner*
- April 2 Municipal Utility Leadership Program: Leading with Collaboration — *Mauston*
- April 7 Monthly Safety Call — 7:15 a.m.
- April 8 CS\* Roundtable — *Stoughton*
- April 14 CS\* Roundtable — *Merrillan*
- April 15 MEUW Board of Directors Meeting — *Wisconsin Dells*
- April 28-30 Overhead Workshop — *Eau Claire*
- May 5 Monthly Safety Call — 7:15 a.m.
- May 12-14 96th Annual Conference — *Madison*
- May 13 Governance Roundtable — *Sun Prairie*
- May 14 MEUW Board of Directors and Annual Membership Meeting — *Madison*
- June 2 Monthly Safety Call — 7:15 a.m.
- June 3 Fundamentals of Utility Management: Regulation, Compliance & Safety — *Mauston*

\* Customer Service



## LIVE Lines 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](#) or use your smartphone to scan the QR code below. Here is a current opportunity available:

**City of Evansville** — [Electric Line Worker](#)

Review postings for application deadlines.

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



## Spring Forward!

**Daylight Saving Time** begins on Sunday, March 8, at 2:00 a.m.

Remember to set your clocks ahead one hour.



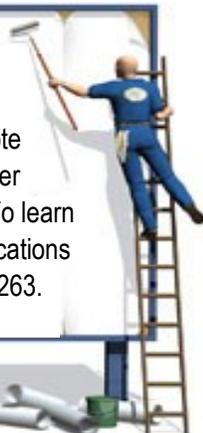
## Equipment For Sale

**Waukegan Utilities** is currently accepting bids for the sale of a substation transformer (ABB 14 MVA), voltage regulators (Siemens), and substation fusing. Bids will be accepted until noon on March 17. Contact Sam Trace at (608) 843-6235 for detailed information.

**Sturgeon Bay Utilities** is selling a 2003 55-foot Versa-lift bucket truck and other equipment. The full list of items for sale can be found [here](#). Contact Jason Bieri at (920) 746-5972 for additional information and photos.

## Your Ad Here!

If you know someone who should promote their business to [Wisconsin's](#) public power community, tell them about *LIVE LINES!* To learn more, call MEUW Manager of Communications and Events **Sharon Wolf** at (608) 837-2263.



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