

Debate over data centers continues to dominate headlines

Data centers are everywhere in the news right now, and for good reason. Many projects are planned or under construction across the country, including here in Wisconsin. The projects are backed by hundreds of billions of dollars in investment from the biggest tech companies in the world. The massive facilities are designed to power not just artificial intelligence (AI), but pretty much everything that happens online — from your streaming to your email and cloud storage. The debates happening in communities throughout Wisconsin are healthy and necessary, and it's important to stay on top of what the outcomes mean for locally-owned utilities.



This artist rendering shows the 700,000-square-foot data center facility currently under construction on 570 acres, visible from U.S. Highway 151, in Beaver Dam (from Meta news release)

Several questions that dominated the 2025 conversation in Wisconsin have since been answered, at least in part, and those answers came from regulators rather than lawmakers.

Some issues related to data centers have not moved at all, and one has become the most consequential constraint on any large-

load project in the state. The difficulty is not a shortage of information, it's keeping up with the latest decision.

The first question many utility operators would ask is, "Who pays for the new capacity?" Across four proceedings this spring and summer, the Public Service Commission (PSC) drew a line.

In April, the PSC approved Very Large Customer and Bespoke Resources tariffs for the state's largest investor-owned utility (IOU), Wisconsin Electric Power Company (which does business as We Energies), lowering the threshold from a proposed 500 megawatts (MW) to 100 MW and requiring those custom-

ers to carry 100 percent of their costs. The three-person Commission — all of whom were appointed by Democrat Gov. Tony Evers — said it needed to do everything within its jurisdiction "to make sure data center customers will pay their own way, fully and transparently, [so] other customers will be held harmless."

In May, the PSC approved an individual rate agreement between Wisconsin Power and Light Co. (part of Alliant Energy) and Meta — the major technology company that owns popular social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, among others — which is constructing a roughly \$1 billion data center campus in Beaver Dam. The PSC's decision also directed the utility to take a different approach moving forward: Future customers at 100 MW or more get standard rates, not negotiated contracts. PSC Chair Summer Strand used the occasion to object to a "black-box approach that includes nondisclosure agreements [and] heavily redacted filings," and said the lack of transparency "is hurting not helping" the debate over data centers.

Meanwhile, Xcel Energy filed its own version in June at the same threshold. Another IOU, Madison Gas and Electric (MGE), followed in July, telling the PSC it expects loads of that size and that the moratoria enacted in its communities "offer MGE and the Commission a timely opportunity to establish electric rate structures before these loads materialize, rather than after costs or obligations have already been incurred."

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While each of those cases involved an IOU, none of those companies are responsible to write a community's zoning or its development agreement. But on the narrow question of who absorbs the cost of new capacity, the state regulatory body responsible has now answered (on the record) four times, and that record is available to any community having the conversation locally.

The water question has moved as well, though not in the direction most coverage suggests. The case against data centers on water rests largely on evaporative cooling, and the largest operators are leaving it behind. Microsoft says every facility it designed after August 2024 uses a closed loop, filled once and then recirculated, and Oracle published the same commitment in February of this year.

Two things keep those large tech companies' commitments from settling the matter. Closed-loop cooling trades water for electricity, putting the load back on the grid. And the industry has not yet converted its original systems. Most facilities still cool with water, the new designs arrive with new construction rather than retrofits, and a one-time fill at hyperscale volume is still worth sizing for.

What has not changed is the timeline, and that is where the real constraint sits. Connecting a hyperscale facility typically requires new high-voltage transmission and substations. The 2026 Global Data Center Outlook published by JLL, a leading firm focused on commercial real estate and investment management, puts the national average wait time at roughly four years. Where the grid is tight, the building goes up faster than the power can be secured to operate it.

Wisconsin now has a case that makes the point concrete. In August, the Commission voted unanimously to revoke the completeness determination it had issued in December 2025 for ATC's Ozaukee County project, the build-out of more than \$1.3 billion meant to serve the Oracle, OpenAI, and Vantage cam-

pus in Port Washington. The PSC's vote is not a denial. It closes the case and sends ATC back to file again from the beginning, just months before the company had planned to break ground on the new transmission lines.

Port Washington has had an organized fight over the campus there for a year, including a first-in-the-nation referendum in April (passed with roughly 66 percent support) that required voter approval for large tax incremental districts. Nevertheless, that's not what regulators acted on. Commission Chair Strand was careful to say the PSC "is not opposed or hostile to data centers, construction, generation, [or] transmission." Instead, she described an application revised so many times that staff could not evaluate it, calling it "a cautionary tale of when unrealistic and unreasonable speed-to-power expectations collide with a deliberative regulatory process."

Observers point to the Port Washington data center development as a wake-up call. Rob Crain, owner of Nasc Consulting, which advises Wisconsin communities on large-project readiness, said, "There is a loud, local fight in Port Washington, and the Commission did not rule on any of it. Those are two separate tracks, and that reality can be a surprise to those who aren't keeping an eye on the full range of issues."

The state legislature, meanwhile, did not fill the gap. Assembly Bill 840, which would have required closed-loop cooling and annual water-use reporting to the DNR, passed the Assembly in January and died with the session in March, without reaching the Senate floor. A proposed ban on local-government nondisclosure agreements died in committee. Despite all the headlines, lawmakers took no action on data centers in the most recent session. And now, the

airwaves are filled with ads attacking the gubernatorial candidate's stances on data centers. What happens next won't be cleared up until the new governor and legislature take office in January 2027.

The practical consequence is that there is no statewide framework, and there likely won't be one for a while. The rules a community operates under are the rules it writes for itself.

As regulators and lawmakers debate data centers, no statewide framework exists, and there likely won't be one for a while. The rules a community operates under are the rules it writes for itself.

That vacuum explains why a string of Wisconsin municipalities and counties have reached for the one tool fully within their control, enacting moratoriums.

Dane and Manitowoc Counties, along with a number of individual communities — including Wisconsin Rapids — are weighing options or have already hit pause on data center development — for now.

"A moratorium is almost never a community's goal," Crain said. "It is what a community reaches for when it has no framework, no process and no trusted way to talk to its residents. It is the blunt instrument elected officials reach for because the precise ones were never built."

With no statewide framework on the horizon, the useful preparation happens before a proposal arrives, not after.

"Almost none of the useful preparation is expensive," he said. "It is deciding what confidentiality terms you will accept, who makes up your advisory team, and what your officials will say when somebody asks at the grocery store. Those are decisions, not studies."

For MEUW member communities, the near-term work is narrower and mostly fact-based. Know the actual capacity of the system. Understand what expanding it would cost, and who would pay. Find out where the interconnection queue stands before somebody else describes it. None of that requires a proposal on the table, and it most certainly will be cheaper to have the information in hand before one arrives. ●

Cuba City's Morrissey reflects on career, upcoming retirement

Some people have a way of leaving a mark on everyone they meet. George Morrissey is one of those people. Later this month, he is retiring as Cuba City Light & Water's Director of Public Works (DPW). We recently sat down with him to chat about his career, community, and membership.

Q: You often greet people with "Aloha." What does that mean to you?

A: Aloha means hello, goodbye and love, but it's also a deeper cultural way of living in Hawaii, based on kindness, unity and respect. Hawaii is a place I love, and the Aloha spirit is something I believe in strongly. I've tried to infuse that spirit into my daily work and life.

Q: Tell us a little about your earlier years.

A: I was born into a large farming family in Shullsburg, where everyone was expected to work from dawn to dusk — and there was plenty of work to go around. Between the crops, cattle and rock quarry, time off was practically unheard of, and going to school was considered a luxury.

Farming is a 24/7/365 profession, and I decided I wanted something different out of life.

Q: How did you get started in the municipal utility industry?

A: In 1997, I was selected for a job as a Water Operator with the City of Shullsburg. While I was there, I earned my advanced water certification license on my own time and at my own expense.

I also went through the Electric Line Apprenticeship Program at Chippewa Valley Technical College and eventually became a Lead Lineman for Shullsburg Utilities.

Five years later, the DPW position in Cuba City opened up, and I was selected based on my practical experience — and possibly also because of my gift of gab!

Q: What made you realize you had made the right career choice?

A: As my wife, Tammy, and I grew our family, welcoming our daughters Grace in 2001 and Faith in 2002, it confirmed that I had made the right life and career choice.

Working for a municipal utility gave me the opportunity to be there for their games and events. It also gave me the chance to really focus on community — including the municipal utility community.

Q: Why do you believe involvement in

MEUW and WPPI Energy is so important?

A: I truly believe being an active member of MEUW and WPPI is an important part of building and supporting the municipal utility community. Dan Hornung, a wise utility commissioner from Manitowoc, once honored me by saying, "You bring something we need."

I really believe every member has something that the collective needs. I encourage all members — from utilities large and small — to get involved and bring your skills, energy, and voices to the table.

I did that myself by becoming involved with the Executive Committees of both MEUW and WPPI.

But participation can take many forms — attending meetings, networking, providing feedback, or simply taking part in the discussion.

Q: What advice would you give to other utility leaders and members?

A: The ability to sit back, observe, listen, and learn is key.

I've been lucky enough to find myself in places and working alongside people who are a lot smarter than me. You can call on them for help and opinions, and sometimes they'll call on you, too.

That's what makes a strong organization and a strong community — people sharing what they know and being willing to learn from one another.

Q: What are your plans once you are retired?

A: Stay tuned! I'm waiting for somebody to tell me. I hope to travel — we hope to have the ability to experience all seven continents and enjoy life. Both my daughters are at UW-Madison: Faith is in physical therapy school, and Grace is starting veterinary school. We'll see what happens next!

Q: Finally, one more note about your use of "Aloha" and "Mahalo." Why do you do that?

A: I say Aloha ("hello") and Mahalo — which means "thank you" or "gratitude" — because I genuinely mean them. But it also helps grab people's attention!

Sometimes, a simple greeting starts a conversation or even a relationship.

I encourage everyone to take the time to express themselves in their own way. Be genuine. Be memorable. Find your own Aloha! You need to leave your mark, whatever that may be. The biggest waste of talent is what we never hear or see — participate and show what you have to offer. Collectively, we are stronger and more well informed as one! ●



All are welcome for what promises to be an "Absolut-ly good time" celebrating George's retirement. Join the fun on **Saturday, Sept. 12**, from 1:00–5:00 p.m. at Hindu's Corner Bar in Cuba City. Guests are encouraged to wear their favorite Hawaiian attire to honor George's customary style choice.

Control of Wisconsin Legislature up for grabs this November



Labor Day is right around the corner, kids are getting back to school, and it's an even-numbered year in Wisconsin, so that means one thing — election

season is upon us! I realize it's probably felt like the last one never ended, but that's the reality of living in a politically-divided state. This was one of the craziest primaries, with a virtually uncontested Republican primary for governor leading to Rep. Tom Tiffany advancing to the November general election. Meanwhile, there was a wide range of competition among the Democrats — with political views ranging from far-left to moderate to establishment. Leading candidates abandoned their campaigns and the eventual winner, Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley dropped out, then got back in, and ultimately won by the narrowest of margins, thanks in large part to a late endorsement from two-term Gov. Tony Evers.

I will share more about the governor's race next month, including some insights about what both candidates are saying about energy and utility issues. This month, let's focus on the battle for control of the state

legislature. Republicans currently hold a 54-45 advantage in the Wisconsin State Assembly, and while there is a chance that Democrats could win enough races to take back the Assembly, their best path to winning a legislative majority comes in the State Senate, where Republicans currently hold a three-seat advantage (18-15). The ballot this fall has four seats that will determine who controls the upper chamber — three currently held by Republicans and one held by a Democrat —

and Republicans will need to win two of those races to come back with a one-vote margin. Let's take a look at the candidates in these hotly contested races that are getting a lot of attention.

WI-5 Senate District

Currently held by Sen. Rob Hutton (R-Brookfield), who is not seeking reelection, this now-open seat has Republican Mike Roberts, a healthcare professional and small-business owner, facing off against state Rep. Robyn Vining (D-Wauwatosa). This suburban Milwaukee district now includes Brookfield, Elm Grove, Pewaukee, and parts of Wauwatosa and West Allis. This area of the state that has been trending toward Democrats in recent elections and is a true 50/50 district.

WI-17 Senate District

Incumbent Sen. Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green), who was first elected to the State Assembly in 2010 and has represented this district in the State Senate since 2015, is facing off against state Rep. Jenna Jacobson (D-Oregon), who was elected to the State Assembly in 2023. The 17th is a primarily rural district in southwest Wisconsin that includes

Dodgeville, Platteville, Prairie du Chien, and a large number of public power communities, including Argyle, Belmont, Benton, Boscobel, Brodhead, Cuba City, Fennimore, Hazel Green, Mount Horeb, Muscoda, New Glarus, and Shullsburg. This is a district where the prior years' top of ticket numbers favor Democrats, but where Republicans have outperformed in state legislative races to win this seat.

WI-21 Senate District

Sen. Van Wanggaard (R-Racine) is not seeking reelection after this district in southeastern Wisconsin was significantly redrawn in 2024. The race has Republican Jim Croft, a businessman from Franklin, running against Democrat Trevor Jung, a former Racine City Councilman and the city's current transit director. The 21st includes part of the City of Racine, Caladonia, Franklin, Glendale, and Hales Corners, and is one where Republicans have had a slight advantage in recent years, but trends have been looking better for Democrat candidates, making this another truly 50/50 district.

WI-31 Senate District

Sen. Jeff Smith (D-Brunswick) served two terms in the State Assembly from 2006-2010 before being elected to the State Senate in 2018. As the incumbent, he's facing off against Republican Michele Magadan Skinner, an Eau Claire County Board Supervisor and former small business owner. The district, which includes Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Menomonie, and the public power community of Cadott, has been very "swingy" the past few election cycles, voting for President Obama in 2008 and 2012 before swinging to favor President Trump more recently. Sen. Smith won 50.4 percent of the vote in the 2022 race, and the 31st is viewed as a 50/50 district that's elected Republicans at the top of the ticket and Democrats down ballot.



Democrats would need to gain **five Assembly seats** but only **two Senate seats** to take control of one legislative chamber

Tyler Vorpapel is MEUW's Director of Legislative and Regulatory Relations. He can be reached at tvorpapel@meuw.org

Upcoming Member Roundtable sessions great for networking

MEUW member utilities routinely report that one of the most valuable aspects of their membership is networking with other members. MEUW will host five informal Member Roundtable sessions around the state this fall to give local utility leaders a chance to connect and network on topics of interest to public power. Make plans for you and your Commissioners or Board Members to attend one of the half-day sessions planned and receive updates about association happenings and participate in roundtable discussions. Planned locations and dates are:

- Tuesday, Sept. 29: Bloomer
- Wednesday, Sept. 30: Juneau
- Thursday, Oct. 1: Hartford
- Thursday, Oct. 8: Clintonville
- Thursday, Oct. 15: Richland Center

All MEUW members are welcome, and there is no cost to attend. The sessions may be especially valuable for governing board members who don't often have a chance to connect with and hear about operations in other public power communities. While the Roundtables have been organized in locations that are central to MEUW's districts, members are invited to attend at the location and on the date that works best for them.

Lunch will be provided. Advance registration is required. Each session will begin at 9 a.m. and wrap up by 1 p.m. Registration is available [here](#). ●

Members' *NEWS*

The City of New Lisbon recently added to their team: **Cindy Suzda** has been hired as City Clerk/Treasurer, and **Dale Bowser** recently started as Journeyman Line Technician. Dale previously worked at Wisconsin Dells Water & Light Utility.

Send us your news! Tell MEUW about new hires, promotions, retirements, honors, and awards, so those tidbits can be shared in MEUW member communications. Simply send an email to news@meuw.org to share your news.



Hands-on learning goes to new heights: Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) instructors and their 2nd year Electric Line Worker Apprenticeship class recently replaced an 80-foot light pole on the football field at Suring High School in Oconto County. The unique assignment was a great learning experience for the apprentices from 17 municipal utilities, who were among the 22 students assisting with the project.



Public Power Week is Oct. 4-10, 2026

Our industry celebrates Public Power Week the first full week of October every year to help customers and stakeholders understand how they can better engage with their community-owned utility and benefit from all it has to offer.

Resources are available online to help your utility take part in the annual celebration. New social media tools, promotional materials, and customizable assets will be available at publicpower.org. Call the MEUW Office at (608) 837-2263 with questions.



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MEUW NEWS Monitor

Affordability is focus of Sept. 15 Customers First Coalition forum

An annual forum bringing together policy-makers, energy leaders, and stakeholders is set for Tuesday, Sept. 15, in Madison. This year's Customers First Coalition "Power Breakfast" will focus on energy affordability, with a keynote presentation by Dr. Destenie Nock, an Associate Professor at Carnegie Mellon University and Founder and CEO of Peoples Energy Analytics. She is a leading voice in energy affordability, equity, and systems modeling. Her pioneering research provides critical frameworks for understanding energy burden beyond traditional metrics, and offers valuable insights for utility policy and regulatory design. Dr. Nock's presentation will be followed by an expert panel exploring practical solutions to maintain affordability while supporting reliability, economic growth, and long-term investment in the state's electric system. Registration is [here](#).

Brush up on the Basics of Electric Rate Setting

Support your utility's success by understanding the fundamentals of electric rate setting. This class is for anyone who wants to understand the different components and considerations involved in the process, and is especially helpful for those new to the utility industry. Utility commissioners and elected officials are welcome to attend. Taught by a seasoned instructor, this course will cover the cost-of-service process, rate design and principles, and special rate provisions. Whether you're a municipal utility employee or member of a governing body, don't miss this chance to ensure you know this important utility con-

cept. Join your peers for this class in Mauston on Tuesday, Sept. 22. Details and registration are located [here](#).

Register today for Accounting & Customer Service Seminar

This annual seminar draws municipal utility staff from across Wisconsin with a focus on accounting and customer service topics. Attendees receive updates on regulatory rules and legislation affecting their utilities and compare best practices to improve their operations. MEUW's Accounting and Customer Service Committee assists MEUW staff in putting together the day's program to address industry topics. This year's seminar is planned for Wednesday, Sept. 23, in Mauston. Additional information and registration details are available [here](#).

Utility Planning and Risk Management class set for Oct. 7

An upcoming session in MEUW's professional development programming — Fundamentals of Utility Management — will focus on utility planning and risk management. The one-day training is led by **Dave Krause**, an experienced engineer and regular presenter at MEUW events. He will explain the basics of strategic and operational planning, why planning matters, and how well-thought-out plans and careful assessments of risks can contribute to long-term success. The class will be held in Mauston on Wednesday, Oct. 7. Registration and details about the class and instructor can be found [here](#).



It's time for suppliers to renew their Associate Membership!

Having strong connections to vital supply lines is essential for municipal utility operations. MEUW Associate Members are suppliers and service providers who have paid membership dues in support of those connections. During the month of September, current members who renew their membership will also receive priority access to register for the 2027 Electric Operations Conference & Expo, giving them the best opportunity to select the table location of their choice (space permitting). Priority registration for 2025-26 Associate Members is open through Sept. 30. Registration for first-time and lapsed Associate Members will open Oct. 1. Full details about the benefits of Associate Membership renewal can be found [here](#). The Associate Member year runs from Oct. 1–Sept. 30 each year.

Plan ahead for December seminar on coaching others

Commit to your own leadership development by attending Leading Through Coaching, a one-day class that focuses on the importance of effective coaching as an essential leadership skill for utility leaders. Participants will take away practical ideas they can apply to set a good example, develop their employees and get the most from individuals and their teams. Part of MEUW's professional development programming, this class will be held in Mauston on Wednesday, Dec. 2. Details and registration are [here](#).



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MEUW Employee Spotlight: Mike Czuprynko marking 10 years

This article is part of a series of employee spotlights to help members learn more about the people of MEUW.

Mike Czuprynko, Director of Operations and Safety Services, is a familiar face to many of our members. His outgoing presence is hard to miss, whether he's interacting at a conference or coordinating a mutual aid response. He has been with MEUW for 10 years, first serving as Manager of Safety Services before becoming Director of Safety Services and Operations in May 2023.

Mike graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater with a bachelor's degree in occupational and environmental health and safety, and a minor in coaching. Prior to joining MEUW, he worked for Charter Manufacturing, which is headquartered just outside Milwaukee. He started at the company's cold-rolling steel facility, and later move to their auto division, where he managed safety and environmental programs globally, including locations in the United Kingdom and China. The position



Fun Facts about Mike:

I'd eat that ... "Chicago-style hot dogs, Italian beef, Maxwell Street Polish (sandwich)"

Best new thing ... "Internet in cars and trucks, because kids don't know how to just look out the windows!"

Bring back ... "Car keys that actually go into the ignition so you're not stuck when the fob fails or the battery dies, and then you have to get a new fob for \$350 even after you replaced the battery ... ask me how I know."

Favorite game ... "Golf, Battleship"

Motivated by ... "Helping people, whether it's a mutual aid event or outside of work."

required regular overseas travel. Seeking to stay closer to home, in 2014, he took a job in Portage with Encapsys, a business partner for Procter and Gamble that micro encapsulated scents and perfumes for laundry products.

He was hired by MEUW on Sept. 14, 2016, and today oversees the association's safety compliance program offered to municipalities as well as the on-the-job training program offered to utility line-workers. He represents MEUW members as part of the American Public Power Association (APPA) Mutual Aid Committee that coordinates national public power mutual aid efforts, including the most recent response to help Lakeland Electric recover from the devastation Hurricane Milton caused in Florida in October 2024. He also has responsibility for the general operations of the association, including maintaining the office facility, and managing equipment and technology needs.

Mike currently lives in Cato, and enjoys hunting, fishing, boating, and golfing with his sons Vince, 11, and Blake, 9. ●

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President declares National Emergency to secure U.S. bulk-power system

President Donald Trump signed Executive Order (EO) 14420 – Declaring a National Emergency to Secure the United States Bulk-Power System, which would limit the importation of foreign-produced bulk-power system electric equipment. The EO was signed on Aug. 26; the full text can be found [here](#), and a fact sheet from the White House is [here](#).

High-Level Summary

The EO finds that the use of foreign bulk-power system electric equipment constitutes an “unusual and extraordinary threat” to national security and bans its importation. The Secretary of Energy is directed to identify the specific equipment and manufacturers (“covered foreign entities”) that should be subject to the prohibition within 120 days. The secretary is authorized to make exceptions or impose conditions to the use or importation of equipment on a case-by-case basis. Before doing so, the secretary is directed to “consider the effects on reliability and safety, the availability of secure replacements, and the continuity of essential service, and may establish a phased compliance.”

The EO defines “bulk-power system” and “bulk-power system electric equipment” broadly. Notably, the EO specifies that, for the purposes of the order, the definition of bulk-power system includes “transmission lines rated at 69 kV or more, but does not include facilities used in the local distribution of electric energy.”

In determining whether equipment is within the scope of the EO, the Energy Secretary is authorized to consider “associated software and firmware, remote access capabilities, lifecycle maintenance and update mechanisms, and other supply chain dependencies.” It is also notable that the EO specifically states that “items not listed in the definition of bulk-power system electric equipment or that have broader application beyond the bulk-power system unrelated to the national security concerns identified in this order are outside the scope of this order.”

Actions in President Trump’s First Term

In his first term, President Trump issued a similar order. After the original EO was signed, the Department of Energy (DOE) issued a request for information (RFI) to “understand the energy industry’s current practices to identify and mitigate vulnerabilities in the supply chain for components of the bulk power system.” APPA responded, asking DOE to take a risk-based approach that was cost-conscious and had a national defense strategic focus. In December 2020, then-Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette issued an order prohibiting utilities that supply critical defense facilities from procuring specific electric equipment from China. Upon taking office, President Joe Biden suspended and then revoked the DOE order, and issued a separate RFI, which APPA also responded to, as part of what it characterized as a “larger and coordinated effort.” ●

Wisconsin UTILITY NEWS Digest

Application for ATC transmission project must start process over

The three-person Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) voted unanimously on Aug. 6 to revoke the “completeness determination” for a proposed transmission project to serve a data center campus being developed in Port Washington. The decision came after ATC submitted more than 500 amendments to its application for the roughly \$1 billion project that seeks to add and rebuild transmission lines and construct five new substations across five counties. Commissioners said the extensive revisions made the proposal a “moving target” and prevented them from adequately evaluating its economic, environmental, and public impacts. The decision does not mean the project has been rejected, and ATC has the option to submit a new application.

Oracle drops challenge to new safeguards for data centers

Without explanation, tech giant Oracle on Aug. 17 dropped its lawsuit challenging Wisconsin utility regulators’ new financial safeguards for large data centers. Earlier this year, the PSC ordered We Energies’ rate structure that would require developers with credit ratings below certain levels to provide cash or lines of credit, protecting customers if projects close before utility investments are recovered. Oracle is developing a \$15 billion AI campus in Port Washington with OpenAI and Vantage, and argued the rule could cost it \$100 million annually and discourage investment. The PSC, Clean Wisconsin and the Citizens Utility Board welcomed the dismissal, saying the safeguards appropriately shield ratepayers from financial risk.

Public asked to provide input about new transmission project

Developers of a \$1.2 billion transmission project being planned across southern Wisconsin have begun public meetings. The 190-mile, 765-kilovolt Bell Center–Columbia–Sugar Creek–Illinois/Wisconsin State Line Project, or BECI, would run from Crawford County through Walworth County to the state line. Midcontinent Grid Solutions, a joint venture of Transource Energy and BHE Transmission, is developing the project for completion by June 1, 2034. Its proposed “Guyed-Y” structures are designed to reduce right-of-way and environmental impacts. No final route has been chosen, and developers are gathering public input. Some landowners have raised concerns about effects on farms, property values, land use, and potential noise. ●

Collaboration = Energy savings and community impact

A recent project at Pine Haven Christian Communities demonstrates how collaboration among local utilities, Focus on Energy, contractors, and customers can translate energy-saving opportunities into meaningful community impact.

Pine Haven operates senior-living communities in Sheboygan County, including facilities served by Sheboygan Falls Utilities. Because lighting is critical to maintaining safe, comfortable, and welcoming spaces for residents and staff, and often operates for long hours, upgrading aging lighting offered a significant opportunity to reduce energy use.

“As a nonprofit with multiple campuses, [we are] always looking for innovative ways to manage operating costs more efficiently,” said Maintenance Manager Phillip Gabrielse. “Rising energy expenses made it clear that implementing modern efficiency upgrades would deliver meaningful financial benefits.”

Working in partnership with Sheboygan Falls Utilities and Focus on Energy, Pine Haven moved forward with a comprehensive lighting project. Werner Electric Supply served as the contractor, while Pine Haven worked closely with Focus on Energy Advisor Mark Garrigan, who provided technical guidance and helped the organization navigate available energy-saving opportunities and rebates.

Staff and residents have been pleased with the results, Gabrielse said. Common areas are brighter and more pleasant thanks to modern LED lighting that requires far less maintenance, while new occupancy and daylighting controls enable smarter energy use.

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



Comprehensive Lighting Upgrade

Rather than simply replacing a handful of bulbs, Pine Haven upgraded lighting throughout its facilities using a combination of high-efficiency LED technology and controls. Improvements included:

- Replacing older fluorescent fixtures with complete LED fixtures.
- Replacing incandescent, CFL, and HID downlights with LED downlights.
- Replacing fluorescent lamps with tubular LED (TLED) lamps.
- Replacing exterior HID lamps with LED lamps.
- Installing daylighting controls that adjust lighting based on available natural light.
- Using occupancy sensors that reduce unnecessary lighting when spaces are unoccupied.

Together, these upgrades allow Pine Haven to use less electricity while maintaining the bright, comfortable environment that residents and staff rely on every day.

Nearly \$14,000 in Incentives

Focus on Energy provided Pine Haven with nearly \$14,000 in rebates to help offset the upfront cost of the improvements. Since completing the upgrades, Pine Haven has realized significant

energy cost savings, freeing up dollars that can instead support the organization's mission of serving its residents.

The project is expected to save nearly 110,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) in its first year alone. To put that into perspective, that's roughly equivalent to the electricity used by about 10 average U.S. homes for an entire year.

The long-term impact is even greater. Over the expected life of the installed equipment, Pine Haven is projected to save approximately 1.7 million kWh of electricity, roughly equivalent to the electricity used by more than 150 average U.S. homes for a year.

Those reductions translate into lasting operational savings while also reducing demand on the local electric system.

And Pine Haven's energy-saving efforts aren't stopping with lighting.

“More projects, including heating and cooling upgrades, are planned at all three residential campuses,” Gabrielse said. “Pine Haven is excited to see how bright its energy-saving future will get.”

Pine Haven's success also highlights the value of connecting municipal utility customers with the resources available through Focus on Energy. Through Sheboygan Falls Utilities' partnership with the program, local customers can access financial incentives and technical expertise that help turn energy-saving opportunities into completed projects.

For Pine Haven, the benefits are clear: lower operating expenses, improved lighting for residents and staff, and significant energy savings that will continue for years to come. For municipal utilities, the project demonstrates how a conversation with a customer about aging equipment or rising energy costs can open the door to meaningful improvements with lasting benefits for both the customer and the community. ●

Submit ideas for topics and presenters at 2027 Electric Operations Conference & Expo

The annual gathering of municipal utility and electric cooperative employees from across Wisconsin is set for



Jan. 13–14, 2027, and event organizers are working to identify topics and presenters to make the event informative and worthwhile for all who attend. The focus of the 2027 event is resilience and reliability — hallmarks of energy service.

Utilities, suppliers, and consultants are invited to submit ideas they can present to conference attendees during a large-group general session (30 minutes or less). This is an opportunity to showcase a project or share important insights by presenting information about a compelling and relevant topic of interest to leaders in utility operations. The “Call for Presenters” form is available [here](#). The deadline to submit an idea is Friday, Sept. 11.

EOCE27 will take place at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells. The trade show is planned for Thursday, Jan. 14, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

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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 are some current opportunities available:

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Rice Lake Utilities

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Lake Mills Light & Water

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