

# RPU Plugged In



## Get to Know Your RPU Board

Photo by Josh Banks.



# WHERE DOES THE Energy Come From?

**W**hen you flip on your light switch in Rochester, where does the energy come from to light the bulb? The answer today is a little more complex than it used to be, however 100 years ago, the answer would have been simple: "The energy in Rochester comes from the two Lake Zumbro Hydro units and the North Broadway coal plant." All energy in Rochester was generated by RPU assets and consumed within the Rochester area. This remained the case until late 1956, when Rochester reached an agreement with Dairyland Power to supply back-up services via a transmission line that spanned from Alma, WI, to Adams, MN, and finally to the Silver Lake Power Plant. However, up until the late 1970s, RPU mainly relied on its own generation sources to meet Rochester demand.

During the 1970s, RPU continued to experience demand growth, but like the rest of the country, RPU faced tough economic conditions. The

national fuel shortage, along with the reality that bonding for a new plant would likely be too expensive, led to the creation of Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA). By pulling together resources from multiple cities, bonding for a large plant was now attainable. New transmission lines were constructed on the west side of town to further connect Rochester and allow SMMPA to supply Rochester's power needs.

## Creating the Grid

Throughout the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more transmission lines were erected, rural electrification was completed, and a greater amount of small systems became interconnected with each other. This interconnection ultimately led to what is now referred to as the "grid." The entity charged with running the grid within our region is the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO). MISO administers the wholesale electricity market and dispatches generation throughout a

## Thank You for Your Dedicated RPU Service!

**Greg Heppner**  
34 years



**Doug Rovang**  
29 years



The progress of integrating new forms of generation, conservation, marketing rules, carbon regulations, and unknown technologies will no doubt shape the future of utility service in the coming years.

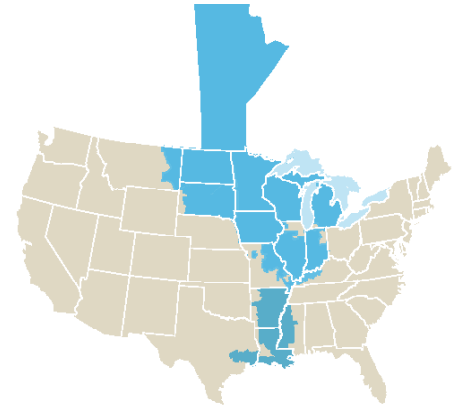
15-state footprint. MISO's role is that of an air traffic controller; constantly assessing the state of its entire transmission system, and adjusting so that the grid remains stable. One of the main roles of SMMPA and RPU within MISO is to competitively bid/sell generation into MISO and purchase energy out of MISO. A few advantages of MISO are that the lowest cost generator can meet electric demands, extra generation resources required for emergencies are lower due to the larger system area, and more varied resources make up the generation fleet.

### Generating Renewable Energy

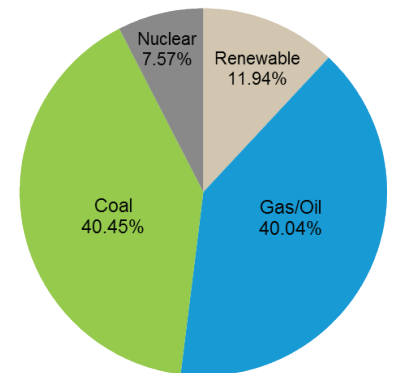
Within Minnesota, there is a state law that requires utilities to generate 25% renewable energy by 2025 based on retail sales. Since the majority of RPU's energy comes from SMMPA, so does this renewable requirement. SMMPA purchases power out of a wind farm near Dexter, MN, which produces enough electricity annually to meet the needs of 39,000 homes. As a whole, MISO currently has over 13,000 megawatts of registered wind capacity. It is through MISO planning and real time

oversight that large variable resources, such as wind, are able to work within the electrical system.

The original question posed in this article is often a difficult one to quickly answer. No longer is a local generation source tied solely to Rochester's needs. For now, most of the energy in Rochester is wholesale supplied via the MISO market, either indirectly through SMMPA or directly to RPU. RPU and SMMPA send their expected electrical load to MISO on a daily basis, and MISO calculates how to best meet those needs based on price offers from generators and location. While there is still a generator and light bulb that is served, the look of the generator and for that matter the light bulb itself are changing dramatically. The formation of the energy market greatly changed the way that energy is transacted between the two, as well. The progress of integrating new forms of generation, conservation, marketing rules, carbon regulations, and unknown technologies will no doubt shape the future of utility service and could possibly change the answer again in the coming years.



MISO MARKET AREA



MISO FUEL MIX







(Left – right) Mark Browning, Dave Reichert, Roger Stahl, Jerry Williams, Michael Wojcik

## GET TO KNOW YOUR RPU BOARD

One of the many benefits of having a municipal utility in your community is local governance. The RPU Board is comprised of local members appointed by the Mayor and makes decisions with the Rochester community in mind.

### >> MARK BROWNING

Safe, reliable, and efficient electrical and water services, at the lowest possible price, are important to allow for the continued economic growth of Rochester and provide maximum value to our ratepayers. In order to ensure this balance, an effective long-term strategy and plan are necessary. In Mark Browning's role as an RPU Board member, he is responsible for the oversight of strategic planning activities. Mark's 20 years of experience in the private utility industry helps provide him with the ability to ensure RPU is prepared for future challenges.

"As the largest municipal utility in Minnesota, local governance allows us the ability to set RPU's course to meet the needs of the ratepayers and community," shares Mark. "Over the past few years, RPU had stable rates during the economic downturn to help ratepayers through difficult times. RPU also decided to decommission the Silver Lake Plant when it was determined that the plant was no

longer economically and environmentally viable, saving ratepayers approximately \$7 million annually.

"For the future, our strategy includes the ability to leverage lower cost surplus electricity available in the Midwest versus the cost of constructing new generating units," he continues. "Our investment in the CAPX 2020 project helped make this possible. Local governance gives RPU the ability to make decisions based on the best interests of the ratepayers and local needs."

### >> DAVE REICHERT

Dave Reichert was born and raised in Illinois and then came to Minnesota to attend college. After college he held several jobs, including managing a restaurant and working for a residential heating and air conditioning company. The latter position raised an interest in engineering and led him to pursue a degree in engineering.

Along the way he married a wonderful woman and the couple bought their first home in Minneapolis, where they lived until IBM hired Dave. The Reicherts moved to Rochester and have lived here ever since. They have two great children, both girls, who have graduated from college and are off on their own adventures.

Dave's time with IBM has all been in the facilities services area including design and construction, energy management/conservation, space planning, utility plant and waste treatment plant operations, building maintenance organization, process safety, and environmental protection.

Around the house he is a do-it-yourself type who tries to use energy wisely. There are smiley faces on the Home Energy Report the Reicherts receive from RPU.

"I asked to join the RPU Board because I believe my knowledge and experience could be of value to the utility, but also because I want to give something back to the community," says Dave. "This city has been very good to my family. We've found good friends and enjoyed rewarding jobs; we've made a home here. I believe we owe a debt

to those who came before us – the people who helped build up this place we now call home, and we should repay that debt by providing a good home for future families.

"I am honored to be allowed to serve the people of Rochester," says Dave, "and value the independence of public utilities like RPU, which are able to focus on the needs of their customers without concern for investors or stockholders."

## >> ROGER STAHL

Board member Roger Stahl has been practicing law in Rochester for 22 years and owns and operates his own small business, RMS Law Firm, PLLC. He is committed to helping individuals, families, and businesses with their diverse legal needs, including wills, trusts, and estate planning, and business start-ups, purchases, sales, and succession planning. What he likes best about practicing law are the relationships he has built with the many different clients he has helped over the years, becoming their trusted advisor in legal matters and more.

"I joined the RPU Board as a way to serve the Rochester community," says Roger. "I am also deeply interested in and concerned about how energy and energy policy quietly, yet profoundly, affects all of our lives. Serving on the RPU Board, and retaining local control over our utility, gives me the opportunity to influence energy policy from the perspective of a utility ratepayer and for the overall benefit of the city of Rochester."

## >> JERRY WILLIAMS

Jerry Williams enjoyed a 41-year career in public education with the last 20 years right here in Rochester. He retired in June 2007 as Superintendent of Schools.

Jerry has been engaged in a wide variety of activities in the community, besides the RPU Board, including:

- Salvation Army Board
- Chair, sales tax renewal campaign
- Chair, task force to improve the development and permitting process
- Presenter for DMC in the community and area communities
- Interim President of Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce

"What impresses me most about municipal power utilities is the emphasis on 'local,'" says Jerry. "We exist to provide water and electricity exclusively to the residents of Rochester. We are a volunteer board who all live within the city limits of Rochester and like the other citizens are customers of RPU. Our decisions equally impact us and our neighbors all across the city.

"It's a way that I can continue to voluntarily serve and give back to my community," he continues. "Years ago I realized what a fine organization RPU is and since I've been on the board, that feeling has only been reinforced. To be part of this charter-authorized governance body has been a sincere privilege, and the community is very fortunate to have such a quality utility that continues to reliably deliver cost-effective products essential to our daily lives."

## >> MICHAEL WOJCIK

Michael Wojcik is a small business owner and city council member in Rochester, first elected to the RPU Board in 2008. Michael has dual master's degrees in Electrical Engineering and Business Administration from the University of Minnesota. Originally from the Iron Range, Michael earned a degree in Electrical Engineering (with a focus on power) from the University of North Dakota in 1999. Michael is a strong advocate for local economies, conservation, sustainability, clean air,

clean water, and the environment. Michael is committed to addressing the serious issue of man-made climate change through local leadership. Michael believes that local clean energy production is vital to keeping dollars in our community.

"When I discuss energy with colleagues around the country and tell them that we have a publicly owned utility, that point immediately becomes a point of envy with all those that don't have one," says Michael. "Because we own the utility we have great local control over our power and water resources. Our public ownership of our electric and water infrastructure gives us a unique ability to guide the future of our community. Serving on the RPU Board is a unique opportunity to influence issues like power, water, conservation, and environment that I am passionate about. I have never forgotten how fortunate we are to have a public utility and I am proud to serve in my official elected capacity."

## RPU Board Meeting Schedule

### Customers are invited

to be a part of the decision-making process by attending an RPU Board meeting held on the last Tuesday of each month. Meetings are held at 4 p.m. at the RPU Service Center, 4000 East River Road NE. Attendees are able to address the board, listen to board discussions, or just keep up on the RPU decision-making process.

### Upcoming dates:

Aug 26  
Sept 30  
Oct 28  
Nov 12  
Nov 25  
Dec 16

## What Parts of My Water and Electric Service Do I Own?

**M**any customers don't realize that there are a number of components of your electric and water service that you own and must maintain. If something is damaged from a storm, frozen due to a deep frost line, or other causes, you are responsible for the repair costs.

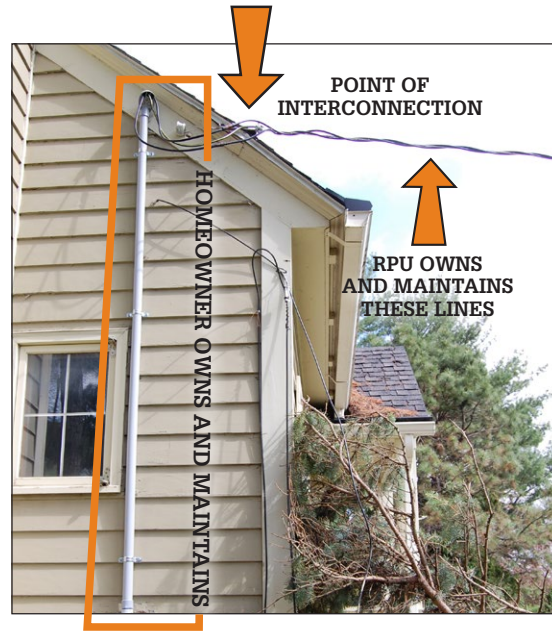
### Overhead Electric Service

For overhead electric customers, homeowners own and are responsible for repair from the point of interconnection into the home. RPU owns and maintains from that point back to the utility pole. There are instances when customer-owned components may be damaged and will require a licensed electrician to repair the service before RPU can safely reconnect the electric service. If your overhead service is ever damaged, do not go near it and contact RPU for further direction and guidance of what to do. (See graphic to the right.)

### Underground Water and Electric Service

With regards to underground water and electric services, there again are parts that the homeowner owns and maintains and parts which RPU owns and maintains. The two diagrams at the bottom of the page show what is customer owned and RPU owned. To help take the surprise and expense out of a repair, RPU has an underground utility repair coverage program called Service Assured®. Repairs to your water service or underground electric service can be expensive. RPU customers own their underground electric service if it was installed or updated after January 1, 1981. Underground electric service installed before 1981 may be owned by RPU and is RPU's responsibility to repair in the event of a break. Some services installed prior to 1981, by a company other than RPU, may also be customer owned. To determine if you own your service, call us at **507.280.1500**.

Aging pipes, invasive tree roots, soil conditions, and seasonal changes are just a few examples of how normal wear and tear can cause a water or underground electric service to break. You can't prevent it. You can't predict it. And, worst of all, most



Homeowner owns and is responsible for repair from point of interconnection into the home. RPU owns and maintains from that point back to the utility pole.

homeowner insurance policies do not cover repairing it, so you'll have to pay for it.

Service Assured® is available to customers living in single-family homes or single-owner duplexes. Townhome associations, individual twin-homes, and triplexes, where each unit has its own service line, may also be eligible.

Some changes have recently been made to the terms and conditions of the program including only one frozen service repair will be made each winter season. Other exclusions apply such as with mobile homes and in rare instances of atypical configurations.

Call RPU to sign up for Service Assured® today at **507.280.1500**.

FIGURE 1 Water Service

SERVICE ASSURED® covers from 1 to 7

- 1 Corporation Stop (CUSTOMER OWNED)
- 2 Service Line (CUSTOMER OWNED)
- 3 Curb Valve (CUSTOMER OWNED)
- 4 Curb Box (CUSTOMER OWNED)
- 5 Angle Stop (CUSTOMER OWNED)
- 6 Meter (RPU OWNED)
- 7 Meter Tail (RPU OWNED)
- 8 Full Flow Gate Valve (CUSTOMER OWNED)

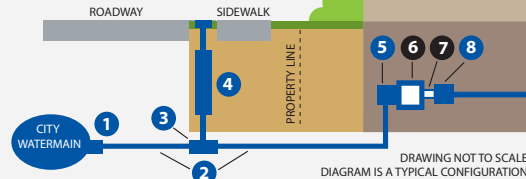
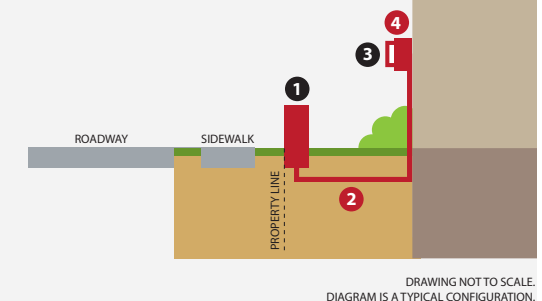


FIGURE 2 Underground Electric Service

SERVICE ASSURED® covers from 1 to 3

- 1 Transformer or Secondary Pedestal (RPU OWNED)
- 2 Service Line (CUSTOMER OWNED)
- 3 Meter (RPU OWNED)
- 4 Meter Socket (CUSTOMER OWNED)





# Choose Your Way

## TO PAY YOUR RPU BILL

### Go Paperless

Receive an email that payment is due and your bill is available to view at [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org).

### Budget Billing

Monthly payments stay the same based on the average of the previous 12 months of service.

### Automatic Payments

- Automatic Checking or Savings Account Debit
- Automatic Credit/Debit Card Payment
- Can be combined with Budget Billing

### How to Enroll

Enroll at [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org) or fill out the form below and mail this page to: RPU Customer Service  
4000 East River Road  
Rochester, MN 55906-2813

Visit [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org) to learn how to Pay Online, Pay By Phone, or use Pay Stations and Drop Boxes.

## RPU BILL PAYMENT OPTIONS ENROLLMENT FORM *You may also enroll at: [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org)*

Last Name (As It Appears On Your Account): \_\_\_\_\_

First Name (As It Appears On Your Account): \_\_\_\_\_

RPU Contract Acct Number: **300000** \_\_\_\_\_

Service Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address:  
(If Different Than the Service Address)

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Type: ☐ Home ☐ Cell ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address:  
(Required to Go Paperless)

### SIGNATURE:

By signing above, I hereby request RPU to enroll my account in the options I select to the right, and acknowledge that I have read and agree to the terms and conditions as outlined on [www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org).

### BILL PAYMENT OPTIONS:

☐ **GO PAPERLESS** (Provide an email address at the lower left.)

☐ **BUDGET BILLING**

☐ **AUTOMATIC PAYMENT OPTIONS:**

**PLEASE DEDUCT MY PAYMENT:** (Check one.)

☐ When Bill Is Invoiced ☐ When Payment Is Due

☐ **Checking Account Debit** (Attach a VOIDED check.\*)

Bank Name: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Savings Account Debit** (Attach a VOIDED deposit slip.\*)

Bank Name: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Credit / Debit Card**

☐ DISCOVER  ☐ MasterCard  ☐ VISA 

Card Number:\*

\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Exp Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

\*To protect your privacy, RPU will destroy the credit card information on this form, as well as any voided checks and deposit slips.



4000 East River Road NE  
Rochester, MN 55906  
**507.280.1500**  
[www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org)

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
BlueSpire



## RPU Service Center Holiday Hours

The RPU Service Center  
will be closed on:

**Monday, Sept. 1, in  
observance of Labor Day**

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## Road Construction Near RPU Service Center

**O**n Monday, July 7, road construction began along parts of East River Road NE in front of the RPU Service Center. The road construction project is scheduled to go through early November.

Access to the RPU Service Center will be available for a majority of the project. We will post on the RPU blog ([www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org)) any times that we are made aware of limited access. If you are visiting the RPU Service Center, please use additional caution in the work zone.

Please remember that you can pay your RPU bill without having to come into the RPU Service Center. You can pay your bill anytime on the RPU website ([www.rpu.org](http://www.rpu.org)) or over the phone by calling **1.855.210.2285**.

