

## **PRESS RELEASE**

May 26, 2020

Muscatine Power and Water  
3205 Cedar Street  
P.O. Box 899  
Muscatine, IA 52761

Contact: Erika Cox, [ecox@mpw.org](mailto:ecox@mpw.org)

### **MPW Beginning the Process of Returning to Normal Operations**

The Board of Water, Electric and Communications Trustees learned of Muscatine Power and Water's plan to transition staff back to on-site work at Tuesday's meeting. While many operational crews have continued to work or rotated crews throughout the last eight weeks, most professional staff worked remotely to limit the spread of COVID-19.

"Providing essential, continuous utility services requires 24/7/365 support," explained General Manager, Gage Huston. "We take our hats off to the men and women in our field crews, along with generation and system operations keeping power, water and communications services flowing to our customers – they haven't skipped a beat throughout the pandemic."

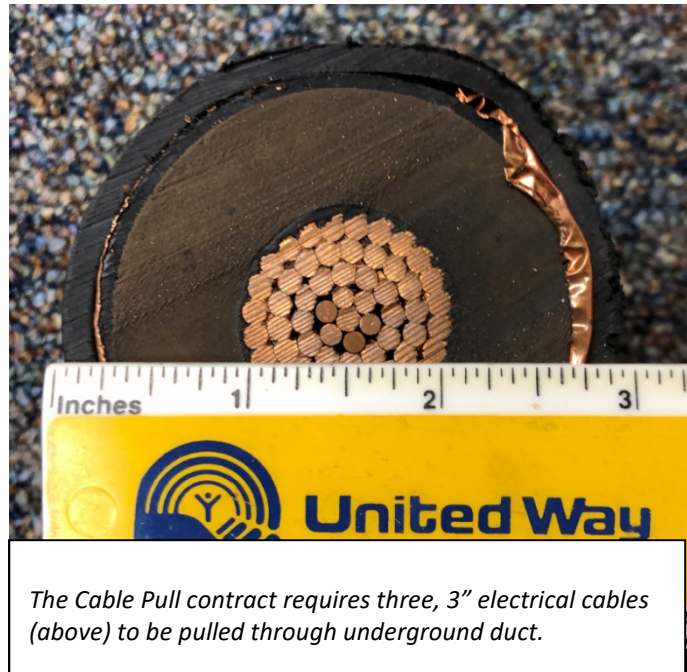
The plan returns staff back to work on-site in three phases, with the earliest phase focusing mostly on operational areas. The phases will be implemented two weeks apart but could be adjusted depending on the local COVID-19 situation. Several employee protection protocols have been established to accommodate the return-to-work plan including face covering requirements, hand sanitizing stations placed throughout work areas and continued social distancing requirements.

The customer lobby and in-home communications install work is anticipated to reopen mid to late June. New protective protocols have been developed in preparation of the reopening of the Lobby, including plexiglass sneeze guards, social distancing floor markings and face covering requirements. Installers will continue wearing a facemask, vinyl gloves, and booties, and will sanitize their hands and equipment for each appointment.

"We've had success continuing to serve our customers' needs while most customer service staff have been working remotely and we've been doing limited in-home work for cable and internet services," said Customer and Technology Experience Director, Erika Cox. "Implementing additional safeguards helps protect both our customers and staff."

With resumption of normal operations, MPW will resume late payment penalty charges and service disconnection effective June 17, 2020. The Iowa Utilities Board has authorized municipal utilities to resume disconnections effective May 28, 2020, however, MPW is extending the date to align with when customer service staff will be available to assist customers. Customer notifications of past due accounts are ongoing and MPW reminds customers that Community Action of Eastern Iowa (563-263-9290) may be able to provide some assistance, especially for those households financially impacted by COVID-19.

Construction work on the Mississippi Drive Corridor Project continues. The Board awarded the contract for the Mississippi Drive Corridor Underground Cable Pull Contract to Marmon Utility, LLC – Kerite Cable Services of Seymour, Connecticut, for a total cost of \$1,131,944.20. As the project's only bidder, the contractor will pull underground transmission cabling through new duct banks in preparation for remaining overhead transmission lines to be removed, improving the aesthetics of Muscatine's riverfront. The Mississippi Drive Corridor Project is multi-year, multi-phase City of Muscatine project that encompasses work from the Norbert F. Beckey Bridge on east 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to Carver Corner.



General Manager, Gage Huston announced for the second consecutive year, Muscatine Power and Water received national recognition in March from the American Public Power Association (APPA) for achieving exceptional electric reliability in 2019. APPA is a trade group representing more than 2,000 not-for-profit, community-owned electric utilities. The utilities recognized by APPA have been tracking reliability data via the Association's web-based subscription service called eReliability Tracker, which lets utilities collect, categorize and summarize their outage information.

"Outage data from 2019 exemplifies the hard work from MPW staff in multiple areas, including the line crews out in the field, system operators in the Control Center, planning and design staff and customer service representatives," shared Huston. "These results also reflect the benefits from MPW's reliability investments in recent years."

In providing a monthly update to the Board about MPW's Fiber to the Home (FTTH) Project, Cox advised that construction work on the Fiber to the Home Project restarted May 18 with drop and mainline construction crews reporting to Muscatine. "The MPW and AEG teams are excited to get working on the final phase of construction. Most of the remaining work is underground, so weather will play an important role in our progress." At times, the underground work will cause service interruptions, but efforts will be made to minimize those impacts. MPW has put more customer communications in place to advise customers when crews will be working in their neighborhoods or in their yards. To maximize efficiencies, crews will be working smaller areas and completing all required work and then moving on. "Customers can really help us when they get those notices and see utility locates by marking their privately-owned underground lines like sprinklers systems and underground dog fences. Approximately 64% of customers are active on the all-fiber system and we're excited to ramp back up so that we can connect more of our customers to our new blazing fast and reliable fiber service", concluded Cox.

In other action, the Board:

- Approved the revised Project Summary Form for the HelpDesk/Mail Room Conversion Project for a total cost of \$171,934.
- Approved a contract change order for an increase of \$87,192.25 related to construction of the 69kV underground duct bank from 2<sup>nd</sup> and Oak Streets to 4<sup>th</sup> and Poplar Streets as part of the Mississippi Drive Corridor Project. Although this portion of the work exceeded the estimate, the total \$5.9M project is still projected to come in at or under budget.
- 

###

*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.*