

Utilities Section Newsletter

League of Nebraska Municipalities

January 2022

2022 Utilities/Public Works Section Annual Conference Highlights

*By Rob Pierce, LNM Field Rep./
Training Coordinator*

The 2022 Utilities/Public Works Section Annual Conference was held Jan. 12-15 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Lincoln. This year marked the Utilities Section's 90th conference. **The highlight of the conference was the passing of the Utilities Section Presidency from Eric Melcher of Aurora to Bill Bischoff of Wauneta.** Gary Thurlow, Utility Superintendent at Atkinson, and Sarah Sawin, Assistant Director of Utilities at Kearney, were nominated and voted in as new board members. **The full board elected at the conference is as follows:**

President: **Bill Bischoff**, Utility Superintendent, Wauneta;

1st Vice President: **Al Schoemaker**, Director of Public Works, Blair;

2nd Vice President: **Duane Hoffman**, Public Works Director, Oxford;

Past President: **Eric Melcher**, City Administrator, Aurora;

Board Members: **Pat Heath**, City Administrator, Gering; **Gary Thurlow**, Utility Superintendent, Atkinson; and **Sarah Sawin**, Assistant Director of Utilities, Kearney;

Ex Officio: **Tom Goulette**, City Administrator/Utility Superintendent, West Point.

The conference started Jan. 12 with a five-hour Preconference Seminar on "Municipal Employees at a Crossroads" with four speakers discussing issues on the graying of municipal utility and public works employees, attracting new employees and employment policies.

Sessions covered a broad range of topics, including: Lead Service Lines, New Federal COVID Relief and Infrastructure Monies, Tips to Improve Your Workers Comp Rating, High Speed Broadband, Collector Wells, Industrial Storm Water Requirements, EV Charging Stations, Backup Generation Operation/Maintenance, Building a Major Wastewater Treatment Plant from Scratch,



Eric Melcher receives plaque of appreciation for his service as President of the Utilities/Public Works Section from Lash Chaffin, LNM Utilities Section Director.

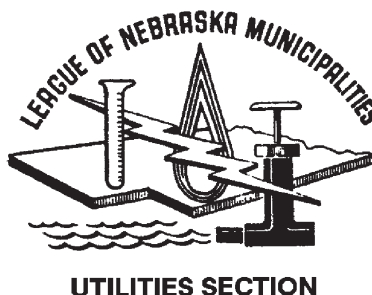
Black Starting Municipal Generation, Water/Wastewater Sales Tax Issues, Water Tower Attachment Management, Rising Costs of Long Waited Municipal Projects Needs, Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act Update along with a Municipal Utility and Public Works Legislative and Regulatory Update.

Participating systems included: Albion, Ashland, Atkinson, Aurora, Beatrice, Blair, Broken Bow, Coleridge, Cozad BPW, Crete, Dorchester, Falls City Utilities, Friend, Geneva, Gibbon, Gretna, Hastings Utilities, Holdrege, Imperial, Kearney, Kimball, Lincoln, Loup City, McCook, Norfolk, Ogallala, Oxford, Pilger, Plattsmouth, Ponca, Schuyler, Scribner, Shelby, South Sioux City, Stromsburg, Stuart, Superior Utilities,

Continued on page 2



From left: Shane Larsen, Public Works Director, Ashland; Russ Blanscet, Rose Equipment.



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Lash Chaffin
Utilities Section Director
Rob Pierce
Utilities Field Representative

2022 Utilities/Public Works Section Annual Conference Highlights

Continued from page 1

Sutton, Syracuse, Uehling, Valley, Wakefield, West Point, Wisner and York.

Those operators attending the Preconference and the preapproved designated sessions could receive up to 14 hours of wastewater and up to 17 water credit hours toward their license recertifications. Credit hours will be posted on the League's website www.lonm.org.

A special "thanks!" to the sponsors/exhibitors of the 2022 Utilities/Public Works Section Annual Conference. *Note: League or Utilities Associate Members are in bold.*

- Advanced Drainage Systems Inc.
- **Altec Industries**

- Burns & McDonnell
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- Downey Drilling, Inc.
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- **Nebraska Generator Service**
- **NMPP Energy**
- Osmose Utilities Service
- **RESCO (Rural Electric Supply Cooperative)**
- RJN Group, Inc.
- **T&R Electric Supply Company, Inc.**



From left: Jack Cordes, Utility Superintendent, Scribner; Lewis Hyatt, Miller and Associates Consulting Engineers, P.C.

Next year's conference will be held Jan. 10-13, 2023, at the Embassy Suites in Lincoln. Be sure to mark your calendars and attend the 2023 conference!

2022-2023 Executive Board

President

Bill Bischoff
Utility Superintendent
Wauneta

1st Vice President

Al Schoemaker
Director of Public Works
Blair

2nd Vice President

Duane Hoffman
Public Works Director
Oxford

Past President

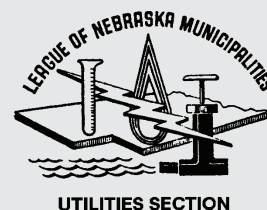
Eric Melcher
City Administrator
Aurora

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Pat Heath
City Administrator
Gering

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Gary Thurlow
Utility Superintendent
Atkinson



Board Member

Sarah Sawin
Asst. Director of Utilities
Kearney

Ex Officio Member

Tom Goulette
City Administrator and
Utility Superintendent
West Point

Crow Line: A line of positive communication that all can share

Congratulations! Incorporation Anniversary Recognition:

100 years – Octavia (Jan. 10, 1922-village); 115 years – **Edison** (Jan. 3, 1907-village); 120 years – Bee (Jan. 30, 1902-village); 130 years – **Union** (January 1892-village); 135 years – **Ansley** (Jan 13, 1887) and **Curtis** (Jan 13, 1887-village/Jan. 5, 1922-city second class); 140 years – **Shelton** (Jan. 6, 1882-village) and Oakdale (Jan. 12 or 13, 1882, one source listed December 1881); 150 years – **Fairbury** (Jan. 4, 1872-village/Sept. 24, 1875-city second class).

The City of Stromsburg has owned and operated the natural gas system since 1962 (60 years).

Congratulations to the five cities – **Arapahoe, Beatrice, Hastings, Seward** and **York** – that are the latest recipients of CDBG Downtown Revitalization funding grants. Each will receive \$435,000 toward their respective downtown project. *Source: Nebraska Economic Development Department.*

Congratulations to the City of Chappell for being recognized as a Leadership Certified Community. *Source: Department of Economic Development (DED).*

Utilities Section members and associate members are bolded.

Do you, your department or facility have something to crow about? Received an award, had an article written highlighting an event or person? Do you have a project worthy of acknowledgment in the Utilities Section



Newsletter? If so, please send your information to us so we can share your excitement with other members.

Water Workshops held

Three Water Operator Training Workshops were held in January, sponsored by the Utilities Section and the Nebraska Section AWWA. The first two workshops were held Jan. 19 in South Sioux City and Jan. 20 in Blair. Topics included source water protection, water loss management programs, water system security, safety discussion and a regulatory/industry update.

The third workshop was held Jan. 25 in Kearney before the Snowball Conference. Thirty-seven water/wastewater operators were in attendance. Topics covered included: tower operation/maintenance, antennae management, asset management and an

industry/regulatory update.

The next LNM/NS-AWWA water workshops were scheduled for Feb. 22 in Beatrice, Feb. 23 in Schuyler and Feb. 24 in Hastings (for more training, check the training calendar on the last page of this newsletter).

WasteExpo scheduled

The WasteExpo is scheduled for May 9-12, 2022, at the Las Vegas Convention Center – West Hall. More information can be found at www.wasteexpo.com.

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Nebraska Breaktime Trivia “Just For Fun”

Q-1. What municipality in the 1860 Nebraska Census had the 4th highest population?

Q-2. What were the first 10 cities/villages whose history articles were featured in the 2006-2007 *Utilities Section Newsletters*?

Q-3. How many representative cities/villages were listed as present at the first meeting to form the Utilities Section Nov. 8, 1931?

Q-4. When were the first Nebraska Utilities Section Bylaws voted on and approved?



Do you know where?

Q-5. This municipal auditorium is

located in what

city in Nebraska?

Answers on page 14.

SAFETY/HEALTH CORNER

OSHA's Top 10 Cited Safety Standards

*By Rob Pierce, LNM
Field Rep./Training
Coordinator*

In October 2021, the Occupational Safety & Health Association (OSHA) announced its top 10 most frequently cited workplace safety standards for fiscal year 2021.

Once again, Fall Protection (1926.501) is number one for the 11th year in a row with Respiratory Protection (1910.134), Ladders (1926.1053), Scaffolding (1926.451) and Hazard Communication (1910.1200) rounding out the top five.

Listed numbers six-10

were Lockout/Tagout (1910.147), Fall Protection – Training Requirements (1926.503), Personal Protective and Lifesaving Equipment – Eye and Face Protection (1926.102), Powered Industrial Trucks (1910.178) and Machine Guarding (1910.212).

The top 10 most frequently cited workplace safety standards never seem to change much so for the year 2022, the *Utilities Section Newsletters* will focus on the top 10 list throughout the year and other safety topics related to utilities/public works.

Do you need to get a wastewater/water operator licensed?

Check the following websites for information on training and test dates:

- Nebraska Water Environment Association
www.nebwea.org

- Nebraska Rural Water Association
www.nerwa.org
- Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy
www.ndee.gov

Conferences of possible interest

The dates for future "Snowball" Wastewater Conferences and Meter Conferences have been scheduled and contracts signed with the Kearney Holiday Inn:

- **Jan. 25-26, 2023**
"Snowball" Wastewater Conference

- **Feb. 11-12, 2023**
Meter Conference
- **Jan. 24-25, 2024**
"Snowball" Wastewater Conference
- **Feb. 6-7, 2024**
Meter Conference
- **Jan. 22-23, 2025**
"Snowball" Wastewater Conference

Nebraska utilities history – Mullen

The Utilities Section Newsletter will continue to feature histories of both utilities and associate members. Any historical data and/or photos of your utilities, a specific facility, or articles already written are welcome, along with permission to print. If you have questions, contact Rob at 402-476-2829 or robp@lonm.org.

*By Rob Pierce, LNM Field Rep./
Training Coordinator*

Mullen, located in Hooker County, had settlers in the area by 1884 and the first area's post office was established in Hecla by 1887. A small store or trading post was operating called Trefren's Post, which was located about one mile west of the present townsite. By Fall 1887, the Grand Island & Wyoming (a subsidiary of Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad) tracks were laid through the town site. The land for the initial railroad station site could not be obtained. A box car was left as a temporary depot one mile east of the trading post and hooked to the telegraph. On May 7, 1888, Amos Gandy and George Trefren laid out/platted a town site on land they purchased from Gary W. Vleit, located near the railcar depot. The community was named Mullen for Charles Mullen, a chief clerk of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad. By 1888, the CB & Q Railroad

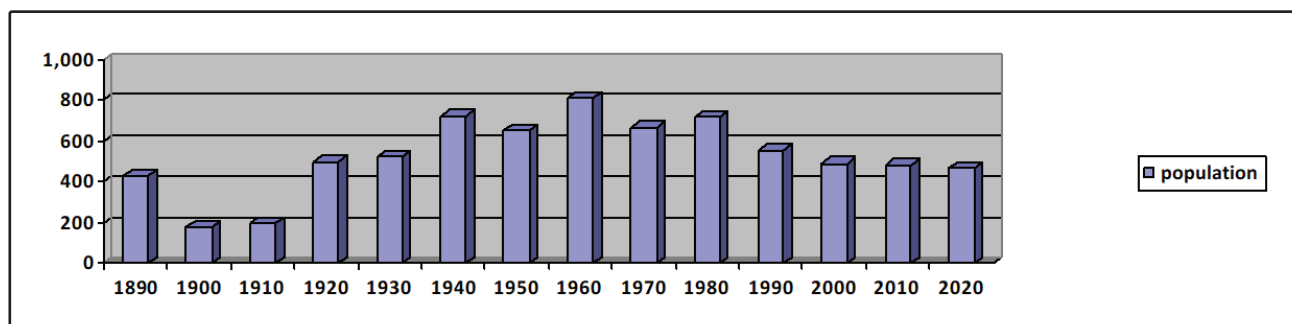
started service to the site and soon the weekly *Hooker County Tribune* newspaper was started. A one square block was set aside for a courthouse. In 1889, Mullen became the county seat by default since it was the only town in the newly formed county. On April 24, 1889, a post office was established at the townsite although some type of mail service had been established before. On Nov. 16, 1889, a new two-room frame (24 feet by 26 feet) courthouse and jail was erected for \$1,500. In 1890, the population was 424 and a bank was established along with several stores, a livery stable and a Methodist Church. By 1891, one source listed the population at 250 and two newspapers were being published, the *Mullen Enquirer* and *Hooker County News*. A general store, a barber shop, a hardware store, a telegraph, a blacksmith, an ag implement dealer and a restaurant were operating by 1891. The population by 1900 was 177 and in 1903, the schoolhouse



Mullen Water Tank. 2001 Photo.

was destroyed by fire. In 1904, land was donated for a Cedarview Cemetery and the livery stable was destroyed by a fire. Mullen was incorporated as a village in 1907, a new two-story frame school building was erected (1908) and an Evergreen Hotel was built in 1910. In 1912, a new brick Hooker County Courthouse was built and a new well was drilled on the courthouse block for \$86. A franchise was given to the Mullen Telephone Company in 1915 to operate the telephone system. A \$10,000 bond was issued for the construction of a water supply for fire fighting in 1916 and a high school district

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Nebraska utilities history – Mullen

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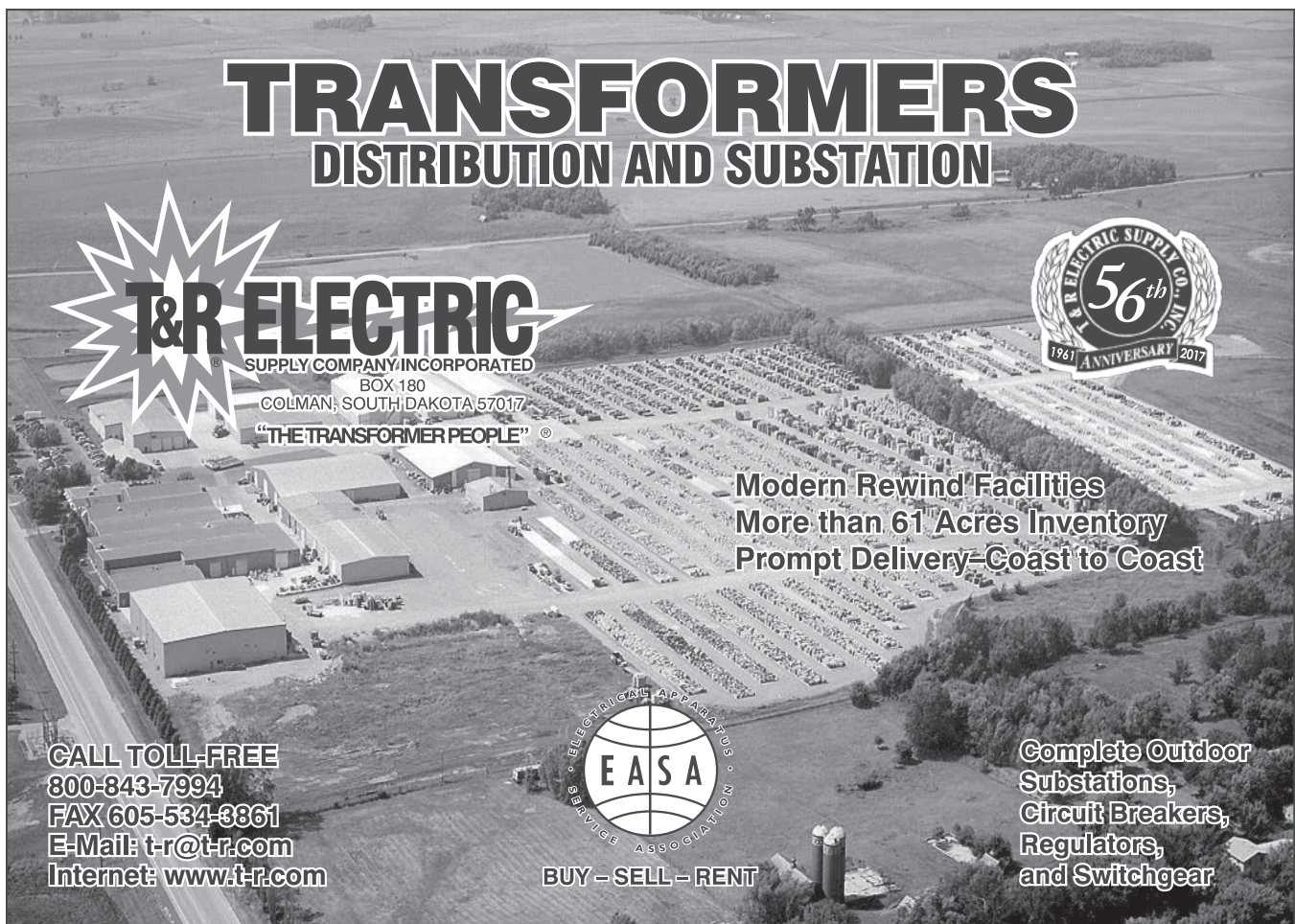
was organized. The fire department was established in 1917 and the first high school was completed. In 1917, R.C. Franke was given a franchise to set poles for electricity and to manage the light plant system. A one cylinder, one station engine was put in the basement of the old Mecure building where Franke operated the light plant. By September, Glen L. Boyer took over the power plant, which he ran for about 25 years. The village paved one-and-one-

half blocks of main street in the business district in 1918 with the paving for the intersection costing \$1,600. The school was tore down in 1965 when replaced. A crippling fire occurred at the power plant in April 1919 and in July, an ordinance was approved to vacate part of Lincoln Avenue next to the railroad to build a municipal water plant (public watering place, hose cart and electric light plant). By December, the village was enjoying 24-hour electric service

from two engines at the power plant, a 25 horsepower (hp) oil engine and a 37.5 hp diesel engine.

The population of the county from 1917-1920 was about 1,300 and the village ranged between 432-499. By 1920, the village had a direct stroke pump attached to a diesel engine, which was operated by a clutch. It pumped about 42 gallons per minute from the well to a 42,000-gallon capacity water storage tank. The

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Nebraska utilities history – Mullen

Continued from page 6

Ladies Club started to organize a library in 1920 and by May 18, the Humphrey addition was platted and annexed into Mullen by Ordinance #88. A nine-hole golf course designed with sand greens was located on the west edge of Mullen in 1924. A fire truck was purchased in 1924 and in 1928, the first addition to the cemetery opened. A new addition to the school was constructed from 1928-1929. The population by 1930 was 524 and the Western Public Service Company offered to buy the power plant for \$5,000, as they planned to build line from Anselmo to Scottsbluff. At the time, the village still had \$8,000 in outstanding bonds. Land was purchased for an airport in the 1930s and by 1934, the Mullen Post Office was said to be the only remaining post office in Hooker County. The village became a member of the League of Nebraska Municipalities in 1934 and a night watchman was hired for \$50 per month. The water rates in 1935 provided that the first 14,000 gallons of water were paid and the second 14,000 gallons

were free. The municipal power plant in 1936 had a 125-kilowatt (kW) capacity of internal combustion power. The nine-hole Mullen Golf Club Course opened (semi-private) in 1938 as the original golf course was redesigned. A new elementary school was built (1938-39). The sewer system and a disposal plant consisting of an Imhoff tank (sand filter type) was constructed by Kelly Construction Company of Grand Island in 1939. The Public Works Administration (PWA) project was a 45 percent project using a \$28,000 grant.

By 1940, the population was 725, the Custer County Rural Power District was established Sept. 19, 1944, and by the fall of 1945, installed poles in the Mullen area. The *Hooker County Tribune* newspaper was being published in 1946 and on Dec. 10, 1948, the Lillie C. Lowe Addition was platted and annexed by virtue of Ordinance #88. The rural fire district organized in 1951 and a new fire truck was purchased in 1952. Hooker County organized all school districts in the county into Mullen School District in 1952. The fire department had 56

volunteer firefighters. The municipal sewer system and disposal maintained by the village had a \$100 tap fee. The municipal water plant in 1956 had 275 meters in service with rates of the first 3,000 gallons at \$10, next 7,000 at \$0.20 per 1,000 gallons, next 40,000 at \$0.10 per 1,000 gallons and the balance at \$0.15 per 1,000 gallons. The municipal diesel plant had a capacity of 475 kilowatt hours (kWh) by 1956 with the initial operation of a Fairbanks-Morse OP 640 engine (0.5 megawatt) in 1958. An auditorium called the "Lariat," which had been built for \$100,000 and leased to the school for \$10,000 for 10 years, was purchased by the school in 1959.

The population increased from 652 in 1950 to 811 in 1960 and the second addition to the cemetery opened in 1960.

The Thomas County Library began in 1962 and an addition was added to the school in 1963. In the spring of 1964, construction started on a new Mullen Rest Home and in 1965, a new \$288,000 school bond was issued for a new high school along with a \$14,000

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Nebraska utilities history – Mullen

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street improvement project. A Fairbanks-Morse OP 960 engine (0.7 megawatt) was purchased for \$89,000 for the municipal power plant in 1965 with initial operation beginning in 1966. Approval for an interceptor sewer system and lagoon system was given in 1965. The project used a \$13,020 federal grant toward the total project cost estimated at \$44,400 with work beginning by 1968.

A swimming pool was built in 1967-68. In 1970, a wading pool was added and the population was 667.

The power plant building in 1971 was used as the village office until the new building was erected in 1972 on Main Street. In 1973, the village had a contract with Custer Public Power District to purchase all power except for peak power in the summer. The village generation facility was to be for standby power only. The electrical distribution system was operated by the city and supplied by Custer Public Power. On Aug. 6, 1975, the Clyde D. Sexton Addition was platted and annexed and the third addition to the cemetery opened in 1976.

From 1980-1990, the population decreased from 720 to 554. In

1982, the Airport Authority was formed and a new addition was added to the Junior/Senior High School building. The Mullen Golf Club Course converted from sand to grass greens in 1991 and in 1995, a new 18-hole \$1.2 million Sandhills Golf Club Course (private) was opened south of Mullen. The 7,000-yard, par 71 championship course was named one of America's best modern courses. The village operates a facultative flow through, a three-cell lagoon system, which is discharged to a vegetated wetland. The municipal power plant has a generating capacity of 1.1 megawatts with about 402 electrical customers. By 2000, the population decreased to 491 and in 2007, the village purchased a \$22,303 vertical baler and loader for use at the transfer station.

Today, Mullen has a population of 469, has been an incorporated village since 1907, a League of Nebraska Municipalities member since 1934 and a Utilities Section member since 1979. The village maintains a water system, a collection and lagoon treatment system.

The electric distribution system is owned/operated by the village and supplied by Custer Public

Power District.

Private individual propane tanks make up the gas services and solid waste collection is provided by a private company.

On its website, Mullen is billed as the "Biggest little town in Hooker County!"

References: Nebraska Directory of Municipal Officials, 1956, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1964-75, 1977-87, 1990-2018; Municipal Review Magazine, 1935; Mullen Internet site, 2006; Municipal Review 1931, 2001, 2007; Water Resources of Nebraska, December 1936; Public Power Magazine, Vol. 51, Number 1, January-February 1993; Department of Energy Website, 2004; Nebraska Our Towns... Central & North Central, 1989; Maps Tell Nebraska's History, 1991; Lincoln Journal Star Newspaper, 2005; NEDED Website, 2005; Wikipedia website, 2018; Nebraska State Business Gazetteer & Business Directory, 1890-91; History of Hooker County, The First 100 Years 1889-1989, 1989; Hooker County, Nebraska, The First 115 Years 1889-2004, 2004; Nebraska Blue Book, 1928, 1942, 1946 and the Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey, Reconnaissance Survey, Hooker County Final Report, 1889.



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Nebraska utilities history – Orchard

The Utilities Section Newsletter will continue to feature histories of both utilities and associate members. Any historical data and/or photos of your utilities, a specific facility, or articles already written are welcome, along with permission to print. If you have questions, contact Rob at 402-476-2829 or robhp@lonm.org.

*By Rob Pierce, LNM Field Rep./
Training Coordinator*

Orchard, located in Antelope County, had the first permanent European settler by October 1878. More settlers arrived in the area by September 1880 when a railroad line was graded through the future townsite. The community was initially called Pacific Townsite as it was to be one of several towns sited along the C.B. & Q. Railroad line from South Sioux City to O'Neill. A store opened July 1, 1881, and a post office was established (north of present townsite) with S.P. Cramer as postmaster. School sessions were taught in the private residence of D.L. Cramer. The community initially known as "Windmill Town" was platted June 4, 1890, with the first train arriving June 20. Many families had their own wells, pumps and cisterns, which is why it was often called "Windmill Town." The post office, located just to the north, was moved to the new townsite, which was named Orchard for

the bountiful local fruit (apple) orchards planted in the area. (S.P. Cramer planted a large orchard on his farm.) A grist mill had a large windmill for power along with a horse-drawn treadmill if the wind was not blowing to power the grinding wheel.

By 1893, some of the businesses included the Pacific Hotel, two general stores, a billiard hall, Orchard State Bank, a harness shop, a blacksmith, an implement dealer, and a hardware, furniture and lumber stores.

Depending on which source is accurate, the library was started either in 1894 or 1903. In 1903, the Atlas elevator and lumberyard were built along with a two-story wood framed schoolhouse with a bell tower in 1905. Once located in the school building, the library was moved in 1907 to the Sherman Shoe shop building and then moved again in 1911. The population by 1910 was 532 and an electric light plant was owned and operated by Calvin George Mahood by 1911-12 (garage business). In 1914, the Rex Theater

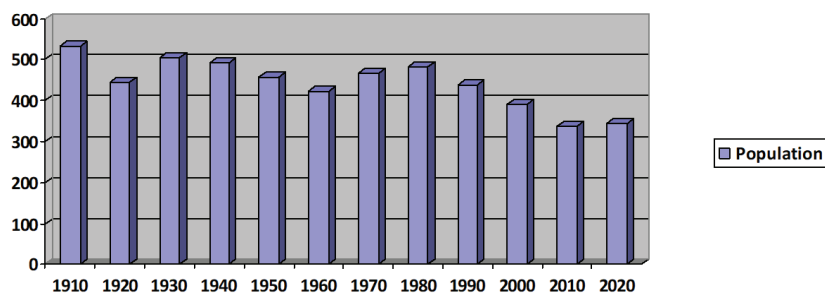
was built and by 1915, both an electric light plant and a water system were in operation as the population increased to 650. The population by 1920 was 444 and the high school

sports teams were known as the black/orange Orioles (1922). In the early 1920s, money was raised for new fire equipment and the library was located in the "old town hall" building by 1922. The library apparently operated mostly on donations until 1924 when \$.05 per week was charged for use of a book. The library was sponsored by the Wimodausis

Continued on page 10



*Orchard water tower.
1999 photo.*



Nebraska utilities history – Orchard

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Club and that year, the library board approached the village board for financial support and received \$15. The municipal water rates in 1925 were: \$0.35 per 1,000 gallons and electric rates were \$0.15 per kilowatt (kW). On Dec. 14, 1925, the Tri-State Utilities Company of Minnesota asked for authority to construct and sell its 6 percent first mortgage bonds in the amount of \$60,000 to purchase the plants at Osmond and Orchard. The private power plant, operated by the Mahood Brothers the past 15 years, was turned over to an outside company. By 1930, the population was 505, a fire department was operating and the library was moved to the "new town hall" building (1930). On Jan. 1, 1935, the electric distribution system was operated by the Interstate Power Company of Nebraska.

The population was 493 by 1940 and the electric system was served retail by the Interstate Power Company.

By December 1940, all towns in Antelope County, except for Oakdale and a portion of service furnished by Iowa-Nebraska Power & Light Company, was served by the Interstate Power Company. In 1942, the property owned by private electric companies was purchased by the Consumers Public Power District.

By 1950, the population was 458 and in 1959, the village received \$13,438 on a sewage plant project with a total cost of \$127,980. The population increased from 421 in 1960 to 467 in 1970 and the Orchard Co-op Creamery building was converted into a cheese

factory. The electric system was owned by Consumers Public Power District. In 1968, a municipal sanitary activated sludge sewage system was completed with a rated capacity of 175,000 gallons. The electrical system was owned by Consumers Public Power District until 1969 when the Nebraska Public Power District was formed. The electrical system was owned by the village and supplied by the Nebraska Public Power District in 1970.

In 1980, the population was 482 and the natural gas system was operated/supplied by Kansas-Nebraska Natural Gas Company (1982). By 1987, the natural gas system was operated/supplied by KN Energy and the population decreased to 439 by 1990. A wastewater treatment project was underway in 1994 with a facultative lagoon system soon in operation.

In April 2000, the North Central Public Power District acquired the retail community from the Nebraska Public Power District. In 2001, a private company provided waste removal services and the village was operating three municipal wells. In 2008, Orchard merged the high school football team with Clearwater and by 2009, the natural gas system was operated by SourceGas. The Orchard Hill Cemetery was maintained, a public library was operating and police protection was provided by the Clay County Sheriff Department. In 2010, the population was 339 and the electrical system was owned by the village and supplied by North Central Public Power District. A privately owned company pro-

vided waste removal services and by 2015, the natural gas system was operated by Blacks Hills Energy. The telephone service was provided by Frontier in 2016 and by 2018, the municipal water system had four active wells with 20 commercial, five industrial and 170 residential connections (all unmetered) serving a population of 373.

Today, the Village of Orchard has a population of about 379, maintains village streets, a swimming pool and public library along with operating a water system and a wastewater treatment lagoon system. Orchard is a League of Nebraska Municipalities and Utilities Section member.

Nebraska Directory of Municipal Officials, 1965-70, 1979-1990, 1997, 1999-2007, 2009-2011, 2013-2021; Nebraska Municipal Review Magazine, 1925; Utilities section Newsletter, 1959; Water Resources of Nebraska, December 1936; Pages of History, Nebraska High Schools, Past & Present, 1854-1994; Lincoln Journal Star Newspaper, 2007; Atkinson Graphic newspaper, 1931-32; Nebraska Place-Names, 1925, 1960; Perkey's Nebraska Place Names, 1995; Nebraska Our Towns...North Northeast, 1990; Orchard Internet site, 2006; Wikipedia website, 2018-2019; NEDED Website, 2005; Maps Tell Nebraska's History, 1991; History & Biography: History of the Elkhorn Valley, Nebraska, 1892; Nebraska Blue Book, 1928, 1942, 1946, Historical Gazetteer of the U.S., 2007, and the Eighteenth Annual Report of the Nebraska State Railway Commission to the Governor 1925, April 15, 1926.

Nebraska utilities history – Wood River

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*By Rob Pierce, LNM Field Rep./
Training Coordinator*

Wood River, located in Hall County, had settlers in the area along the Wood River by 1858 with one of the first settlers operating a road ranch a few miles west of the Fort Kearney site on the Mormon Trail. About 1861, an Irish settlement was established with the railroad constructing rails to the site. A store was started about 1864-65 and a depot/boarding house, called "Wood River Station," was soon built near Moore's road ranch. By 1866, rails had been laid and the original town-site was platted around the Union Pacific Railroad station. On Aug. 3, 1868, a post office was established.

By 1873, the area was known as western Hall County, which included the towns of Wood River, Cameron (on the Prairie Creek six miles northwest) and Alda. The Union Pacific's effort to "centralize depots," resulted in the moving of the Wood River Station two miles east. Roughly 30 buildings,

including the station, a post office and a store were put on skids and pulled down the railroad tracks by teams of horses to the new location. The Union Pacific platted this new location in the fall of 1874 and the present town of Wood River was established. By September 1874, a post office was established at the new site. A shoe shop was started in 1877 and two general stores in 1878 and 1879. By 1879, businesses also included a saloon, a grocery, hotel, general stores and a grain dealer. School was held in a building, which doubled as a church until 1880 when a school was erected. A flour mill was built in 1881 and on Sept. 9, 1881, the *Wood River Gazette* newspaper was first published.

In October 1882 with a population over 200, incorporation papers were filed and Wood River was incorporated as a village. By 1882, the village had a railroad depot, a post office, three general stores, a hardware store, a saloon, a grain dealer, a lumberyard, a bank, a millinery, a physician, a butcher, a drayman, a livery sta-

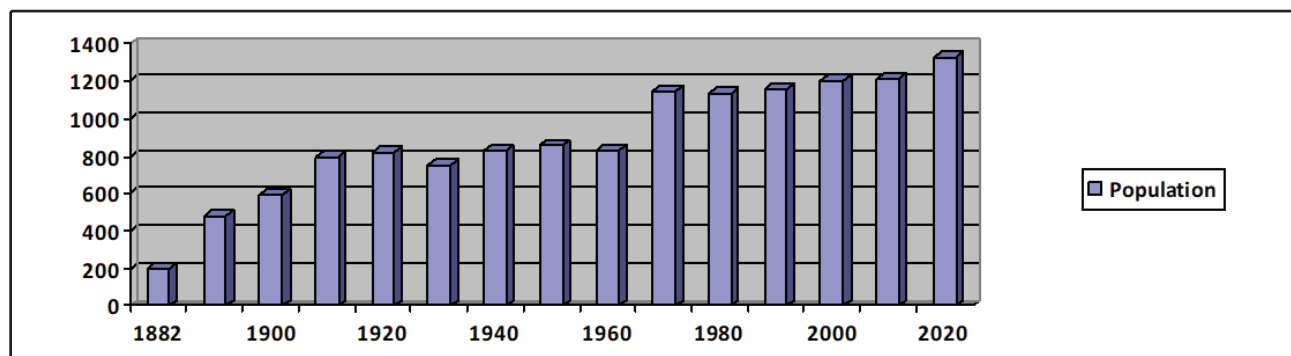


Wood River water tower.

ble, a shoemaker, and a two-story frame school. The Wood River Bank was established in 1883 and by 1884, the Wood River House Hotel and a grain elevator were in operation. The population was 481 by 1890, a second drug store was started and the two-story Moore's Opera House was built (1892).

The 1900 population was 589, the Wood River Telephone Exchange was operating (1903-

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Nebraska utilities history – Wood River

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05) and the new Union Pacific Railroad depot was completed in 1905. On Oct. 9, 1907, the village voted (158-31) for \$3,800 in bonds to construct a water works system. Frank H. Wheeler was to construct a (40 feet by 44 feet) building for the Wood River Electric Light & Water System for \$17,000 (1907-08). W. T. Dunn was appointed as the electric light and water commissioner. By 1910, the population increased to 796 and a light plant was installed (1912). Individual wells were used until 1912 when a well was dug, an elevated tank and water mains were installed and put into use.

By 1915, the Wood River Municipal Electric Light & Water Plant was operating a 50 horsepower (hp) gas engine and a generator with a rating of 30 kilovolt amperes (kVA). The municipal water system wells were direct pressure with a pump/engine capacity of 36,000 gallons per day (gpd). The system consisted of two miles of mains, 25 hydrants, two valves, domestic pressure of 50 psi and fire of 100 psi serving 50 service connections. The water system cost \$12,000 with maintenance costs of \$2,400. The fire department consisted of 26 volunteer firefighters, a hook/ladder truck and alarm bell. By 1916, the power plant was shut down and on Aug. 7, 1918, an application was filed by Central Power Company of Grand Island to construct a transmission line from Grand Island to Wood River. By 1919, the electric distribution system was supplied wholesale by the Central Power Company's power plants.

The population in 1920 was 820

and there were plans to organize and build an ice plant. The electric distribution system was supplied electric current from Central Power Company (1922). In 1914, the Lincoln Highway through town was gravel with an 8-mph speed limit. A new school building was erected in 1929 to replace the old frame school. By 1930, the population decreased to 751 and Wood River became a new member of the League of Nebraska Municipalities. The village was using natural gas by 1932 and on Jan. 1, 1935, the electric distribution system was operated by the Village of Wood River. The Lincoln Highway was realigned along the railroad tracks in the 1930s and by 1940, the population increased to 829. The Central Power Company dissolved by 1941 and its electric properties were sold to Consumers Public Power District. In 1942, the electric distribution system was municipally owned and supplied by Consumers Public Power District.

By 1950, the population was 858 and in 1954, a new 15,000-square-foot addition was constructed at the school, which consisted of a gymnasium and agricultural classroom space. The garbage collection service was provided by private collection companies with a charge from residential and commercial customers. The cemetery was owned by the city and maintained from the sale of burial lots. The electric distribution system was owned by the city and supplied by Consumers Public Power District. In 1958, the city had 10 miles of lines with a meter deposit of \$10. The natural gas system was operated/supplied by

Kansas-Nebraska Natural Gas Company. The municipal water plan had water rates of \$1.50 per month in 1958 and the municipal sewer system/disposal plant was maintained from a one mill tax levy.

The population increased from 828 in 1960 to 1,147 in 1970. The nine-hole Wood River Country Club Golf Course was built in 1965. A three-story brick Wood River Rural High School was built in 1969. The electrical system in 1973 was owned/operated by the city and supplied by Nebraska Public Power District. In 1977, a wastewater treatment facility was constructed with a rotating bio-contactor system designed for 0.127 million gallons per day (mgd), chlorines gas disinfection and anaerobic digester with single-stage sludge treatment.

The population increased slightly from 1,134 in 1980 to 1,156 by 1990. The municipally owned electrical distribution system supplied power for its 520 customers (1993) by the Municipal Energy Association of Nebraska (MEAN). One source noted in 1990 that only the St. Mary's Cemetery and the District #5 School marked the former Wood River town-site. By 2000, the population was 1,204 and the old two-story opera house building was razed. The natural gas system was operated by Source-Gas and supplied by ACE until 2015 when Black Hills Energy took over operating the gas system. In 2003, Wood River received the NMPP Energy "Utility of the Year Award" for a system with a population under 5,000.

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Nebraska utilities history – Wood River

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By 2006, the old water tower had been removed, which was located north of the railroad tracks. The new tower is located south of the railroad tracks. Solid waste collection service was provided by Mid-Nebraska, Clark Brothers and Heartland Disposal hauled to the Grand Island Transfer Station/Landfill (2015). By 2016, the municipal electrical system was supplied by Southern Public Power District. The city maintained three parks (Library Park, South Tower Park and Memorial Park). The

wastewater treatment plant was rehabilitated, replacing one RBC disk and adding a second to the system. The facility had primary and secondary clarifiers with weir boxes and recently added side car aeration.

Today, Wood River has a population of 1,328, has been incorporated since 1882 and is currently a city of the second class. The city has been League of Nebraska Municipalities and Utilities Section members for over 45 years (records only to 1977).

References: Nebraska Direc-

tory of Municipal Officials, 1956, 1958, 1965-75, 1977-87, 1990-92, 1994-2008, 2010-2021; Nebraska Municipal Review Magazine, 1946; Perkey's Nebraska Place Names, 1995; Nebraska Place-Names, 1960; Water Resources of Nebraska, December 1936; Nebraska Travelers Magazine, 2003; Public Power Magazine, Vol. 51, Number 1, January-February 1993; Lincoln Journal Star Newspaper, 2009; Nebraska Our Towns...Central & North Central, 1989; History of Hamil-
Continued on page 14



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ton and Clay Counties, 1921; NEDED Website, 2005; NHHS Website, 2005; Wikipedia website, 2018-2020; Wood River Website, 2005, 2021; Thegolfcourses.net website, 2005; History of Hall County Nebraska, 1920; Johnson's History of Nebraska, 1880; The Sod-House Frontier 1854-1890, 1937; Municipal Journal and Engineering, 1907, 1908; Municipal Journal & Public Works, Political Science Vol. 23, July 3, 1907; Electric Power Development in the United States, Dept. of Agriculture, January 1916; Nebraska Historical Building Survey Reconnaissance Survey Final Report of Hall County, Nebraska, July

1995; History of Hamilton & Clay Counties, Nebraska, 1921; The McGraw Waterworks Directory, 1915; History of Hall County, a Narrative of the Past, August 1920; History and First Settlement of Hall County, 1907 (1944); Andreas' History of the State of Nebraska, 1882; Nebraska Blue Book, 1928, 1942, 1946, 1978; Eleventh Annual Report of the Nebraska State Railway Commissioner, 1918; Directory of Electric Utilities in the United States, Federal Power Commission, 1941 Utilities Section solid waste survey, 2015; Municipal Ownership and the Electric Light & Power Industry, National Electric Light Association, 1923; The Insur-

ance Yearbook 1915-16 Fire and Marine 43rd Annual Issue, 1915; and the Federal Power Consumers Electric

Rate Survey, Domestic and Residential Electric Rates in Effect January 1, 1935 in the state of Nebraska, 1935.

Solid Waste Workshop scheduled

A Solid Waste Workshops is scheduled for April 26, 2022, in Scottsbluff.

This workshop will cover the required "Hazardous Material/Waste Identification and

Random Load Inspections."

Other topics will include transfer station and landfill safety with an emphasis on heavy equipment and traffic controls.

Electric Rubber Gloving Workshops scheduled

The Utilities Section and the Nebraska Rural Electric Association have two Rubber Gloving Workshops scheduled for May 17-19 in Norfolk and Aug. 30-Sept. 1 in Sidney.

The workshops will be held at the Northeast Community College Training Field in Norfolk and the Don Winkelmann Training Field (Wheatbelt Public Power District) north of Sidney.

"Just For Fun" Answers

A-1. Salem with 694. Reference: 1860 Census

A-2. David City, Fairbury, Crete, Lyons, Ord, Red Cloud, Wilber, Friend, Davenport and Wahoo.

A-3. 21 – Beatrice, Crete, David City, Fairbury, Falls City, Fremont, Friend, Grand Island, Hastings,

Hebron, Holdrege, Lincoln, Lyons, Omaha, Ord, Red Cloud, Seward, Tecumseh, Wahoo, West Point and Wilber.

A-4. April 16, 1932, at the Clarke Hotel in Hastings.

A-5. David City. This auditorium was built in 1941-43 as a PWA project, 1999 photo.

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Classifieds

Water/Wastewater Apprentice/Operator. The City of Broken Bow Water/Wastewater Department is accepting applications for full-time employment. This position involves, but not limited to, construction of new water and sewer mains, tapping services, maintain city infrastructure, clean-up of job sites, and assisting other departments as needed. Multiple skill levels are needed. Department of Health and Human Services certification and NDEE certification preferred, but not required. CDL not required, but must be able to obtain CDL within 6 months. Willing to train the right person. Wage dependent on qualifications and a better than average benefit package. Applications and job description are available at the City of Broken Bow located on the main floor at 314 S 10th Avenue or www.cityofbrokenbow.org. Submit application and related information to the City of Broken Bow, 314 S 10th Avenue, PO Box 504, Broken Bow, NE 68822, or via email at ccranwell@cityofbrokenbow.org. Broken Bow is an EOE. For more information, please contact Water/Wastewater Superintendent Craig Cranwell at (308) 870-1203.

Power Plant Production Manager. The Auburn BPW (www.auburnbpw.com) is looking to hire a Power Plant Production Manager. This position will be responsible for the operation, maintenance and repairs of the Auburn BPW Diesel/Gas Generation Plant and substation equipment. Duties will include repairs maintenance, operation, monitoring and control of the power plant generation equipment, monitoring

of the electrical distribution and SCADA systems. For a full job description, please contact Auburn Board of Public Works, 1600 O Street, Auburn, NE 68305, email dhunter@auburnbpw.com or call 402-274-4981. Interested applicants can send resume to the above address, attention General Manager, or email. Position open until filled.

Electrical Lineman. The City of Burwell is accepting applications for a full-time Electrical Lineman. Applicants must be a U.S. citizen, possess a valid driver's license with the ability to attain CDL within six months of hire. Benefits include vacation, sick time, retirement, family medical and holidays. Salary is negotiable based upon experience and qualifications. Interested candidates should contact the City Office at 404 Grand Avenue (PO Box 604), Burwell, NE 68823 or phone 308-346-4509. The application and job description also are available on the city's website at www.burwellonline.com. Completed application along with a cover letter and resume should be mailed or delivered to the city office address above or emailed to cityofburwell@nctc.net and will be accepted until the position is filled. The City of Burwell is an EOE.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Director. The City of Minden, NE is accepting applications for a full-time Wastewater Treatment Plant Director to manage the wastewater treatment plant and infrastructure. Successful applicant must be highly motivated, possess a Grade 2 Wastewater License and a NE class B CDL



license. Primary duties include managing the City's wastewater treatment plant, lift stations and collection system. Candidate must be experienced and dependable, able to motivate and train the utility team and supervise plant efficiency and quality control. Candidate also is required to assist with the City's water and electrical systems. Additional requirements necessary for the position include strong mechanical skills and ability to operate heavy equipment such as loader, backhoe, tapping machines, dump trucks, aerial lift equipment, etc. Position also includes on-call responsibilities. Wage is commensurate with experience and qualifications with wage rate of \$24-\$32 per hour depending on qualifications. The successful applicant will receive a highly competitive benefits package including full family health insurance and retirement plan. Please submit a resume and references to the City of Minden at PO Box 239, Minden, NE 68959 or email to info@mindennebraska.org. For further information, call the City (308) 832-1820. Resumes will be accepted until the position is filled. The City of Minden is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or disability and the position is subject to a veterans preference.



NEBRASKA RECYCLING COUNCIL

NRC offers grant funds of up to \$20,000 for the purchase of recycling equipment.

Funding for these recycling equipment grants is provided by the Nebraska Environmental Trust. The Trust is funded by proceeds from the Nebraska Lottery and has awarded more than \$265 million to over 2,000 natural resource projects in Nebraska since 1993. Schools, municipalities, other government entities, nonprofit organizations, and recycling companies are eligible.

Equipment Eligible for Grant Funds

Forklifts, skid loaders, balers, recycling trailers, recycling carts, indoor and outdoor recycling bins, cargo trailers, semi-trailers, lift-gates, can crushers, dumpsters, trucks, portable loading ramps, approved recycling labels, equipment for compost operations, and more.

Equipment may be new, used, or in need of refurbishing. In some cases, applicant's existing equipment can be refurbished or rebuilt with grant funds.

Cash Match Requirement

A cash match is required from all grantees. In general, these minimum match amounts are required for communities:

- 20% for populations of 5,000 or under
- 25% for populations of 5,000 to 10,000
- 30% for populations of 10,000 and above



RECYCLING EQUIPMENT - *grants* -

Nebraska Recycling Council
offers grant funds of up to
\$20,000 for the purchase of
recycling equipment.

- *in partnership with* -



APPLY AT
nrcne.org/recycling-equipment-grants



"The City of South Sioux City would like to thank the Nebraska Recycling Council for this grant to purchase an oil burner furnace. This has substantially reduced our heating costs in the winter months as well as has recycled 1667.75 gallons of used oil thus far. Our intention is to continue the practice of collecting used oil from the community and from city fleet vehicles."

City of South Sioux City
Recycling Equipment Grant Recipient

2022 Training calendar

Visit our website at www.lonm.org
for a complete list of workshops and conferences.

**Due to COVID-19 guidelines, future workshops and conferences
may have to be rescheduled, cancelled or held virtually.**

April

April 26 Solid Waste Workshop Library, Scottsbluff
April 28 Water Operator Training Workshop Ogallala

May

May 17-19 Rubber Gloving Workshop NECC Training Field, Norfolk
May 25 Wastewater Workshop City Hall Council Chambers, Sidney

June

June 9 Wastewater Workshop Atkinson
June 15-17 Municipal Accounting & Finance Conference Younes Conference Center, Kearney

August

Aug. 9 Water Operator Training Workshop McCook
Aug. 10 Water Operator Training Workshop Holdrege
Aug. 11 Water Operator Training Workshop Hebron
Aug. 16 Backflow Workshop Beatrice
Aug. 17 Backflow Workshop Wayne
Aug. 18 Backflow Workshop Stuart
Aug. 23 Backflow Workshop Ogallala
Aug. 24 Backflow Workshop Grand Island
Aug. 25 Water Operator Training Workshop Grand Island
Aug. 30-Sept. 1 ... Rubber Gloving Workshop Don Winkelman Training Field, Sidney

September

Sept. 7-8 Electric Underground School Sidney
Sept. 14-16 League Annual Conference Cornhusker Marriott Hotel, Lincoln
Sept. 27 Water Operator Training Workshop Lexington
Sept. 28 Water Operator Training Workshop Broken Bow
Sept. 30 Water Operator Training Workshop Norfolk

October

Oct. 11 Water Operator Training Workshop York
Oct. 12 Water Operator Training Workshop Red Cloud

December

Dec. 7 Water Operator Training Workshop Lincoln
Dec. 8 Water Operator Training Workshop Hastings