



OWATONNA
PUBLIC UTILITIES

VOLUME 33 | ISSUE #12
DECEMBER 2023

CUSTOMER UPDATE

Which is more affordable?



Natural Gas

VS



Electricity

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OPU MEMO



David Olson, Jr.
Director, Finance &
Administration

OPU Commission

Kent Rossi
Randy Doyal
Jay Johnson
Doug Zirngible
Greg Vetter

In last month's OPU Memo our general manager, Roger Warehime, mentioned a rate case we settled with Northern Natural Gas (NNG), our gas pipeline provider, that resulted in a partial refund of their charges from January through April of 2023. In the gas section of your November bill, you may have noticed the additional Gas True-up credits shown below:

Gas True-up 2 = (.0791) per CCF of usage on March 2023 Bill
Gas True-up 3 = (.0189) per CCF of usage on April 2023 Bill

These credits are your share of the refund from NNG for March and April. In your December bill you will see similar credits for your share of the refund for January and February. Over the course of both months, the average residential customer will receive about \$30 in credits.

At the November commission meeting our 2024 budget and rate policies were approved, so I can now share with you our planned rate changes for 2024. The good news is that the average residential customer will see a slight decrease in their overall utility bill.

On average electric rates will increase 2.1%, which adds about \$2.38 per month for the average residential customer. This increase is needed because we set a record peak load of almost 84 Megawatts on August 23rd, 2023. Because part of our electricity cost is based on the prior summer peak, our 2024 cost will increase

even though our electricity supplier, SMMPA, does not plan to increase rates. When we issue peak alerts next summer, please remember this cost impact and voluntarily reduce load to save money for all customers.

Water rates will increase an average of 8.8% in 2024. Fortunately, water is the smallest portion of most customer's bills so it will add just \$2.04 per month to the average residential customer's bill. Unlike electricity and gas, whose main costs are driven by commodity markets, water costs are mainly driven by inflation, which as you know has been high over the last year or two.

The bright spot is that forecasted natural gas commodity prices are lower than last year. Supplies are currently high, which is helping to keep the cost low. As Roger mentioned in the OPU Memo last month, we expect our effective gas rates to decrease by about 11.5%. The typical residential customer should see about a \$7.77 decrease in their average monthly bill. Natural gas commodity prices can still be affected by extreme weather patterns as we have seen in the past, but the outlook is much better than last year.

Combining the changes in all 3 utilities, in 2024 the typical residential customer should see an average reduction in their bill of about \$3.35. We strive to keep costs low while keeping reliability high. Each year we compare our rates to similar utilities in our area and OPU's rates are consistently lower than average, and we intend to keep it that way.

Have a wonderful holiday season.

CONSERVATION TIP\$

Check the rotation of your ceiling fan. Most ceiling fans should run clockwise in the winter to pull cool air up to the ceiling and push warm air back down along the walls.



City of Owatonna Budget Process

The City of Owatonna will held its annual Truth-in-Taxation meeting December 5. Each taxing jurisdiction (the City, County and School District) holds a Truth-in-Taxation meeting annually to publicly present a summary of and receive input on their proposed budgets. The City Council is expected to adopt its final 2024 budget and levy at its December 19 meeting. Until the final budget is adopted, the City Council may lower it from the preliminary budget amount but cannot increase it.

The tax statements received by property owners from the County Auditor's Office in November were created based on property tax valuations and the City's proposed 2024 levy and budget. Property tax valuations were set in March and the public was invited to attend the annual Board of Appeal and Equalization meeting in April to provide input on valuations. Budgets for all three taxing jurisdictions are planned based, in part, on tax revenues calculated from these valuations.

Check out the City's budget in an interactive document that can be found online at www.owatonna.gov/Finance. Community members are encouraged to provide input throughout the budget process by contacting a City Council member or the mayor. For questions regarding property valuations, taxes or property tax relief options, please contact the County Assessor's Office at (507) 444-7435.

Winter Parking Restrictions Odd/Even Parking

Winter parking restrictions in Owatonna are in effect November 15 through March 31. These restrictions facilitate effective snow removal and allow crews to perform other street maintenance.

During this period, street parking is only allowed on alternating sides of the street every night between 12:01 a.m. and noon, **regardless of the weather**. On even-numbered calendar dates, vehicles may park on the sides of streets with even-numbered addresses. On odd-numbered calendar dates, vehicles may park on the sides of streets with odd-numbered addresses. Between noon and midnight, the winter parking restrictions are not in effect. Therefore, parking is allowed on both sides of the street (unless otherwise marked). At 12:01 a.m., parking is only allowed on the side of the street that corresponds with the calendar date. Anticipating the date change at 12:01 a.m., there's no need to move from one side of the street to the other at midnight. Instead, park prior to midnight on the side of the street that corresponds with the next day's date.

Keep in mind December and January both end and begin with odd dates – the 31st and the 1st. Parking restrictions are enforced nightly from November 15 through March 31 regardless of weather conditions. Odd/even parking restrictions do not apply to any street that has posted restrictive parking or any cul-de-sac which has combined even and odd house numbers.

The City's easy-to-use Winter Parking Map app (scan the QR code) shows where to park during winter months. The app is available on the City of Owatonna's website Owatonna.gov, search for "Public & Winter Parking."



SCAN ME

MAYOR

Tom Kuntz

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Dan Boeke

David Burbank

Nathan Dotson

Kevin Raney

Greg Schultz

Brent Svenby

Doug Voss

Which is more affordable?



VS



This article is from the Minnesota Blue Flame Gas Association's September 2023 Association Newsletter

DOE Announces Natural Gas is 3.3 Times More Affordable and Electricity

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announced that natural gas is 3.3 times more affordable than electricity and significantly more affordable than several other residential energy sources for the same amount of energy delivered. The 2023 Representative Average Unit Costs of Five Residential Energy Sources says:

"America's natural gas is critical to American and global energy security," said American Gas Association (AGA) President and CEO Karen Harbert. "DOE's analysis confirms the very clear and substantial cost-advantage of natural gas. Our nation's domestic abundance of natural gas means American customers pay a fraction of what customers pay for other energy sources hear at home and see significant savings compared to energy costs globally. Our industry invests \$91 million every day to ensure our vast modern delivery infrastructure provides the reliability Americans expect."

AGA analysis shows that households using natural gas for heating, cooking and clothes drying save an average of \$1,068 per year compared to homes using electricity for those applications. Natural gas is projected to be half to one-third the price of other fuels through 2050. This affordability is enhanced by successes in energy efficiency. The typical residential natural gas consumer has cut their average fuel use by half since 1970, even as homes have become larger. This is the result of steady improvements in building and appliance energy efficiency, and the positive impacts of gas utility energy efficiency programs, and other measures that have contributed to steady improvements in energy efficiency.

Natural Gas	\$13.97
No. 2 Heating Oil	\$28.36
Propane	\$32.62
Kerosene	\$33.52
Electricity	\$46.19

"Natural gas is responsible for 61 percent of cumulative CO2 emissions reductions from the U.S. power sector since 2005, according to other analysis from the Energy Information Administration," Harbert said. "This data from DOE underscores how critical natural gas is for reducing emissions while keeping prices affordable for customers and preserving lifesaving reliability."



UPGRADE COMING SOON



New Look. New Experience. Same SmartHub.

Manage your account like never before with the new, improved SmartHub web application. A simplified yet enhanced design is coming your way soon. This new version of SmartHub puts your usage and payment details front and center for fast, easy access and the simplified menu structure makes navigating the site a breeze. Keep an eye out for more details soon!

Sign up at owatonnautilities.smarthub.coop



Smart Management. Smart Life. SmartHub.



LED Light Bulbs

FINAL
YEAR!



Reduced pricing through December while supplies last at these participating retailers:

Alexander Lumber Co.
Batteries + Bulbs

Arrow Hardware & Paint
Lowe's Walmart



Learn about space heater
use, cost, and safety:
www.OwatonnaUtilities.com



www.owatonnautilities.com 5

Due to new federal lighting standards

TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR LED BULB REBATES!



Rebates for screw base LED bulbs for
all residential and commercial
customers will end
December 31, 2023.

Apply before they are gone!



CONSERVE & \$AVE
www.OwatonnaUtilities.com

NOT EVEN HE CAN SNIFF OUT ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS HOME INTRUDERS

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can be deadly. Symptoms of CO poisoning can be similar to COVID.

If you, or your family, are experiencing headaches, dizziness, drowsiness, weakness, nausea, vomiting or convulsions call 911 immediately.



MERRY

Christmas

AND HAPPY NEW YEAR



FROM ALL OF US AT THE
OWATONNA PUBLIC UTILITIES

We wish you the very best this holiday season and hope your coming year is filled with health, happiness, and new blessings.

To allow our employees to spend time with their families this holiday season, OPU is closed these days:

- Monday, December 25, 2023
- Tuesday, December 26, 2023
- Monday, January 1, 2024

Celebrate with Savings!

BUY ENERGY EFFICIENT HOLIDAY LIGHTS OR DECORATIONS & APPLY FOR A REBATE:

1. Purchase new LED holiday plug-in (not battery or solar operated) lights and decorations by December 31, 2023.
2. Complete this page and submit it to your utility:
 - by March 31, 2024
 - with original sales receipt
 - with packaging showing the LED logo and number of lights per string (one package per type)
3. Rebate is limited to 50% of LED string or package cost, tax excluded, up to maximum amounts listed below.

Customer Name _____

Mailing Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Installation Address (if different from above) _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Contact Phone # (with area code) _____ ☐ Home ☐ Cell ☐ Other: _____

Account # _____ ☐ Residential ☐ Commercial

A Date Purchased (MM/DD/2023)	B Lamp Size	C # of Lamps per String	D Cost per Package	E Qty of Packages	F Total Cost of Packages (D X E)	G Rebate Amount	H Total Rebate (F X G) (up to max amounts*)	I OFFICE USE ONLY
____/____/2023	<input type="checkbox"/> Mini <input type="checkbox"/> Other		\$		\$	50%	\$	\$
____/____/2023	<input type="checkbox"/> Mini <input type="checkbox"/> Other		\$		\$	50%	\$	\$
____/____/2023	<input type="checkbox"/> Mini <input type="checkbox"/> Other		\$		\$	50%	\$	\$
____/____/2023	<input type="checkbox"/> Mini <input type="checkbox"/> Other		\$		\$	50%	\$	\$
____/____/2023	<input type="checkbox"/> Mini <input type="checkbox"/> Other		\$		\$	50%	\$	\$
____/____/2023	<input type="checkbox"/> Mini <input type="checkbox"/> Other		\$		\$	50%	\$	\$
GRAND TOTAL REBATE:							\$	\$

* Rebate is 50% of string or package cost (tax excluded), up to maximum amounts listed below:

# of Lamps	Maximum Rebate per String
less than 99	\$3.00
100 - 199	\$6.00
200 - 299	\$9.00
300 or more	\$12.00

OFFICE USE ONLY: ID # _____
DATE Received _____
Date Processed _____

(Rebates under \$75 will be applied to your account.)

TEAMING UP TO SAVE YOU MONEY



Austin Utilities

Attn: Rebate Processing
1908 14th St NE
Austin, MN 55912
507-433-8886
www.austinutilities.com
rebates@austinutilities.com

Owatonna Public Utilities

Attn: Rebate Processing
P.O. Box 800
Owatonna, MN 55060
507-451-2480
www.owatonnautilities.com
rebates@owatonnautilities.com

Rochester Public Utilities

Attn: Rebate Processing
4000 E River Rd NE
Rochester, MN 55906-2813
507-280-1500
www.rpu.org
rebates@rpu.org

Recipient must be an electric customer of Austin Utilities, Owatonna Public Utilities, or Rochester Public Utilities.
Valid only on purchases made by December 31, 2023. All Utility Rebate terms and conditions apply.

1023



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

Office: 451-2480 Service: 451-1616

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POSTAL CUSTOMER
ECRWSS

EXPLORE THE HIDDEN GEMS OF UTILITY CAREERS

Discover the possibilities

Meter Serviceworker

National salary range
\$41,974 - \$91,998*



Scan to watch
Employee Interview

Job description: Collection, transfer, and edit meter readings manually or automated from the field to billing. Inventory, install, replace, test, calibrate, and repair of all devices involved with the measurement of electricity, water, and gas. Inventory, install, replace, test, calibrate, program, and repair all devices involved with Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), and customer load management units. Responds to customer service calls regarding meter issues and performs disconnection/reconnection of services due to non-payment issues.

Education Requirements:

Two-year technical
college
degree/certificate
in related field

* American Public Power Association Survey

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.smarthub.coop
- Phone at (507) 451-2480 Option 2 or 1-888-228-2398 (Available 24/7)
- Automatic Withdrawal; bank account or credit card
- Drive-up drop box located in our parking lot
- Drop box locations at CashWise and HyVee Food Store
- Mail to P.O. Box 800, Owatonna, MN 55060

Moving?

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



WWW.OWATONNAUTILITIES.COM