CUSTOMER UPDATE

Do you know the benefits?

OF PUBLIC POWER AND NATURAL GAS

OCTOBER 1-7, 2023 IS PUBLIC POWER & NATURAL GAS WEEK

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I wanted to take a few minutes to thank everyone who stopped by to visit us at the 2023 Steele County Free Fair. Each year our volunteer booth workers comment on how much they enjoy being able to visit with customers.

One of our biggest draws is our drinking water tower. Every year it seems to be a big hit, and this year was no exception. People often ask us how much water we go through. This year we wanted to know too, so we metered the tank.

Over the course of the six day fair, 341 gallons of water were dispensed through our little drinking water tower. That’s 2,588 plastic water bottles saved!! Saturday proved to be the biggest water-use day, with 105 gallons consumed by visitors.

Speaking of Saturday, what an eventful day that was! And how about that heat? If you visited the Four Seasons building late morning or early afternoon you were met with darkness (other than sunlight coming in from outside.) Unfortunately, a large, old, rotten tree decided to pick that day, of all days, to call it quits. When it fell, it took overhead lines with it which, of course, were ones feeding the Four Seasons Building. Our crews worked in that heat as fast as they could to clear the tree and restore power. Later in the afternoon/early evening, they restored power to the camping area, too. I’m sure that’s not how they wanted to spend their Saturday at the fair.

Our feature attraction this year was a shadowbox of buried services. Several people stopped to check it out and ask questions. It now resides in the lobby of our building, so if you missed it, stop in and see it. Remember, Call Before You Dig, even if it’s just to plant a bush...you never know what might be just below the surface.

In addition to the shadowbox, people stopped by for our main give away items of chapstick and cellphone fans. These were such a huge hit, they flew off the table and we ran out by end of day on Friday. Lessons learned...order more next year!

I cannot close without mentioning my appreciation for all the work that goes in to making the Steele County Free Fair a success every year. That’s off to everyone involved. What an amazing event!

Here’s to another successful year. We look forward to seeing everyone next year.
Indoor Play Space for Tots
Welcome to Owatonna’s new indoor play space! For children ages six and younger, this play space is in the Activity Room of the West Hills Tennis & Pickleball Center. Our play area is a safe and stimulating environment where kids can have fun, be active and explore new activities through play. The play space is equipped with age-appropriate activities that encourage physical activity and development. Kids can enjoy shooting hoops on our child-sized basketball hoop, playing soccer with soft soccer balls and nets and crawling, rolling and playing on soft floor mats. Parents or guardians are required to supervise their children at all times and are responsible for ensuring that their children follow the rules and guidelines of the play space. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, children can also run around the gym. Visit owatonna.gov for details and to register to use this space at no charge. Registration for each day is required.

Open Basketball Returns
Open basketball is back at the West Hills Gym! We are thrilled to have you here to play basketball in a fun and safe environment. Open to all ages. Children ages 12 and younger must be accompanied by an adult. During our open basketball sessions, you will have access to our indoor court to play games, practice shots and work on dribbling skills. To ensure the safety of all participants, we ask that you follow our guidelines and rules while playing. This includes wearing appropriate footwear and clothing, respecting your fellow players and following the directions of our staff. Visit owatonna.gov for details and to register. Registration is required. The daily cost is $5.

Youth Programs at the Owatonna and West Hills Tennis and Pickleball Center
Home to the Star Tennis Academy
The Star Tennis Academy, established in 2021, is an after-school tennis program held weekly throughout the year. The program is open to children with all abilities ages four through 18. More than 200 students have participated in the program.

Tennis Director Matt Hokanson and his staff run four classes by age/ability: Shooting Stars (ages 3-7), Young Stars (ages 7-10), Star Academy Intermediate (ages 10-18) and Star Academy Advanced (ages 10-18). Students learn how to play tennis by playing games, learning fundamentals and competing against one another in practice matches. If kids would like to play in official matches throughout the year, they can also compete in Sunday matches.

Once students are ready to play competitively, we offer a Universal Tennis Junior Club Team that represents West Hills/Owatonna. These monthly matches involve travelling and hosting teams from the metropolitan area and beyond.

All Star Academy Tennis classes are open for signup for Fall 2023. Fall classes begin the week of September 10 and run for eight consecutive weeks. Register at Owatonna.gov.

Stay Informed on City of Owatonna News!
Check out the weekly Owatonna Update e-newsletter at Owatonna.gov to find out about City news, projects and decisions. Just click on “City Services” then “Communications” and “Stay Informed”. Sign up to automatically receive each issue of Owatonna Update at Owatonna.gov, click on “Notification Sign-up”.
When you switch on a light or adjust the thermostat, do you know who’s providing that service? Generally, utilities come from one of three types of providers: investor-owned utilities (IOUs), municipal utilities, or cooperatives. All three have something to offer, but we believe municipal utilities provide a unique set of advantages, especially when compared to investor-owned utilities.

**Sustainability: A Focus on the Common Good**
Both municipal utilities and cooperatives are deeply committed to sustainability. However, compared to IOUs, which often prioritize shareholder profits, consumer-owned utilities like ours can take a community-first approach. Being part of local governance means municipal utilities are especially well-positioned to focus on environmental stewardship, often aligning seamlessly with local sustainability goals.

**Affordability: Serving You, Not Shareholders**
When it comes to cost, consumer-owned utilities like municipal and cooperatives typically come out ahead. IOUs, aiming for profits, often pass additional costs onto consumers. In contrast, municipal utilities and cooperatives function on a not-for-profit basis. That means any extra money goes back into improving the system, with a direct focus on community benefit.

**Accountability: You Have a Say**
Consumer-owned utilities—be they municipal or cooperatives—are renowned for their accountability. They answer to you, the consumer. IOUs, on the other hand, are primarily accountable to shareholders, which can sometimes lead to decisions that are not in the best interest of customers or the community. Municipal utilities often offer an extra layer of local oversight, which can be reassuring for many consumers.

**Local Decision-Making: Tailored to Your Community**
Local control is a strong point for both municipal utilities and cooperatives. But what sets consumer-owned utilities apart from IOUs is their deep community integration. While cooperatives are member-focused, municipal utilities often benefit from close coordination with local government agencies, leading to comprehensive community planning.

**Economic Impact: Community First**
All utility models contribute to local economies, but consumer-owned utilities often do so with a heightened focus on community development. Unlike IOUs, which may funnel profits out of the community, both municipal utilities and cooperatives are more likely to reinvest in local projects and jobs.

Investor-owned utilities, cooperatives, and municipal utilities all play vital roles in delivering essential services. However, the not-for-profit, community-oriented approach of consumer-owned utilities offers notable benefits. Among these, municipal utilities stand as a robust choice, providing a unique blend of affordability, community involvement, and long-term sustainability. As we tackle significant global challenges, the close-to-home solutions provided by municipal utilities offer a promising path forward.

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**Do you know the benefits of Public Power and Public Natural Gas?**

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**Public Power and Public Natural Gas Week**
October 1–7

During this week, we celebrate the benefits of living in a public power and public natural gas community.

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**Opu Customer Update**
Stay Safe from Scams

Keep You and Your Family Safe

Scammers try all different kinds of tactics to trick people into giving them money or access to personal information. Review these items to stay safe from utility scams:

- OPU will not demand payment or other personal information over the phone.
- OPU will not ask for gift cards, prepaid cards or money transfers as a form of payment.
- OPU will not contact you by phone to threaten disconnection or ask for immediate payment. You will receive notification by mail.
- Scammers can fake emails or phone numbers. If you have any questions about your account, contact us directly at 507-451-2480.
- Have you noticed a scam? Let us know!

For more information regarding utility scams and how to keep yourself safe, visit utilitiesunited.org. #StopScams
HEAT PUMPS WORD SEARCH

HEAT PUMPS

EFFICIENT

HOME

HEATING

COOLING

ENERGY STAR

CLOTHES DRYERS

WATER HEATERS

CONSERVE

SAVE

REBATES

They’re not just for home heating anymore!

An air-source heat pump can provide efficient heating and cooling for your home, but did you know there are also heat pump clothes dryers and heat pump water heaters?

Owatonna Public Utilities offers valuable CONSERVE & SAVE™ rebates on all three!

• Air Source Heat Pumps: up to $2,000
• Heat Pump Clothes Dryers: $25
• Heat Pump Water Heaters: up to $400*

Visit www.owatonnautilities.com to download rebate applications with complete terms and conditions.

^must be ENERGY STAR® certified

*not to exceed 50% of the cost, for electric-only retrofit or new construction

Pollutant Reduction Strategy

Our community is regulated under a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS4) Permit by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to discharge stormwater runoff to waters of the state. As part of the City’s Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP) our community is required to identify sources of pollutants and develop a plan to make progress towards reducing and preventing pollutants entering lakes and streams to keep them swimmable, fishable, and to support aquatic plants and animals. Many of the water bodies within the Cannon River Watershed are classified as impaired waters. Impairments are due to excess nutrients, sediment, and bacteria.

The City of Owatonna partnered with WHKS to develop a Pollutant Reduction Strategy to meet our total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) and waste load allocations (WLAs) goals for phosphorus, turbidity, and fecal coliform. View it here: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0c138b1c453a43b39af2a49e4e2c3fa6

Join us @ Morehouse Park! - 15th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up on 9/16/2023

For over a decade, volunteers organized by Clean River Partners 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 lakes, creeks, Cannon River, and the Straight River.

The 15th Annual Watershed Wide Clean-up will take place in Owatonna on September 16th from 9am to 12 noon at Morehouse Park Chalet. The event is hosted by the Clean River Partners, who helps to find sponsors and coordinate the clean-up event. This is the largest one-day clean-up event in Minnesota with over 200 volunteers working in 8 locations across the watershed!

Visit cleanriverpartners.org for additional volunteer and sponsorship information regarding this event.

Send us an email at stormwater@owatonna.gov for further information regarding the City Stormwater Management Program or visit our website at owatonna.gov/300/Stormwater-Management
HEAT PUMPS.
They’re not just for home heating anymore!

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Visit www.owatonnautilities.com to download rebate applications with complete terms and conditions.

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HOME  CONSERVE
HEATING  SAVE
COOLING  REBATES
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www.owatonnautilities.com 7
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
- ACH bank draft sent directly from your bank

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

NOTICE OF RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER RIGHTS
EFF: OCTOBER 1 THRU APRIL 30


This notice is to inform customers of their rights and responsibilities under the Cold Weather Rule. The rule provides that from October 1 to April 30, Owatonna Public Utilities cannot disconnect a residential customer for non-payment if a payment arrangement is entered into, and keep current. If a customer chooses not to assert their rights or enter into a Payment Agreement, services may be disconnected.

Your Rights:
- To declare your Inability to Pay
- To enter into a signed, mutually agreed upon Payment Arrangement.
- To appeal any proposed disconnection.

Your Responsibilities
- To declare your Inability to Pay.
- To enter into a signed, mutually agreed upon Payment Arrangement.
- To make timely payments as agreed, or promptly notify OPU of changes in circumstances.

Where to Get Financial Assistance
SEMCAC-Energy Assistance at 1-800-944-3281 or 507-451-7134 for more information.

For more information, please call 507-451-2480 or visit our website at www.owatonnautilities.com