

PRESS RELEASE

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Muscatine Power and Water
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MPW Implements Community Support Measures in Response to COVID-19

At Tuesday's meeting of the Board of Water, Electric and Communications Trustees, the Board postponed previously scheduled rate adjustments for water and TV services in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The rate adjustments were scheduled to take effect April 1 and will now be effective May 1, 2020. Deferring the rate adjustment one month will reduce Net Income approximately \$20,000 for the Water Utility and \$40,000 for the Communications Utility.

"The Trustee's decision to postpone the rate adjustments highlight the significance of local control," General Manager Gage Huston shared. "As our community pulls together during these unprecedented times, MPW will continue to look for ways to ease our customer's concerns."

Many health and safety efforts have been implemented to protect staff and customers including the closure of the lobby, suspension of meter readings, limiting in-home communications installs where possible, and transitioning some staff to working remotely. Utilizing staggered shifts and social distancing, electric, water, and communications field crews continue to work on necessary infrastructure projects, a reduced Generation staff continues to produce power, and System Control operators continue to monitor the overall system and dispatch crews as necessary to keep services online.

"The safety of our staff and customers weigh heavy on our minds," said Huston. "We've reduced as many person-to-person contacts as we can, and appreciate customers who are helping us out from submitting their own meter readings to picking up equipment through our drive-up and performing some self-installs of communications services and routers with the phone assistance of our HelpDesk staff. We've had to change our service model and I'm extremely happy with how both employees and customers have adapted during this unprecedented time."

To provide some additional support to those staying home due to the pandemic, MPW – in partnership with content providers – is offering free previews of many popular networks. The previews, lasting into April and May, give much more content to customers at a time when they're being asked to stay home. Other customer support measures implemented recently include the suspension of disconnects for non-payment and waiver of late fees.

"Customers should not be anxious about their utility bill," said Erika Cox, director of customer and technology experience. "During this time of lost or reduced work hours, we are being more flexible about when payments are made. If your work status has changed due to COVID-19,

please be sure to reach out to us. We can't waive utility bills, but we can be more flexible with payments while folks are recovering from job impacts. We want customers' energy to be on the health and safety of their loved ones."

All updates impacting service, billing and COVID-19 information can be found by visiting www.mpw.org/covid19alerts or calling (563) 263-2631.

COVID-19 has had a negative impact on MPW's Fiber to the Home project. "We shut down fiber installs mid-March. Fiber installs are the only part of the project completed in the home and can take 45 minutes up to 4 or 5 hours. Customers already have communications service, and we felt it was too much of a risk to customers and installers to continue with the fiber installs. Construction is temporarily halted as well, although we're hoping outside construction work will pick back up soon," updated Cox. As of the end of March, nearly 64% of customers are on the all-fiber network.

MPW's Internet network is holding up very well under the new record level usage. "We're seeing record load with students being home, people working from home, and the emergence of video meetings and training. Our excess Internet capacity is quickly being used, but we will have another 10 Gigabit path (bringing total bandwidth to 40 Gigabits) activated by the end of this week to keep ahead of customer demand. Our ISP Team has positioned us to meet this increased demand extremely well. Our hats off to them," concluded Huston.

MPW reminds customers that two free public wi-fi spots have been opened. One at the Pearl City Center (red brick building) on the riverfront and one between the dorms/apartments and Loper Hall on the MCC campus. "We felt this was a great option that we could spin up quickly to provide customers that potentially don't otherwise have internet access a way to get connected and receive important updates," explained Huston, adding, "we're looking at some other options as well that will benefit the community."

In other action, the Board:

- Ratified and approved February expenditures and transactions totaling \$7,752,413.90
- Awarded contract for the Unit 9 ESP Roof Replacement Project to Jim Giese Commercial Roofing, Inc., of Eldridge IA, for a total of \$82,240.
- Approved the recommendation requesting the Mayor and Muscatine City Council designate May 3-9, 2020 as Drinking Water Week.

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Muscatine Power and Water (MP&W) is a customer-driven, not-for-profit municipal utility, established by the community for the purpose of serving the community responsively, competitively, and responsibly. MP&W 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. MP&W is locally controlled and operated for the benefit and betterment of the community.