

PUD Approves 2% Rate Increase, Effective June 1st

The Grays Harbor PUD Board of Commissioners have approved a resolution authorizing a 2% increase for its electrical customers, going into effect at the beginning of June. The increase was included in the 2021 budget which was passed last November, but was not enacted during the high energy usage winter months. In addition, the delay allowed the utility to complete its financial analysis for 2020 and the first months of 2021.

"The decision to raise rates is not one that the Board takes lightly and comes only after a detailed examination of the PUD's financial state," said PUD Board President Russ Skolrood. "With power purchases making up 70% of our budget, the two-percent increase recommended by utility staff is the lowest practical amount that will allow the PUD to cover those costs and continue the critical service our customers rely upon for their homes and businesses."

The increase will be the first rate adjustment by the utility in two years. The PUD Board chose not to increase rates in 2020 in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the utility delayed implementing the increase until the beginning of June, rather than the beginning of May as was originally scheduled.

PUD Crews Receive Mutual Aid Commendation

The Grays Harbor PUD has received a national commendation from the American Public Power Association for its support in restoration efforts in Clark County in the aftermath of the President's Day Weekend Ice Storm.

After working for nearly two days to restore power to almost 10,000 Grays Harbor customers impacted by freezing rain, snow and ice, two line crews were dispatched to Vancouver for two days to assist Clark Public Utility crews with restoration efforts related to the same storm.

"They were great! I would put them on the top of the list for any mutual assistance in the future," said Clark Public Utilities Director of Operations Gene Morris.

Commission Meeting Dates

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

May 2021

Monday—May 10

Monday—May 24

June 2021

Monday—June 7

Monday—June 21

Utility workshops are held at 3:30 pm. Regular business meetings are scheduled to begin at the conclusion of the utility workshop. Public comment periods are included at the open and close of every meeting.

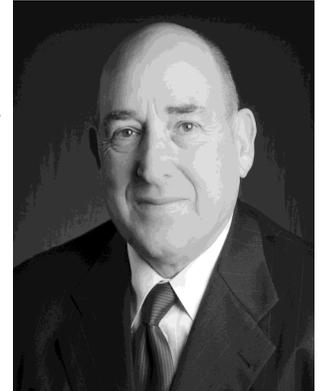
Commission meetings may be cancelled and special meetings may be scheduled. Due to COVID-19 precautions, commission meetings are now being held via ZOOM. Please visit our website (www.ghpud.org) for updated information.

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Could Texas Happen Here? by Commissioner Dave Timmons, District Two

In February, Texas was hit with a severe winter storm that left 4.5-million Texas homes and businesses without power. How did this happen? Most Texas energy comes from three sources: coal, wind and natural gas. The deep freeze led to the coal pipes freezing, a nuclear reactor tripping off line and the wind turbines icing up. The state's largest source of electricity, natural gas, couldn't produce because the icy conditions blocked pipelines. In Texas, when gas resources are low, the remaining gas is prioritized for heating rather than electricity. Grid operators were forced to initiate blackouts to relieve the grid demand. Recently we were asked by a customer: "Could this happen in Washington?" The short answer is: "With current resources, it's not likely." But, add the sentence: "But move away from reliable energy resources, maybe."



There are three electrical grids in the US; the Eastern Grid, the Western Grid and the Texas (ERCOT) Grid. While all three grids operate independently, they are composed of interconnected local electricity grids, which maintains reliability to the grid by providing redundancy, allowing multiple routes for power to flow into the state. This certainly will ease the loss of service if transmission lines or power plants fail as they did in February. Texas wanted to be independent of federal power regulations, but that independence left them vulnerable to market prices skyrocketing as they did this past winter when out of state power costs jumped to \$9 per kilowatt-hour, or over 100 times our residential rate. I could not imagine trying to explain that to you.

Since the majority of Washington's power comes from hydroelectricity, the chances of a cold snap stopping the flow of water through turbines are very low. But that brings the second sentence I mentioned earlier into play. If we move away from reliable hydroelectricity, and become dependent on intermittent resources, or resources that are dependent on weather conditions, we increase the chances of a Texas-like scenario occurring. Resources like the Lower Snake River Dams have helped the state meet power demands during recent cases of extreme cold and the Environmental Impact Statement on the Federal Columbia River Power System released last year highlighted their importance to system reliability. But there are those seeking their removal and replacement with less reliable energy resources. While I share some of the concerns regarding the environmental impact of dams, I'm not ready to chance the reliability of our system. The chances of Texas happening here are low, but if we don't protect our reliable system, they go up.

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

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