

Grays Harbor PUD Adopts 2015 Budget

The Grays Harbor PUD Board of Commissioners have adopted a 2015 budget that maintains current staffing and internal expense levels while making investments in system safety and reliability. The \$118.1 million spending plan was unanimously approved by the commissioners at their November 17 meeting.

"This is a sustainable budget that sets the PUD on solid ground heading into 2015," said Board President Russ Skolrood. "Throughout Grays Harbor, our customers are making the tough choices that allow them to live within their means. They expect the same thing from their PUD and the budget we have adopted allows us to do that."

The budget achieves the PUD Strategic Plan goal of keeping annual budget growth below 2% and does so without borrowing money to fund \$10.2 million in capital expenses. These improvements to the PUD's power system infrastructure and general plant include replacing aging poles, the addition of new power and cable lines and the purchase of new transformers and equipment. Combined with the construction of access roads, substation work and computer and vehicle upgrades, the system upgrades will allow the PUD to continue to provide safe and reliable power to its over 48,000 customers.

Rising power supply costs will necessitate a 3% increase in customer rates beginning in July of 2015. Over the next six months, PUD staff will be working to find a way to absorb the increased power costs in the budget, meaning the amount approved by the commissioners will likely decrease.

"Our staff has and will continue to prioritize PUD spending as we move into 2015, ensuring that we spend money only on the projects we need to fulfill our responsibility to our customers," said General Manager Dave Ward. "Between now and July we will closely examine and scrutinize our expenses to reduce the size of the increase we will be asking our commissioners to approve."

Phone Scams Again Target PUD Customers

Phone scammers are again calling Grays Harbor PUD customers and are attempting to convince them to transfer money to pay for past due accounts. In the past month, multiple Grays Harbor customers have reported phone calls in which representatives claiming to work for the PUD have threatened to cut power if a payment is not immediately made.

"Fortunately these customers did the right thing. They did not send money or provide any personal information to the callers and they immediately contacted the PUD to verify whether or not the call was legitimate," said PUD Chief Financial Officer Doug Streeter.

PUD customers and local media were notified of a similar phone scam in February, April and August in which residential and commercial customers were contacted by people claiming to work for the PUD. Local law enforcement agencies have also reported a number of phone and mail scams in which the perpetrators demand money while threatening to cut off cable, internet, water or electrical services.

Recipients of such fraudulent calls and mailings are advised to first contact company officials to verify the claim and to contact the office of your local law enforcement agency.



Affordability and Service Quality Drive 2015 Capital Budget

Affordable improvements to safety and reliability highlight the Capital Budget approved by the Grays Harbor PUD Board of Commissioners.

The PUD has allocated \$10.2 million for improvements and upgrades to the PUD's distribution, substation and telecommunication infrastructure; a system at the heart of the utility services provided to over 48,000 customers in Grays Harbor County.



PUD crews replace power poles on Hoquiam's Riverside Avenue.

"Everywhere you look, people are making the tough choices that allow them to live within their means. The Grays Harbor PUD is no different. This is a budget driven by what the PUD needs, not what we want," said Commission President Russ Skolrood. "In the past months, our staff has been working tirelessly to determine which projects will immediately serve the safety and reliability goals that are at the heart of the Grays Harbor PUD's mission. Those are the projects that we have chosen to fund in the coming year."

"Our staff was asked to prioritize based on quality service and affordability," said General Manager Dave Ward. "Providing safe and reliable utility services to our customer is the most important job we have and the Capital Budget that they have worked to create allows the PUD to fulfill that responsibility within the means available to us."

The largest portion of the Capital Budget is the \$4.2 million Distribution Budget that includes replacing aging poles, the addition of new power and cable lines and the purchase of new transformers.

The \$2.3 million General Plant Budget will cover \$427 thousand in communication, phone and radio projects, \$550 thousand for new bucket trucks for the Quinault and Elma service areas and \$770 thousand for the installation and implementation of new computer and IT systems.

The \$1.8 million Substation Budget will include over \$1 million for new transformers and microwave equipment, circuit breaker replacements and upgrades and miscellaneous system improvements.

The \$1.7 million Transmission Budget will include nearly \$1 million in pole and line replacement and maintenance work, \$180 thousand to replace poles and address line clearance on a portion of the East Hoquiam Road, an area heavily impacted by outages and power surges, and \$175 thousand to construct access roads allowing PUD crews easier and quicker access to transmission lines.

Commission Meeting Dates

Meetings are held in the Nichols Building, 220 Myrtle Street, Hoquiam.

December 2014

Monday - December 1
Monday - December 15

January 2015

Monday - January 5
Tuesday - January 20
(Tentative rescheduling for holiday)

Regular business meetings are scheduled to begin at 4:30 pm.

A one hour workshop (3:30 to 4:30 pm) will precede each business meeting, unless otherwise noted. The public is welcome to attend all commission meetings, special meetings, workshops and public hearings. **Public comment periods are included at the open and close of every meeting.**

Commission meetings may be cancelled and special meetings may be scheduled. Please visit our website (www.ghpud.org) for updated information.

ON-LINE BILL PAYMENT

Want to pay your bill on-line? Now you can pay your bill instantly without ever leaving home. Just go to ghpud.org, click the "Pay Bill Online" button on the right hand side of the screen and follow the instructions. If you have any difficulties using the online service, please call Customer Service at 1-800-562-7726 or you may email customerservice@ghpud.org.





Skolrood Wins Second Term

Grays Harbor County PUD Commissioner Russ Skolrood has won a second six-year term. In taking 57% of the vote in the November 4 election, Skolrood becomes the first District Three commissioner to successfully win reelection since John Welch, who served from 1970 to 1982.

"I'm deeply grateful to the people of Grays Harbor for the trust they have placed in me and view my reelection as affirmation that the Grays Harbor PUD is headed in the right direction," said Skolrood. "I truly believe that we have turned a corner and are sitting on solid ground. We have a dedicated and hard working staff, a strong leadership team and a clear vision of where are going and what we want to be as a public utility."

Skolrood was first elected to the Board of Commissioners in November of 2008 and is currently serving his third one-year term as Board President. He will take the oath of office for his second term at District Three commissioner at the beginning of the Jan. 5, 2015 Board meeting.

If the Power Goes Out, Are You Prepared?

Storm season is officially upon us and the Grays Harbor Public Utility District is reminding customers of what to do if your power goes out.

During an outage, the PUD System Dispatch Center immediately sends service crews out to find the cause of the outage and assess what repairs are needed. In addition, the PUD Communications Department begins notifying customers through the PUD website, media, Twitter and Outage Alert email system.

There are also methods for customers to inform the PUD of power outages. To report an outage, customers can call the outage reporting line at **360-537-3721** or **1-888-541-5923**. If your call is not answered (it continues to ring), it means the PUD is experiencing a high volume of calls. Your call will be answered in the order it was received. In addition, customers can go to the PUD website at www.ghpud.org and report an outage electronically.

During an outage, there are a number of steps customers can take to protect themselves and their property, including: turning off and unplugging all sensitive electrical equipment, keeping freezer and refrigerator doors closed as much as possible so the cold air stays inside until the power comes back on, not operating generators indoors and avoiding areas where PUD crews are working.

If for some reason your power stays off for an unusually long time, again contact the outage reporting line at **360-537-3721** or **1-888-541-5923** to ensure that PUD crews are aware of your outage.



A downed tree hangs over a PUD power pole and lines following the December, 2007 storm.



Commissioners Corner

by Arie Callaghan District 1 Commissioner

With the harsh winter months just around the corner, the potential for high winds and snowfall increases. One area in which your PUD has paid extra attention is in tree and vegetation management around poles and overhead lines. Most everyone understands that because we live in an area where the trees grow tall and strong, so increases the chance of power outages when the winter storms arrive. When a large tree or branch falls on or across a line, the result in most instances is an outage for the customers served by those lines. At times it can also lead to power surges into customer's homes, which can be costly for those with unprotected electrical equipment.

The PUD has taken a proactive position in listening to our customers when we are contacted about a tree on their property that could potentially damage power lines during a storm. In many instances the PUD will have these trees removed at no cost to the customer, to reduce the risk of much more costly damage later. Here at the PUD there are dedicated employees that, upon request, will meet with our customer-owners to identify any tree that could pose a problem during storm season, and if there are no issues with right of ways and ownership, have them cleared away from the transmission lines.

We really live in a great part of the country, but when you put large trees and high winds together the chance of power outages caused by downed trees are compounded. Because of their location on the Washington coast, Grays Harbor, Pacific and Clallam counties are particularly vulnerable. This vulnerability plays a large part in our increased expenditures during the winter months. The trees that enjoy our climate are always going to be an issue for those supplying power to Western Washington. It's the price we pay for living in the Evergreen State.

If you have a tree on your property that may threaten a PUD power line please call (360) 532-4220 and let our staff see if we can help! It could keep you and your neighbors from spending the night in a cold, dark, house!



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Cold weather is coming, and as the temperatures drop, your heating costs go up. The good news is you have friends who are energy efficiency experts at your Grays Harbor PUD. Let us help you save.

If you live in all-electric home, your home heating system probably accounts for one-half to two-thirds of your total electricity consumption. Your PUD's experienced energy efficiency advisors are ready to help you save energy. Often a phone call will uncover opportunities to help you save energy. Where appropriate, a walk through energy audit can be performed to identify energy saving measures. Also, if you are thinking of investing in energy efficiency, your PUD offers rebates or low interest loans for weatherization, heating systems, appliances and even energy-saving compact florescent light bulbs!

Save Energy!



Give Energy Services a call and save energy now!

360-538-6383 or 800-562-7726 x6383
www.ghpud.org

ENERGY, an informational newsletter, is published monthly for families and businesses energized by Grays Harbor PUD.

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