



**OWATONNA**  
**PUBLIC UTILITIES**

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# CUSTOMER UPDATE



## FEATURING: WHY NATURAL GAS?

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# OPU MEMO



Mark Fritsch,  
General Manager

## OPU Commission

Mr. Kim Cosens  
Mr. Dale E. Simon  
Mr. Matt Kottke  
Mr. Kent Rossi  
Mr. Randy Doyal

I was recently asked if I believe OPU is renewable energy friendly. The answer was easy for me, most definitely yes. Through our energy provider, Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA), we are providing more renewable energy than government mandates require. We offer rebates to customers that want to install their own solar systems, and we pay them retail rates for energy produced through net metering. We are also looking at offering a Community Solar Program for customers interested in having solar energy without installing it on their homes or property.

I was then asked about the subsidization of renewable energy. Subsidies lower the costs for some at the expense of others. Energy subsidies may be direct cash transfers to producers, consumers, or related bodies, as well as indirect support mechanisms, such as tax exemptions and rebates, price controls, trade restrictions, and limits on market access. Renewable energy like wind and solar are mainly subsidized by tax breaks and mandates to ensure they are being used when less expensive alternatives are available. Both of those subsidies are born by all consumers in the form of higher taxes and more expensive utility bills.

There is another way that utilities have been inadvertently subsidizing solar energy, that doesn't spread the cost to all consumers. What many people don't know is that the utility energy charge (Commodity Charge), on your bill also includes some of the cost for maintaining the power lines, and infrastructure to ensure you have reliable energy when needed. The monthly service charge was intended to recover

the distribution and billing-related costs, which include having an electrical distribution system in place, plus the cost of the meter, servicing and reading the meter, mailing the bills and maintaining customer records. Over time utilities kept that charge the same and slowly began recovered increased costs through the energy charge. Since all costs were recovered, it didn't make a difference. Now that people are installing their own generation including solar, they are reducing commodity costs that also include infrastructure costs. As a result, these costs are shifted to those customers without rooftop solar systems through higher utility bills, which is not fair.

That is why many utilities are removing infrastructure costs from their Commodity Charge and transferring it to the monthly service charge. In some utilities that can more than double the service charge.

OPU is currently reviewing the way we charge customers by performing a Cost of Service Study. The primary objective of a cost of service analysis is to identify the cost of providing service to each rate class of customer, such as residential, commercial and industrial, as a function of load and service characteristics. A cost of service study analysis will provide us a useful guideline for assigning cost responsibility to each customer classification in a way that avoids unjustifiable price discrimination. That may mean lowering our commodity charge and increasing our service charge. Some renewable energy advocates may say by increasing the service charge we are anti-renewable energy, but we know that they are only being charged for their fair share of using our poles and wires.

Thank you so much for your questions. It's an honor and privilege to serve you.

## CONSERVATION TIP\$

Check your fridge and freezer temperature periodically. Fridge temperatures should be set at 38°F while freezers should be set at 0°F. Setting your fridge or freezer 10 degrees colder than necessary can mean up to 25% more energy use!

Go to [www.tinyurl.com/OPU-Tips](http://www.tinyurl.com/OPU-Tips) for more conservation tips.



### **Brooktree Family Sunday Funday!**

If you haven't already heard, Sundays are Family Funday at Brooktree Golf Course! Adults and children (ages 5 & up) can come and play together after 2 p.m. Green fees for nine holes are just \$15 per pair, and \$5 for a cart. Parent and child must each have their own sets of clubs. Please call ahead for a tee time!

**Brooktree and Master's Bar & Grille is on Facebook!** Be sure to follow Brooktree on Facebook for fall specials at the course and in the restaurant!

### **National Golf Lovers Day**

Come celebrate at Brooktree on Tuesday, October 4th~! \$5.00 cart rental and \$5 green fees; per nine holes; per person

**Beers & Bogeys at Brooktree!** – A fun 2-person, 9-hole best shot tournament. Totally for fun, and totally cheap! Grab a partner and register at the clubhouse. Shotgun start at 10:30 a.m. on October 8th. Stop in the Pro Shop for more information.

### **Now Hiring!**

Adult volleyball officials  
Seasonal and temporary parks and grounds  
Seasonal and temporary golf maintenance  
Water safety instructor  
Lifeguards  
Therapeutic recreation group aide  
Therapeutic recreation group lead  
Program supervisor for youth basketball  
Youth official- basketball

### **4th Annual Trick or Treat Trail- Free Community Event!**

Saturday, October 28th – 2:00 – 4:00pm

Manthey Park

Ghosts and Goblins of all ages grab your trick or treat bags and head to Manthey Park for our 4th Annual Trick or Treat Trail! Visit local businesses along the trail for treats, games, a photo shoot and crafts. Take a ride on the kiddie train ride, find spooky treasures on the scavenger hunt and visit the cute animals at the petting zoo! New this year is a magician and free pony rides. We'll also have not one, but two bounce houses, free hot chocolate and food trucks. Mark your calendars!

**West Hills Tennis & Fitness Center** – New fall and winter hours for West Hills begin on October 1st. Fitness Center is open Monday-Thursday 6am-9:30pm, Friday 6am-7pm, Saturday 8am-6pm and Sunday 11am-6pm. Pool hours are Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 6-7:15am; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday from 7-9pm; Saturday and Sunday 1-4pm. Upcoming Specials: September – SERVE IT UP: It's Tennis Time...reserve a 1 ½ hour block of Open Tennis Court Time for \$5.00 per person between 7:00 pm-8:30 pm, Monday – Thursday. Purchase a one month membership at regular price and get a 2nd month of equal or lesser value for ½ price! \*Not eligible with any other specials or discounts. October: Spring into Action: Purchase a one month membership and get entered into a drawing for a free month membership of equal or lesser value. \*Not eligible with any other specials or discounts

**The Park Passport is back!** Use the insert in the Fall Parks & Recreation brochure, find one online at [ci.owatonna.mn.us/parksrecreation](http://ci.owatonna.mn.us/parksrecreation) or stop in the office to pick yours up! In the 12 miles of trail used to complete a passport, you'll see the beauty of Owatonna's parks. Look for the signs, approximately 2-4 feet from the ground,

at each park to complete a 12-word phrase. The first set of signs will be posted from September 8-21, and the second ones from September 22-October 6. Only one entry per household, but bring the whole family to search! Prize packages include a Brooktree Golf Course gift certificate, Cabela's prize package, bike package gift certificate from Straight River sports, and River Springs Water Park passes. So get those hiking boots out & get ready to hit the trail!

### **Winery Trip: Thursday September 28**

Wine lovers will have a blast touring two local, award winning wineries. We start the day at Chankaska Winery for a noon Walking Taste and Tour of the vineyards. Lunch is at Boondocks Bar and Grill in Janesville at 1:30 PM (lunch not included in trip fee). After that we head down the road to Indian Island Winery for a 3:00 PM tasting and to enjoy the beautiful scenery. Transportation and wine tastings are included in the fee. Register by September 12  
Cost: \$33 for SP Members or \$48 for Non-Members  
Depart from SP: 10:45 am.

### **St. Croix River Cruise: Thursday, October 12**

Enjoy this two-hour luncheon cruise as we observe the fall colors on the shores of Minnesota and Wisconsin along the scenic St. Croix River. The professional, courteous staff and crew of our vessels will accommodate all of your needs. Full bar service available for your social time. A buffet lunch is included. Credit cards are not accepted on the boat, please bring cash for any purchases.  
Register by October 2  
Cost: \$39 for SP Members or \$54 for Non-Members  
Depart from SP: 8:30AM - River cruise 11:30AM - 1:30PM

### **SeniorPlace Inc. Annual Meeting**

Monday, September 25, 2017

Location: The Elks Club

Social hour, meeting, and dinner

Entertainment provided by Earl Beale Piano Bar. Tentative start time is 4:30pm.

There will be a drawing for door prizes.

New SeniorPlace Inc, Board Members will be elected. Please RSVP to the SeniorPlace by Sept. 18. Contact SeniorPlace for more information.

We want to hear from you! Parks and Recreation is Your Best Investment. Are there things you would like to see offered...let us know! Are there things we do really well...let us know! What's your favorite part of Parks & Recreation...let us know! What additions or improvements would you like to see...let us know! Although budget and time constraints limit what we can do...we'd like to know what you want to do!

Until next time, get out and enjoy your parks during this fine fall weather!

### **MAYOR**

Tom Kuntz

### **COUNCIL MEMBERS**

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Jeff Okerberg

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss





# WHY NATURAL GAS?

Information for this article obtained from American Gas Association publication "Why Natural Gas"

Natural gas is clean, domestic, abundant, efficient and affordable, making it the ideal energy sources to strengthen our economy, meet environmental challenges, create jobs, reduce the cost of energy for consumers, and increase overall security by reducing our dependence on foreign energy sources.

## ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND PRODUCTION OF NATURAL GAS:

- Horizontal drilling technology means much smaller well footprint and surface disturbance
- Single well with multiple laterals as opposed to multiple wells scattered over a large geographical area
- Less roads and pipelines
- Natural gas production does not contaminate ground water
- Natural gas production does not trigger earthquakes

[Animation of Hydraulic Fracturing:](https://vimeo.com/177586135)

<https://vimeo.com/177586135>

[Hydraulic Fracturing: Just the facts:](http://energyindepth.org/just-the-facts/)

<http://energyindepth.org/just-the-facts/>

## IMPECCABLE SAFETY RECORD:

- The natural gas industry has a longstanding record of operating safely
- Spends more than \$22 billion annually to maintain more than 2.5 million miles of transmission and distribution lines
- Collaborates with federal and state regulators, public officials, emergency responders, excavators, consumers and general public from wellhead to the burner tip

## EFFICIENTLY YIELDING GENEROUS NATURAL GAS SUPPLIES:

- Horizontal drilling combined with hydraulic fracturing reaches large natural gas stores in shale formations
- U.S. leads the world in production
- Job creation directly tied to energy extraction and delivery up 40%
- In U.S. more than one hundred year supply

## INDUSTRY RENAISSANCE AND JOB CREATION:

- Domestically produced and abundant energy means lower energy costs
- Lower cost energy keeps manufacturing costs down
- Low cost natural gas is helping bring manufacturers back to the U.S.
- Natural Gas-dependent industries to date have created more than one million manufacturing jobs

## RESULTING IN LOWER PRICING:

- Access to more gas is keeping prices low
- Lower prices passed on to consumers provide significant energy savings
- Residential consumers spend less than those using other energy
- Commercial and industrial businesses also benefit from lower prices

To learn more about natural gas' vital role in America's infrastructure, visit <http://playbook.aga.org>.

# EQUIPMENT SERIES

# OPU HIGHLIGHT



Odorizer – Injects Mercaptan into Natural Gas

The next time you smell rotten eggs in your home, business or apartment, GET OUT!

Don't stop to turn the lights on or off.

When you are a safe distance away from the building, call Owatonna Public Utilities at 507-451-1616. You may have experienced a leak of natural gas. Trained safety professionals will arrive to conduct an assessment and investigation.

The rotten-egg smell comes from a chemical called mercaptan. OPU injects that chemical into its gas lines because natural gas, though highly flammable, is odorless and colorless.

Mercaptan alerts customers to a potential gas leak in their homes or businesses.

Each year, OPU gets over 200 gas-leak calls from its customers. Because they concern potential life-or-death situations, they are our highest priority and we respond as quickly as possible.

We urge customers to err on the side of safety. Don't think, "This is silly," or "Maybe it's someone burning trash." If you ever catch the slightest whiff of rotten eggs, get out of the building and call OPU.

We spend about \$6,000 a year to purchase mercaptan, a clear liquid that is designed to give off one of the most intense, smelliest odors on the planet. If we put one drop on your desk, you'd be out the door in a second, and the smell would linger for days.



**Kent Rossi,**  
**OPU Commissioner**

Kent Rossi joined the OPU commission in May 2016. Kent is an attorney with his own personal injury practice in Owatonna for over 37 years. His cases range from anything between car accidents to worker's compensation claims.

Kent enjoys traveling the world and attributes his love of travel to his father. As a young teenager, Kent spent 7 weeks in Madagascar where his father brought the family of seven to practice dentistry in a missionary hospital. While in Madagascar, he lived in a small village and learned how different it is to live in other parts of the world. This trip also helped Kent enjoy interacting with people from all cultures.

Kent also enjoys finding ways to give back and pay it forward. Kent and his wife, Betsy, have hosted 13 foreign exchange children through the years. He also spent over 10 years on the Steele County Food Shelf Board.

Kent said his happiest place to be is in his flower gardens. He stays busy outside all summer tending to his many flower gardens.

Kent felt honored when Mayor Kuntz asked him to serve as a commissioner for OPU. He looks forward to giving back to the community on our commission while learning more about how a municipal utility operates.

Thank you, Kent, for being part of our team!

# AUTO PAY OPTION

Took the kids to school and...

**Paid their utility bill with Auto Pay!**

Authorize regularly scheduled payments to be made from your checking account or credit card.



Learn more and enroll at [www.owatonnautilities.com](http://www.owatonnautilities.com).





# CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Minnesota Law **REQUIRES** homeowners, do-it-yourselfers, excavators and contractors contact Gopher State One Call two business days prior to digging, driving stakes, or performing any other activities that involve disrupting the ground. ***Never assume the depth of a utility or that the depth of the utilities are consistent.***

Gopher State One Call will contact the utility companies in the area to have underground lines marked. Once all utility lines are marked, digging may begin. Proceed with caution and avoid the tolerance zone or hand dig with a shovel within 2 feet of the marked utility lines.

Watch for private facilities such as sprinklers, power lines to garages or out buildings, gas grill lines or invisible fencing as these will not be located by Minnesota utility companies.

Visit [gopherstateonecall.org](http://gopherstateonecall.org) to learn what information will need to be given when contacting Gopher State One Call.

The service is **FREE**. Call toll free at 800-252-1166 or simply dial 811.



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**



## Take Action for Water Quality in Your Community!

### Visit the Cannon River Watershed Partnership and City of Owatonna Fair Booth

Take the opportunity to learn a little bit about what the CRWP and City of Owatonna has been working on as well as the opportunity to be comment and review the City of Owatonna's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan as part of the communities MS4 Program. The Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan document will be available at the booth for you review! You may also review and comment by filling out a survey on the City's website at <http://ci.owatonna.mn.us/stormwater> Your input is greatly valued! Steele County Fair dates: August 15th – 20th, 2017

### Save the Date - 9th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up

For the past 8 years, volunteers have combed the stream banks and waterways around Owatonna with the goal of cleaning trash and debris from the Straight River. With every passing year, more and more garbage is removed by hard working individuals and businesses who are dedicated to making a difference. Since 2009, residents of Owatonna and the surrounding cannon river watershed have volunteered cleaning up local creeks, the Cannon and Straight River.

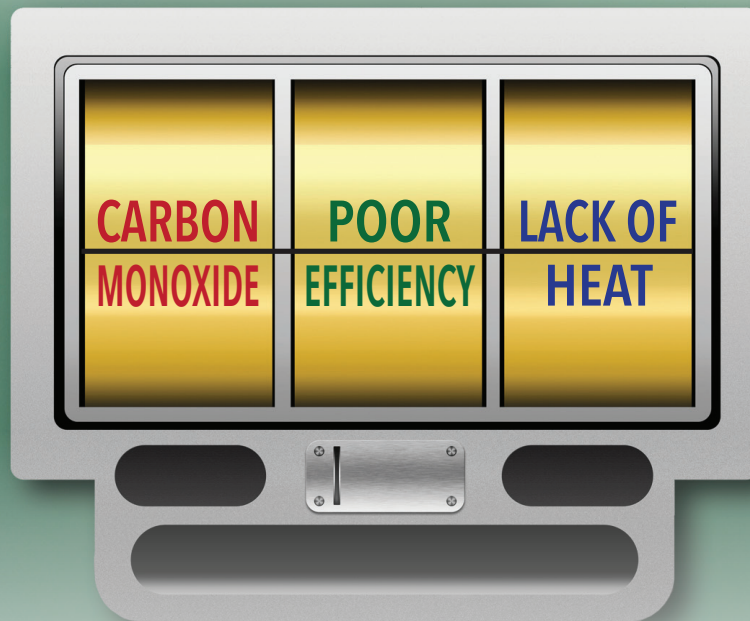
The 9th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up will take place in Owatonna on **September 16th from 9am to 12 noon** at the *Morehouse Park Pavilion*. The event is hosted by the Cannon River Watershed Partnership, who helps to find sponsors and coordinate the clean-up event. After the event, all volunteers are provided lunch and an opportunity to share their big finds of the day.

**Get Involved!** If you are interested in helping visit [www.crwp.net](http://www.crwp.net). If you'd like to support this event by being a sponsor contact Kristi Pursell at [kristi@crwp.net](mailto:kristi@crwp.net) Please come and join us to ensure our waters stay clean, safe and healthy!

For more information you may contact Brad Rademacher, Water Quality Specialist at 507-774-7300.

# REBATES

# DON'T GAMBLE ON YOUR FURNACE OR BOILER!



October is HVAC System Awareness Month.  
Make sure your heating system is working properly and efficiently.  
Complete a Clean & Tune and apply for a  
**\$25 REBATE!**

Visit [www.owatonnautilities.com](http://www.owatonnautilities.com) to learn more and download rebate applications with complete terms and conditions.

# CONSERVE & \$SAVE<sup>®</sup>





INDICIA

P.O Box 800 208 S. Walnut Ave.  
Owatonna, MN 55060

Office: 451-2480 Service: 451-1616

### OFFICE HOURS:

#### Monday-Wednesday:

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

#### Thursday:

8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

#### Friday:

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

#### Saturday & Sunday:

Closed

### Payment Options

- Online at [www.owatonnautilities.com](http://www.owatonnautilities.com)
- Automatic Withdrawal; bank account or credit card
- Drive-up drop box located in the parking lot south of building
- Drop box locations at Cash Wise Grocery Store and HyVee Food Store
- Mail
- At Owatonna Public Utilities; cash, credit card, check or money order

### Moving?

Remember to contact the Customer Service Department **ONE WEEK** prior to moving, 451-2480.

# Be Aware Of Our Workers!



## Don't Drive Distracted.

[www.OwatonnaUtilities.com](http://www.OwatonnaUtilities.com)



Your opinion matters to us. Please take a few minutes to tell us how we did by visiting our website at [owatonnautilities.com/customerurvey](http://owatonnautilities.com/customerurvey) or simply scan the QR code above.

### From the Editors

We welcome your comments and suggestions for future issues. Feel free to give us a call at 451-2480 or send an email to [schmolt@owatonnautilities.com](mailto:schmolt@owatonnautilities.com).

### Gas Leak?

If you smell gas and can't find the source immediately, go to a neighbor's house and call OPU at 451-1616.



Don't turn electrical switches on or off or use a flashlight or telephone in the home, because an electrical spark could ignite the gas and cause an explosion.



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