

PRESS RELEASE

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MPW Derecho Response; MCSD Collaboration

At Tuesday's meeting of the Board of Water, Electric and Communications Trustees, the Board was fully briefed on the response to the 'Derecho' which impacted Muscatine Power and Water's (MPW) service area. The severe thunderstorm complex produced wind gusts in excess of 100 mph, causing significant damage and widespread power outages.

MPW received numerous reports of electrical outages, downed lines, uprooted trees and affected services. In total, 3,637 MPW customers experienced a power interruption due to the storm. Of those customers, 1,089 had just a momentary loss of power, while the remaining 2,548 experienced extended outages. All possible system restorations were completed in just over 14 hours by MPW staff and crews.

A few customers remained without power; however, it was a result of repairs required on their equipment. MPW restored those customers as quickly as the repairs were completed by electricians.

"I am so proud of the work our crews accomplished," said General Manager, Gage Huston. "Our team members worked vigorously to restore essential services to our community and were on standby to help other communities devastated by the storm. This weather event brings to focus the skill and commitment our crew members bring to work daily to serve the community."

The Board learned of the continuing collaboration with Muscatine Community School District. In response to the district's Return to Learn plan, MPW is offering an internet/router service to eligible families enabling children to receive online instruction. An anticipated 90-200 families not already receiving internet service could potentially sign up.

"MPW has an obligation to support and collaborate whenever there is community need," said Erika Cox, director of customer experience and technology. "Helping local students return to school is possible due to countless hours of work by school officials, local community groups coming together, and resourceful creativity. MPW is glad to be a part of a project which champions learning, no matter where learning happens."

As a follow-up to last month's meeting, Staff presented a recommendation to approve a project to upgrade MPW's fixed wireless service. The \$250,800 expenditure will include the upgrading of existing equipment, adding base stations and associated equipment to existing tower locations, replacement of all customer premise radios and the purchase of licensed spectrum.

MPW is currently participating in the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Citizens Broadband Radio Service (CBRS) spectrum auction. MPW must acquire new licensed spectrum and/or additional unlicensed spectrum to make its planned service enhancements.

Fixed wireless service is available to customers living outside MPW's wired service area. Upgrades to the system have been implemented over the years, the last in 2016. Changes prompted by the FCC are driving the current upgrade. While the upgrade was being planned, improving spectrum efficiency and service delivery were driving considerations.

"Internet usage and customer needs have changed rapidly in the last few months due to COVID-19, with many still working from home and now students returning to school," shared Cox. "Providing essential communication services to those who do not have a viable alternative option is a priority for our communications staff. This investment in additional equipment and updated network configurations support our rural customers by providing increased speeds and greater reliability."

Some of the work to upgrade the service will begin immediately, with full implementation completed by April of 2021.

Lastly, the Board approved the refinancing of Communications Revenue Bonds for a cumulative total of \$10,000,000. The refinancing will replenish cash reserves, support further initiatives to improve existing service experience and delivery and provide working capital for projects to meet increased requests from non-customers wanting to be served by MPW's all-fiber system.

"The Communications Utility is experiencing growth with no slowdown in the foreseeable future," shared Huston. "Investing dollars today will secure Muscatine's communications needs for decades - connecting people to life."

In other business, the Board:

- Accepted and approved the contract change order and final acceptance for Unit 9 ESP Roof Replacement Project for an increase of \$9,756 with a final price of \$91,996.
- Accepted and approved contract change order and final acceptance for the Water Tower Refurbishment Project for an increase of \$8,300 with a final price of \$452,550.
- Requested the Mayor and City Council designate October 4 – 10, 2020 Public Power Week in the City of Muscatine.

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Muscatine Power and Water (MPW) is a customer-driven, not-for-profit municipal utility, established by the community for the purpose of serving the community responsively, competitively, and responsibly. MPW provides reliable electricity, high quality water, and state-of-the-art communications services, including internet, video and phone services, to homes and businesses throughout the Muscatine community at rates below state and national averages with outstanding customer service. MPW is locally controlled and operated for the benefit and betterment of the community.