

NEBRASKA MUNICIPAL REVIEW

■ Ribbon cutting held for Atkinson
solar lights project

■ HR tips and resolutions
for the new year

■ Record number of women in the
Nebraska Legislature and in other states

Official Publication of the League of Nebraska Municipalities

DECEMBER 2022



*Deb VanMatre
Gibbon Mayor
League President*



*Marlin Seeman
Aurora Mayor
League President-Elect*



*Bryan Bequette
Nebraska City Mayor
League Vice President*



*Paul Lambert
Plattsmouth Mayor
League Past President*

2022-2023 League Executive Board Officers



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DECEMBER 2022

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Marlin Seeman, Mayor, Aurora
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Chris Anderson, City Administrator, Central City
Nikki Schwanz, City Administrator, Cozad
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Randy Woldt, Utilities Superintendent, Wisner
CJ Heaton, City Administrator, Yutan

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President-Elect	Marlin Seeman Mayor, Aurora
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Fire Chiefs	Dennis Thompson North Platte
Utilities	Bill Bischoff Wauneta

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Lynn Marienau	Communications Director
Ethan Nguyen	LONM/LARM Information Technology Manager
Rob Pierce	Utilities Field Representative/ Training Coordinator
Shirley Riley	Membership Services Director

LARM Staff

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Diane Becker	Communications/Marketing Director
Fred Wiebelhaus	Loss Control/Claims Manager
Drew Cook	Customer Service Specialist
Kyla Brockevolt	Executive Administrative Assistant
James Kelley	Loss Control Specialist

CALENDAR

Midwinter Conference..... Feb. 27-28, 2023, Cornhusker Marriott Hotel, Lincoln
NLC Congressional City Conference..... March 12-15, 2023, Washington, D.C.

Municipal Legal Calendar

(All statute citations to Revised Statutes of Nebraska)

FEBRUARY 2023

CITIES OF THE FIRST CLASS

Within 15 days of Passage.....Clerk publishes ordinances passed. (16-405)
Within 10 days from meeting or before
next meeting (whichever is sooner).....Clerk to have minutes available for public inspection. (84-1413)
On or before second MondayAnnual Library Board report due. (51-213)
Within 30 days from Council meeting.....Clerk publishes official proceedings of meeting. (19-1102)
Within 20 days after end of monthTreasurer files monthly financial report. (16-318)
* *Clerk must prepare agenda prior to next Board meeting. (84-1411)

CITIES OF THE SECOND CLASS

Within 15 days of Passage.....Clerk publishes ordinances passed. (17-613)
Within 10 days from meeting
or before next meeting
(whichever is sooner)Clerk to have minutes available for public inspection. (84-1413)
On or before second MondayAnnual Library Board report due. (51-213)
Within 30 days from
Council meeting.....Clerk publishes official proceedings of meeting. (19-1102)
Within 20 days after end of monthTreasurer files monthly financial report. (17-606)
* *Clerk must prepare agenda prior to next Council meeting. (84-1411)

VILLAGES

Within 15 days of Passage.....Clerk publishes ordinances passed. (17-613)
Within 10 days from meeting or before
next meeting
(whichever is sooner)Clerk to have minutes available for public inspection. (84-1413)
On or before second MondayAnnual Library Board report due. (51-213)
Within 30 days from
Trustees' meeting.....Clerk publishes official proceedings of meeting. (19-1102)
Within 20 days after end of monthTreasurer files monthly financial report. (17-606)
* *Clerk must prepare agenda prior to next Board meeting. (84-1411)

Nebraska Municipal Review Editor and Advertising Sales: Lynn Marienau, 402-476-2829 or
lynnm@lonm.org

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Congratulations to Lynn Marienau on her retirement

BY L. LYNN REX, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LNM

Congratulations to Lynn Marienau on her retirement after 29 years of exemplary work as the League's Communications Director!

Thanks to Lynn Marienau for her dedication, important contributions and hard work as the League's Communications Director for almost three decades! On behalf of the League Executive Board, League President Deb VanMatre, Mayor of Gibbon, recently said, "*Lynn's professionalism and expertise have been a true asset to the League during her years of service as our Communications Director, which is evident through our monthly publication, the Nebraska Municipal Review. She will be missed; however, we wish her only the best in her retirement!*"

As the former Director of the Legislature's Information Office, it was a smooth transition when Lynn accepted the position as the League's Communications Director in 1993. Lynn immediately was welcomed and highly valued as a member of our League family in our office and by municipal officials throughout Nebraska. Lynn's understanding of the legislative process has been invaluable, not only in writing articles for the *Nebraska Municipal Review* but also the *League Legislative Bulletin* published weekly while the Legislature is in session.

She is highly respected by Senators, legislative staff members and others!

In addition to Lynn's other duties, she significantly improved the content, appearance and value of the *Nebraska Municipal Review* for those who benefit greatly from reading an overview of important issues and concerns facing cities and villages across our state. Lynn encouraged elected and appointed officials to forward articles and information to include in the *Nebraska Municipal Review* highlighting their innovations, projects and accomplishments so similar programs can be replicated in other cities and villages without "reinventing the wheel." In documenting current events and issues, the League monthly magazine is extremely valuable when one needs to do research. With over 340 issues of the *Nebraska Municipal Review* during her tenure, Lynn is leaving a legacy of outstanding work underscored by her sincere appreciation of municipal officials and employees who serve the citizens of our communities, large and small.

Lynn is an EXCEPTIONAL writer! Over the years, I especially have enjoyed reading the extensive articles she thoughtfully has written about each of our League Presidents to share their life's stories with other municipal

officials of member cities and villages.

As Lynn retires, her life story will continue to be full of rich experiences with Bill, her loving husband, and Nicole, their beautiful daughter who is a Regents Scholar at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, majoring in Mathematics and Secondary Education. Lynn is a beloved member of our League family who will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of working with her! She has a great sense of humor and is a kind, thoughtful, politically astute individual who can discuss the issues of the day with anyone.

It has been said that retirement is one of those major milestones that signifies the ending of one chapter and the beginning of another chapter. The League staff, municipal officials and employees across the state, and so many others wish Lynn, Bill and Nicole wonderful times together as they write the next chapters of their lives!

Cheers to retirement! ■

Thank you and farewell

BY LYNN MARIENAU, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR, LNM



In 1993, Bill Clinton was President, the European Union was formally established and six people were killed and more than 1,000 were injured when a bomb was detonated at the World Trade Center in New York City, foreshadowing an event much later that was to forever change us.

Of much less significance than those events, I began working for the League of Nebraska Municipalities. I came to the League from a position that I held for 13 years at the Legislature as director of the Unicameral Information Office. (Apparently, I am not a job hopper.) At the end of this year, I will be retiring and joining my husband, Bill, who also is retiring from a lengthy career as an attorney at the Legislature.

I remain grateful for the chance to work on behalf of cities and villages and all of you, the dedicated municipal officials in our state. Most of all, I am thankful for my colleagues, who make coming to work a joy. They are interesting, caring and make me laugh every day. I also am thankful for the League's Executive Director, Lynn Rex. She told me when she hired me that the League is family – a statewide family and you are all part of it.

As communications director, I have had the privilege of telling your stories – the stories of all the incredible things you do every day for your communi-

ties – from rebuilding after floods, fires and tornados to organizing fundraisers for a new library, swimming pool or fire hall. I am always impressed by your competence, your commitment and your perseverance in serving your communities despite long odds and a public that can – at times – be less than appreciative of your efforts and sacrifices. After 29 years in this job, I remain steadfast in my belief that public service is a noble calling and I look forward to reading about Nebraska's cities and villages and the innovative ways you, as municipal officials, work every day to promote growth and success in your communities. You are

doing good work. Never doubt that you make a difference.

As for my immediate future, Bill has a few trips planned for me and our daughter, Nicole. Next spring, we will visit the British Isles and perhaps the next year, we will take a trip to the Scandinavian countries. We also have our sights set on a trip to Hawaii, preferably at a time when it is cold here.

While I am looking forward to what lies ahead, I will deeply miss working with you and I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with the League of Nebraska Municipalities. I am especially grateful to have known so many fine public servants across the state. ■



Rothenburg, Germany, 2022. From left: Bill, Lynn and Nicole.



Tara A. Stingley



Michelle L. Sitorius

HR tips and resolutions for the new year

BY TARA A. STINGLEY & MICHELLE L. SITORIUS, CLINE WILLIAMS WRIGHT JOHNSON & OLDFATHER, L.L.P.

As we ring in 2023, employers should be making a list – and checking it twice – with regard to human resource policies and procedures. A new calendar year is a great opportunity to roll out updated Employee Handbooks and related HR policies (assuming union bargaining is not required). Employers should keep the following HR tips and resolutions in mind.

1. Reflect on Recent Employment Issues

A new year is a good time for reflection, including reflection on recent employment situations with which your organization has dealt. In recalling prior situations, consider whether any changes to your organization's policies or procedures are advisable. For example, would different policy language or procedures have assisted your organization in handling a particular issue more efficiently? Did current employment policies unnecessarily complicate your ability to address an employee's performance or violation of workplace rules? Are modifications to your employment practices needed in light of changes to your workforce or to the workplace in general?

2. Review Employee Handbooks and HR Policies

In reviewing your organization's Employee Handbook and HR policies, remember that:

- The Introduction to the Handbook should provide in bold language that the handbook is not a contract, that employment is at-will (unless modified by a contract, statute or ordinance), and that only a designated representative has the authority to execute a written agreement for a fixed term of employment.
- Policies covering at-will employment, equal employment opportunity, anti-harassment and protocols for reporting misconduct should be at or near the beginning of the handbook to emphasize their importance.
- Ensure your anti-harassment policy is clear, provides multiple avenues for employees to report inappropriate behavior and is sufficiently broad to cover all unlawful harassment and not just sexual harassment.
- If you have an introductory or probationary period, make it clear that successful completion of such period does not alter the at-will employment relationship.
- If you have a progressive discipline policy, ensure flexibility and ability to bypass steps in the policy as needed and appropriate under the circumstances.
- Paid Time Off (PTO) and Vacation Leave policies should be reviewed for clarity on accrual, payment on termination and avoiding forfeiture. If your organization still is using a "use it or lose it" system or is not paying accrued PTO or vacation leave upon termination, stop doing so immediately. Such accrued benefits generally are considered wages under Nebraska law and must be paid.
- Ensure you have a strong information systems policy to cover employees' proper use of workplace technology and employer resources.
- Ensure your safety policy addresses the immediate reporting of workplace accidents and injuries, the completion of an incident report and arrangements for medical care.
- Eliminate policies that provide for wage deductions without a written agreement from the employee and remember that

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deduction rules are different for exempt and non-exempt employees.

- With regard to wage and hour issues, ensure the presence of clear policies on accurately recording all work time, barring working off the clock and requiring approval to work overtime, where so desired.
- The handbook should have a clear receipt and acknowledgment form that provides that the employee has reviewed and understands the policies, agrees to comply with the policies, agrees that discipline may result if policies are not followed, agrees that their employment is at-will (unless modified by a contract, statute, or ordinance), agrees the policies are non-contractual and can be changed at any time, and consents to monitoring and searches, as appropriate to your workplace and in accordance with applicable law.

3. Update Job Descriptions

A written job description is recommended to clearly identify the essential functions that an individual must be able to perform, with or without reasonable accommodation, to be qualified for the job in question. Job descriptions should be reviewed annually as well as when position changes

are made to ensure they are current, comprehensive and accurate.

For example, employers may need to update a job description if the description's list of essential functions does not align with the employee's actual job duties. A written job description will be helpful evidence in demonstrating the essential functions of a position, but it will not be dispositive, particularly if it does not align with the realities of the employee's position and job duties. Similarly, if an employee has been classified as exempt from overtime requirements under the Fair Labor Standards Act but has a job description that does not satisfy or align with the applicable exemption, changes may need to be made.

4. Ensure Wage and Hour Compliance

Compliance with applicable wage and hour law is essential for any employer. The Fair Labor Standards Act establishes wage and hour standards for public and private employers, including minimum wage and overtime pay requirements for nonexempt employees, classification of employees and independent contractors, restrictions on wage deductions, employer record keeping, recording hours worked and special rules for government employers, such as with regard to law enforcement and fire protection services. Employers should consider conducting a routine audit on their wage and hour practices to determine whether any changes or corrective measures are necessary.

5. Evaluate Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals and reviews can assist employers in evaluating employees' contributions and progress, educating employees on expectations, coaching performance and

addressing employee morale. Effective performance reviews can reinforce an employer's expectations, business principles and priorities as well as

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Together, we've made Nebraska a global brand

BY GOV. PETE RICKETTS

In Nebraska, the crops we grow, livestock we raise, goods we manufacture and innovations we develop make an impact far beyond our borders. Nebraskans have long known that. Increasingly, the world does, too.

Growing Nebraska's international presence has been a pillar of my administration. Since I took office, we've made trade missions to 11 different countries to forge new partnerships and increase investments in the Good Life. As a result of these missions, our state has become its own global brand.

Trade mission to Japan

Recently, I led a delegation of Nebraska agriculture businesses, state agricultural organizations, the Department of Agriculture (NDA) and the Department of Economic Development (DED) to Japan. While there, we thanked existing partners for their continued investments in our state and discussed ways to increase our agriculture and ethanol exports. This was our fourth and final trade mission to Japan during my administration.

These trade missions have solidified Japan as one of our most valued trade partners. For example, they are our second largest market for agriculture exports. They are our largest interna-

tional market for pork. In 2021, 56 percent of Nebraska's pork exports went to Japan. And they represent the second largest international market for beef. Since 2015, annual beef exports to Japan have increased by \$215 million annually. That's an 88 percent increase.

Export growth

Last week, we explored opportunities to grow Nebraska's agriculture exports even more. Right now, there is a unique opportunity to increase beef sales after the Japanese Legislature approved new beef tariff trigger levels. The new safeguard mechanism will make it less likely that U.S. beef exports will trigger higher tariffs, which means our state can do even more to meet Japan's growing demand for quality beef.

Additionally, we are positioning Nebraska as Japan's go-to source for ethanol and sustainable aviation fuel, or SAF. As part of their country's commitment to reduce its carbon footprint, Japanese officials are looking to increase the country's ethanol blending requirement for all gasoline, including jet fuel. This will increase demand for biofuels. And Nebraska can easily help meet that need, since our state has 24 ethanol production facilities with the capacity to produce

nearly 2.6 billion gallons of ethanol a year.

In many ways, investing in and trading with Nebraska is an easy sell: Our central location and abundant natural resources make Nebraska a reliable partner for a variety of goods. Our strong work ethic, high labor force participation rate (#1 in the nation at 69.8 percent) and investments to develop our talent pipeline make us a secure place to invest and grow.

However, our best asset is our people. This is why we make sure our farmers, ranchers and industry leaders are a part of the delegation when we engage in trade missions. They are the best ambassadors of Nebraska. They tell their story better than anyone.

Major advantage

In a market that places a high premium on the quality of their food, that story gives us a major advantage. With 95 percent of Nebraska's farms being family owned, we have abundant examples of the adaptations our farm families make to ensure that our beef, pork, corn and other crops remain best-in-the-nation. People often are surprised to learn that Nebraska's farmers and ranchers are the original conservationists – but there's never a

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doubt that what they import from us is the best there is to offer.

On trade missions, our export partners hear it straight from our producers. The delegation to Japan included Nebraska cattle ranchers and hog, corn and wheat farmers, which gave them the chance to tell the story of their multi-generational operations and the great work they're doing to care for their land and animals. For instance, our agriculture delegation shared the success of the U.S. cattle industry producing 66 percent more beef while reducing its carbon footprint by 40 percent since the 1960s. They also highlighted that U.S. beef production has some of the lowest greenhouse gas emissions in the world

Changes announced in local sales and use tax rates

Nebraska State Tax Commissioner Tony Fulton announced that as of Jan. 1, 2023 the following changes in local sales and use tax rates will be effective.

- Gage County will terminate its 0.5 percent local sales and use tax rate.
- Byron will start a local sales and use tax rate of 1 percent.
- Sutherland will start a local sales and use tax rate of 1.5 percent.
- Seward will increase the local sales and use tax rate from 1.5 percent to 2 percent.

These changes are on the Nebraska Department of Revenue's website at revenue.nebraska.gov under the Sales and Use Tax link. ■

Source – Nebraska Department of Revenue

– 10-50 times lower than in many other parts of the globe.

The willingness of Nebraska's farmers and ranchers to meet foreign consumers, businesses and officials is invaluable as we work to strengthen

partnerships and increase trade. So, to everyone who has gone on state trade missions during my time as Governor: thank you. We have succeeded in growing Nebraska globally because of your involvement. ■

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George W. Norris Legislative Chamber, 2022 session. Staff photo.

2023 Legislature to elect new Speaker, committee chairpersons

As lawmakers convene Jan. 4 for the 2023 Legislature, they will meet for 90 working days, which means that they likely will adjourn sine die in early June. The legislative calendar, however, will be determined by the new Speaker of the Legislature, who will be elected on the first day of session along with standing committee chairpersons. Speaker Mike Hilgers of Lincoln was elected Nebraska Attorney General in November and will resign from the Legislature.

Forty-nine Senators make up the Nebraska Legislature with each lawmaker representing about 37,000 people. In 2023, 11 newly elected Senators

will be sworn into office while two additional newly elected Senators, Merv Riepe of Omaha and Danielle Conrad of Lincoln, have served previously in the Legislature. The Senators-elect include the following:

- **District 4** - R. Brad von Gillern, Omaha
- **District 12** - Merv Riepe, Omaha
- **District 18** - Christy Armandariz, Omaha
- **District 20** - John Fredrickson, Omaha
- **District 24** - Jana Hughes, Seward
- **District 26** - George C. Dungan

III, Lincoln

- **District 28** - Jane Raybould, Lincoln
- **District 34** - Loren Lippincott, Central City
- **District 36** - Rick Holdcroft, Bellevue
- **District 40** - Barry DeKay, Niobrara
- **District 46** - Danielle Conrad, Lincoln
- **District 48** - Brian Hardin, Gering

Lawmakers are elected to a maximum of two consecutive four-year terms and receive an annual salary of \$12,000. ■

Record number of women in Nebraska Legislature and in other states

— **BY AARON SANDERFORD
AND JENNIFER SHUTT**
NEBRASKA EXAMINER ■

Reprinted with permission

Nebraska voters in November elected a record number of women to the Legislature, sending new faces to join the 14 women already serving and setting a new high of 18.

Women in 2023 will hold more than a third of Nebraska's 49 seats for the first time – at 37 percent – with nine Republicans and nine Democrats serving in the officially nonpartisan body.

Republicans added three women: Christy Armendariz of Omaha; Jana Hughes of Seward and Teresa Ibach of Sumner. Democrats added two: Jane Raybould and Danielle Conrad, both of Lincoln.

Gaining new perspectives

State Sen. Julie Slama of Dunbar, a Republican who represents a largely rural district in southeast Nebraska, said she is glad to see the Legislature gaining new perspectives.

She said she is pleased that “conservative Republican women” are running and being elected to office.

Raybould, a former Lincoln City Councilwoman who will replace term-limited State Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks, said she spent years trying to help more Democratic women run for office, because they're under-represented.

She said she is proud to be among them.

“It's incredibly exciting to be serving with all these strong, amazing, smart, savvy women,” Raybould said. “It's a little bit different perspective that we bring.”

All 18 Nebraskans are part of a national trend. Nationally, a record 32 percent of state lawmakers in 2023 will be women, according to the Center for American Women and Politics.

States will have at least 2,376 female lawmakers in 2023, including both women elected in 2022 and holdovers. That is an increase in the number of women writing state laws from the record set in 2022 of 2,307 women.

That number could still climb because 59 races nationally with women running remain too close to call.

Nationally, Democratic women hold more seats, with 1,560 members, while Republicans have 795. The remainder don't belong to a major party or are registered as independents.

About a third of women in state Legislatures are Republicans, but they have been gaining ground, according to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

Parity in some states

The numbers of women in state-houses is still far from reflective of their roughly half of the population, but the numbers are starting to reach parity in some states.

Colorado will join Nevada next year as the only two states that have at least half their state legislatures made up of women, according to the center's analysis of this year's elections.

Women hold exactly half of the seats in the Arizona and New Hampshire Senate chambers.

“Nevada became the first state to reach this milestone following the 2018 elections. As of Election Day 2022, 58.7 percent of Nevada state legislators were women, and in 2023 Nevada's Legislature will be 60.3 percent women,” the center's researchers



wrote in a summary of state legislative election results.

“Colorado's Legislature also will be majority-women in 2023, with women holding 51 percent of state legislative seats.”

Nebraska's 2023 legislative makeup certainly will be different from Conrad's first go-round. She served from 2007-2015, then was term-limited out of office.

Conrad said it is exciting to see the trend continue, and she is optimistic about what's ahead.

“As you see more and more women candidates from across the state and across the political spectrum step forward to make a positive difference, you are seeing positive results,” she said. ■

<https://nebraskaexaminer.com/>

State Mailing Address

Senator
District Number
State Capitol
PO Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509-4604
Most Senators also have email addresses. The web site address is <http://nebraskalegislature.gov/web/public/home>.



Greeley Public Library. Photo by Diane Becker, Communications/Marketing Director, LARM.

LARM – Are you discussing safety in the workplace?

■ **BY DIANE BECKER**
COMMUNICATIONS/MARKETING
DIRECTOR, LARM ■

“Are you discussing safety?”

Safety in the workplace is a topic of utmost importance but may seldom be considered part of daily conversation. Here are some ideas to help put safety at the forefront in the workplace.

1. Have staff members take a safety survey. Staff involvement is essential to make any safety program work. An excellent place to kick-start a safety program is to ask staff to complete a survey on current safety practices

and provide suggestions as to what might be done to improve workplace safety. When staff members are asked for their input on workplace safety, it makes safety a team goal.

2. Talk about safety as part of any project. If a water main needs to be fixed, discuss the required safety equipment and practices that need to be used before attempting the repairs. Before a snowstorm, review safety procedures when using snow removal equipment. Make safety an integral part of the planning of all city projects.

3. Schedule regular safety meetings. Nebraska statute requires workplaces

to have a safety committee and hold regular safety meetings. Also, it is a good idea to have one-on-one sessions with staff members about safety practices, so they can bring up any concerns they may not want to discuss in a group.

4. Provide regular safety training. There are many resources to use to provide safety training for staff. It may be a presentation from a safety instructor from the local community college or there may be online classes that staff members can take individually or as a group. Provide time in the

Continued on page 13

Continued from page 12

work week for safety training.

5. **Reinforce safety training with workplace posters.** It can be easy to go through a training course and then forget the steps taught two weeks later. Visual reminders that include large colorful signs or mottos in the workplace will help reinforce safety practices.

6. **Keep staff supplied with up-to-date personal protective equipment** and regularly ask if the equipment is adequate for the job and fits appropriately. Periodically review with staff the

proper use of the PPE.

7. **Leaders need to model safety.** Promoting safety is more than just talking about it. Actions speak louder than words. Modeling safety includes properly following safety practices, from wearing seat belts even for short distances to keeping office and storage places neat and orderly. Establishing a workplace safety culture is challenging when the leaders do not model it themselves.

8. **Discuss near misses.** Sometimes supervisors in a workplace are hesitant to discuss near misses – incidents that

come close to causing property damage or injury. The more near-misses are discussed, the easier it will be to have open discussions about the changes that should be made so that future accidents don't occur.

Safety should not be an uncomfortable topic that is avoided in the workplace. The subject of safety should be a regular part of the daily conversation so that people feel comfortable sharing ideas and concerns about safety. ■

PSC awards second round of grants totaling more than \$20 million for Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program

The Nebraska Public Service Commission (PSC) Dec. 6, approved an order awarding 37 grants totaling \$20,351,778.01 from the Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program (NBBP).

“As expected, the second-year of the NBBP grant program has surpassed the initial funding year,” said Commission Chair Dan Watermeier. “We have a good process in place and are eager to provide funding to continue broadband buildout to unserved and underserved Nebraskans.”

During the 2022 grant cycle, the PSC received 115 applications for funding through the NBBP and narrowed the group to 103 submissions.

The funding needed to fulfill all 103 applications far exceeded the \$20.3 million available for the 2022 grant cycle and the commission then applied a scoring system to the applications to weigh them based on the projects details and the applicants' financial, legal and technical capability to build a broadband network. Projects also

were ranked by priority in bringing broadband to entirely unserved areas first, before funding underserved areas. Once projects were scored, the commission awarded available funding until the funds needed to support any given project were exhausted.

The Commission determined 37 grants submitted by 14 providers would be approved and receive a total of \$20,351,778.01 in funding. Projects funded through this award

must be completed by June 6, 2024. Providers may apply for an extension of this deadline for good cause.

A list of the approved projects and funding amounts can be found on the Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program page of the PSC website at <https://psc.nebraska.gov/telecommunications/nebraska-broadband-bridge-program-nbbp>. ■

Source – Nebraska Public Service Commission

League magazine available on website

The League of Nebraska Municipalities places the *Nebraska Municipal Review* on the League's website at <http://www.lonm.org/> under the “News” and then the “Publications” tabs.

As always, we encourage you to share news from your city or vil-

lage with fellow municipal officials by sending information for the *Nebraska Municipal Review* to the League of Nebraska Municipalities, Attn: *Nebraska Municipal Review* at 1335 L Street, Lincoln, NE 68508, 402-476-2829 by phone or lynnm@lonm.org by e-mail. ■

Affordable housing projects to be built in Omaha with ARPA funds

The City of Omaha and Front Porch Investments in November announced \$11 million in the first round of Development and Preservation Fund awards through a partnership that matches philanthropic dollars with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support affordable housing development and preservation projects, as well as affordable housing supportive programs.

Funding will be distributed to 14 organizations, which include projects prioritizing affordable housing for seniors and housing solutions for youth formerly experiencing homelessness. Projects additionally will preserve affordability in existing housing, add extensive numbers of newly created affordable housing units and support emerging developers, while also adapting existing structures and supporting development in blighted areas.

Pleased with broad scope

“We are pleased with the broad scope of affordable housing projects this funding round partnership will support. We heard Omaha residents in 2021 when they named housing as a priority. This partnership with Front Porch Investments allows us to utilize the funds available to us, impacting

the community in big ways and supports economic growth in our city,” Mayor Jean Stothert said.

Front Porch Investments received 26 applications, totaling \$24.6 million in requests. The fall 2022 funding cycle serves as the official launch of Front Porch Investment’s Development and Preservation Fund and the first round of ARPA funding in partnership with the city. Additional funding cycles are anticipated to open in February and August 2023. This funding cycle includes ARPA-funded loan awards of \$9.7 million and an additional \$1.3 million in grant awards through philanthropic funding sources.

Based on range of criteria

A scoring committee, including representatives from the City of Omaha, a local housing supportive organization and Front Porch Investments’ board of directors, reviewed applications based on a range of criteria. Loan funding applications went through rigorous underwriting by a funds management partner. Projects and programs awarded will catalyze up to 645 units of affordable and mixed income housing, initiate one new program, launch



Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert

three capacity building grants for affordable housing supportive programming and support two planning grants for future housing projects supporting underserved populations.

“The impact we will see in our community from this ARPA partnership is further maximized by the opportunity to utilize the funds twice, increasing the number of projects that can be supported by these funds,” said Meredith Dillon, executive director of Front Porch Investments. ■

Source – City of Omaha



La Vista's mobile app is being disabled

The City of La Vista in November announced that it is replacing its mobile app with technology that will benefit more users. Residents should watch for new website features coming in 2023 that will offer an enhanced user experience.

The City of La Vista’s mobile app is no longer available in the App Store. It is recommended that you delete the app from your phone since the functionality is being disabled. ■

Source – City of La Vista

Kearney Police, Buffalo County Sheriff's Office launch Project Life Saver Program

*Program made possible through
donation for equipment,
training and start-up costs*

The Kearney Police Department in December announced the implementation of a new public safety program designed to protect and when necessary, aid police in quickly locating at-risk individuals who are prone to life threatening behavior of wandering. Several officers and deputies from KPD and BCSO are participating in three days of training with Project Life Saver this week.

Project Life Saver is a community based, public safety, non-profit organization that provides law enforcement, fire/rescue, and caregivers with a program designed to protect and locate at risk members of the community such as those with Autism or Alzheimer's. Project Life Saver is recognized internationally as a proven and effective method of "bringing loved

ones home." For more information on Project Life Saver, visit <https://projectlifesaver.org/>.

Through proven technology and specially trained teams, citizens enrolled in the program are outfitted with a radio frequency transmitter to be worn on the wrist or ankle at all times. If an enrolled member client goes missing, the caregiver will notify KPD or BCSO and the Project Life Saver team will deploy with specialized receivers to help locate the person reducing search time from hours, potentially days, to minutes.

"On behalf of myself and Sheriff

Miller, we are grateful for the opportunity to bring this program to Kearney and Buffalo County. Our goal to locate at-risk members of our community quickly and safely is a top priority," Chief Bryan D. Waugh said.

This program was made possible thanks to a generous donation for equipment, training and start-up costs.

Additional information and how a member of our community can enroll in the program will be available following the training. ■

Source – City of Kearney



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Lexington receives 5 free fall trees through grant

Lexington received five free fall trees this fall, which were planted along the hike-bike trail in the northwest part of the city. All five were received through a “Free Trees for Fall Planting” grant offered through the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and funded by the Nebraska Environmental Trust. The Nebraska Forest Service also was instrumental in organizing the program.

Earlier this year, the Lexington Tree Board applied for this competitive grant. This is the 11th consecutive year Lexington has received free fall trees since 2012. That means Lexington has received 105 free trees, so far.

One goal of the grant is to remind Nebraskans that fall is an excellent time to plant trees.

In 2023 and beyond, the city will plant more trees along trails and in parks, cemeteries, green spaces and in new developments. ■

Source – City of Lexington



From left to right: Dave Stenberg, Lexington Community Foundation; Tom Nelson, Lexington Community Services Director; and, Dennis Burnside, Lexington Assistant City Manager, next to newly planted flowering crab tree. Photo courtesy of the City of Lexington.

Nebraska Department of Economic Development Awards \$20 million for affordable housing in Lincoln QCTs

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) Nov. 30 awarded \$20 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) to 14 affordable housing projects in Lincoln Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs). The QCT Affordable Housing Program was created under LB 1024, also known as the Economic Recovery Act, to respond to the negative economic impacts of the coronavirus public health emergency.

DED quickly developed an action plan for the implementation of these funds. DED received applications for 23 projects totaling \$56,389,530 in requests.

The funds awarded through the QCT Affordable Housing Program provide grants for new construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing units and for preparing land parcels

for future affordable housing developments. In total, the \$20 million in grants will leverage \$125,782,846 of other funding sources to create or preserve 703 housing units, 542 of which will be income-restricted. A full list of projects receiving awards can be found below.

For more information on the QCT Affordable Housing Program – Primary Class visit the program webpage at <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/programs/recovery/qct-affordable-housing-program/>.

For information on other Economic Recovery Act programs, visit <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/programs/recovery/>.

QCT Affordable Housing Program – Primary Class Recipients

- City of Lincoln – \$1,150,630
- City of Lincoln – \$2,500,000
- Hoppe & Son, LLC – \$4,000,000

- Hoppe & Son, LLC – \$600,000
- Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, Inc. – \$600,000
- M&G Holdings, LLC – \$225,000
- Mural Nebraska, LLC – \$3,000,000
- Nebraska Housing Resource – \$234,850
- NeighborWorks Lincoln – \$194,943
- NeighborWorks Lincoln – \$899,364
- New Generation Properties, LLC – \$1,112,232
- New Generation Properties, LLC – \$2,145,349
- South of Downtown Community Development Organization – \$315,848
- Union at Antelope Valley GP, LLC – \$3,021,784. ■

Source – Dept. of Economic Development

Lincoln Mayor Gaylor Baird and LTU Director Elliott tout PressurePave project

New repair process will extend life of asphalt streets up to 10 years

Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird and Lincoln Transportation and Utilities (LTU) Director Liz Elliott in November said a new process to repair and maintain Lincoln streets saves taxpayer dollars and reduces street closure times. PressurePave preserves asphalt streets up to 10 years by injecting a crack sealant into pavement while simultaneously applying a thin asphalt overlay. Lincoln is the first city in Nebraska to use the process.

LTU Director Liz Elliott said the city will use the new process on streets that have deteriorated past the point of simple maintenance efforts but are not in poor enough condition to require more extensive repairs such as removal and installation of the street's top layer (mill and overlay).

Extends life of streets

"PressurePave enables us to proactively extend the life of our streets at one-fifth the cost of a more in-depth street improvement project, while completing the work in a fraction of the time and resulting in minimal disruption to residents and businesses," Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird said. "This innovation is truly a win-win-win."

Throughout the four-day project in September, Donelson Construction

Company used the PressurePave on more than four miles of residential streets.

"This is just one of many street maintenance solutions our team can utilize to enhance our community's quality of life through sound, long-lasting, money-saving infrastructure investments," Elliott said.

Saves money

The PressurePave project cost \$550,000. A similarly sized mill and overlay project would have cost \$3.35 million and typically takes an estimated 10 weeks to complete, Elliott said. The project also included minor maintenance such as asphalt repairs around utilities and leveling uneven areas.

LTU plans to complete a similarly sized residential PressurePave project in 2023. That project will test the performance of pavement marking



Lincoln Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird

materials. Locations have not been determined. Future projects will consider project size, location and pavement conditions.

For more information on the 2022 Residential PressurePave Project, visit lincoln.ne.gov/PressurePave. ■

Source – City of Lincoln

**See classified ads
on page 25**

**See professional directory
ads on pages 26-27**

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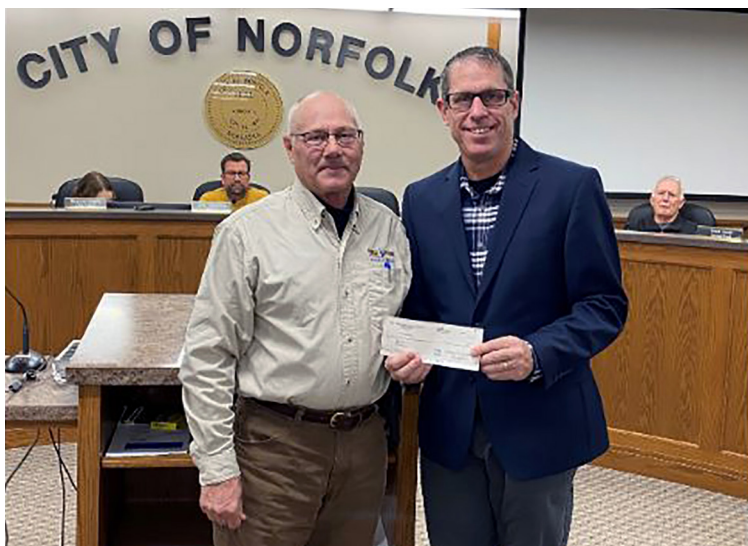
Norfolk receives check for beautification efforts

22 trees planted in September

The Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District presented a check to the City of Norfolk during a November City Council meeting.

The \$3,163.69 donated helped assist beautification efforts along the South 7th Street corridor from Madison to Pasewalk Avenue. Some of the 22 trees planted in September include Crimson Sentry Maple, Tatarian Maple, Sawtooth Oak, Lefler Oak, Heritage Oak, Black Oak, Overcup Oak London Planetree, Silver Linden and American Yellowwood. ■

Source – City of Norfolk



Lower Elkhorn NRD Board of Director Mark Hall and Nathan Powell, Parks and Recreation Director. Photo courtesy of the City of Norfolk.

\$400,000 for Airport Business Park Planning Grant awarded

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) awarded \$400,000 in American Rescue

Plan Act (ARPA) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) to the Omaha Development Founda-

tion for the Airport Business Park Planning Grant.

The Airport Business Park Planning Grant was created under LB 1024, also known as the Economic Recovery Act, to respond to the negative economic impacts of the coronavirus public health emergency.

DED quickly developed an action plan for the implementation of these funds. DED received applications for three projects totaling over \$1.2 million in requests.

The funds awarded through the Airport Business Park Planning Grant provide grants for the opportunity to develop a Master Plan for the development and creation of a business park in or adjacent to Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs) located within the boundaries of a city of the metropolitan class and within two miles of a major airport. ■

Source – Nebraska Economic Development Department



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Registration open for MUD's 16th Annual Heat the Streets Run & Walk for Warmth

As inflation raises prices on many goods and services, the ongoing challenges of our current economy are taking a toll on many of us. More and more Metropolitan Utilities District (MUD) and Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) customers are seeking help to pay their utility bills.

The utilities' annual Heat the Streets Run & Walk for Warmth, taking place March 4, 2023, raises money for greatly-needed utility assistance programs. Registration for this event, now in its 16th year, is open at HeatTheStreetsOmaha.com. The event will be in Zone 6 at Aksarben Village in Omaha.

This year's co-chairs are Gwen Howard, member of the M.U.D. Board of Directors, and her daughter, Sara Howard, who is a member of the OPPD Board of Directors.

The run and walk occurs during the cold winter months to bring added attention to the struggle so many face to keep their homes safe and warm. However, our customers' need is year-round. The unexpected – a lost job, hospital stay, even car repairs – can be extra tough for those living paycheck to paycheck. Sometimes, a little financial boost can make all the difference.

Last year's event raised more than \$150,000, with 100 percent of those funds benefiting customers in need of assistance. The donations provided much-needed assistance for 460 households served by M.U.D. and OPPD.

Funds raised through Heat the Streets are administered by Dollar Energy Fund, a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit that serves low-income utility customers.

Funds are equally distributed between M.U.D.'s Home Fund and

OPPD's Energy Assistance Program. Dollar Energy Fund works with 35 local entities throughout the utilities' service territories to provide this financial assistance for utility bills to our neighbors in need. ■

Source – Metropolitan Utilities District



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LARM – Don't let equipment, pipes freeze

■ **BY DIANE BECKER**
COMMUNICATIONS/MARKETING
DIRECTOR, LARM ■

In Nebraska, vigilance in protecting equipment and buildings from severe cold is a perennial responsibility. Not being prepared for extreme cold weather can cause disastrous consequences for municipalities, including the possibility of frozen and burst water pipes, stalled vehicles and gelled diesel fuel lines in emergency equipment. Preparation is the key, which means planning and implementing steps that protect equipment and property from the effects of cold weather.

Post preparation list

Before the temperatures dip, post a cold weather preparation checklist, so the staff is reminded of all the buildings and equipment that need to be fortified from the cold.

One of the items on the weather to-do checklist should include adding layers of insulation in the walls of cold-susceptible areas. Don't forget to add insulation in the ceiling, especially if overhead pipes may be exposed to the cold.

Consider boarding up unused doors and windows or replacing regularly used ones that are not energy efficient. There may be energy incentives for



Frozen pipes. Tina Jeans at Shutterstock,

communities that replace old windows and doors with more modern and energy-efficient ones. If boarding up or replacing the windows isn't practical, place a plastic covering on the inside. It also is possible to caulk or weather strip windows and doors where cold air may be leaking in.

Set thermostat at 55 degrees

Buildings with water pipes or that store essential equipment susceptible to freezing temperatures should be kept at a temperature of at least 55 degrees. Place thermometers in various rooms in the building and if the heat does not seem to reach all areas of the building, it may be necessary to raise the thermostat temperature to 65 degrees. Do not place portable heating devices in unattended facilities. Staff who use portable heating devices in their offices should be reminded that the heaters should be kept away from anything flammable. There also should be adequate airflow around the devices and they should be unplugged when no one is in the office.

It's imperative to check on the status of buildings as to whether they are warm enough. Consider installing low-temperature alarms in facilities that can send an alert if the temperature in the building drops unexpectedly.

In cold weather, check often

In very cold weather, it's necessary to check buildings more often, including on weekends, evenings and holidays. It's better to take steps to warm a building where the temperature has unexpectedly dropped than to deal with equipment that doesn't run or frozen and burst water pipes.

In extremely cold weather, let the water trickle from faucets served by exposed or vulnerable pipes.

Have backup generators at the ready and ensure adequate fuel is available to power them.

Many resources are available to keep buildings and equipment protected from the cold Nebraska winters; however, vigilance is the key to ensuring the cold isn't causing damage. ■

Municipal Legal Calendars available in Clerks Newsletter

Municipal Legal Calendars are available in the *Nebraska Municipal Clerks Newsletter* in addition to the *Nebraska Municipal Review*. ■

Lincoln receives wastewater management awards

Lincoln Transportation and Utilities (LTU) in December announced it received two awards in the area of wastewater management.

Lincoln Wastewater System was recognized at the Nebraska Water Environment Association (NWEA) conference in November. The team received the Scott Wilber and Silver Safety Awards for both the Theresa Street and Northeast facilities for their commitment to excellence in facility operation and maintenance of large and medium advanced municipal facilities while maintaining environmental compliance and excellent safety records.

“Receiving this award reflects our team’s commitment to continuously enhance operations across both facilities,” said Donna Garden, Assistant Director of Utilities. “Safety is a top priority for our teammates. They are dedicated to operations and maintenance efforts 24 hours, seven days a week.”

Lincoln Wastewater System’s two facilities implement innovative programs to effectively recover and treat approximately 32 million gallons of wastewater each day.

“We are honored to receive this prestigious award from the NWEA,” said Todd Boling, Superintendent of Water Resource Recovery Facilities. “This award is an affirmation that our team continues to deliver a high-quality service to the Lincoln community and motivates us to stay on the cutting edge of improvement and innovation.” ■

Source – City of Lincoln

Unicameral Update online version updated throughout day

As the 2023 Legislature begins its 90-day session, municipal officials can keep up with rapidly developing events at the Capitol through the League’s *Legislative Bulletin* and the *Unicameral Update*, the Legislature’s newsletter produced during session. It is mailed weekly, while the online version, located at update.legislature.ne.gov, is updated throughout each legislative day.

The site provides links to the Update’s Facebook and Twitter feeds. Readers may search Update stories by bill number, Senator’s name or keyword using the search box provided in the top right corner. ■

Source – Unicameral Update



Village of Holbrook. Photo submitted by Kathy Cobb, Holbrook Clerk/Treasurer.

Holbrook is Official Purple Heart Trail Village

The Village of Holbrook, which is now an official Purple Heart Trail Village, honored its heroes on Veterans Day.

Holbrook Village Board Chair Matt Schulz presented a proclamation at a flag-raising event on the cold and windy day at which State Sen. Dave Murman of Glenvil also spoke. He shared information about the origins of “Taps.” After the flag-raising ceremony, cookies and coffee were offered for those in attendance.

Holbrook Clerk/Treasurer Kathy Cobb organized the events. ■

Sources – Kathy Cobb, Holbrook Clerk/Treasurer; Midwest Media by Melanie on YouTube.



Officials from City of Atkinson, GenPro Energy and Central Nebraska Economic Development cut the ribbon in front of one of the recently installed solar lights. Photo by Central Nebraska Economic Development District.

Ribbon cutting held for Atkinson solar lights project

■ **BY AMANDA SINDELAR**
ATKINSON ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR ■

Reprinted with permission.

The City of Atkinson recently installed 15 solar lights in critical areas throughout the community. A ribbon cutting was held Dec. 1, at the Atkinson Fire & Rescue Hall, 512 E. Pearl St., near one of the newly installed fixtures.

Representatives from Central Nebraska Economic Development District (CNEDD), GenPro Energy and City of Atkinson attended the event.

Project completed

"I am very excited to see this project completed. This will help to assure safety not only throughout the community, but also for our public and volunteer first responders," Atkinson Mayor Paul Corkle said.

The total project cost \$88,950. The city was awarded a \$29,000 grant,

which is around 35 percent of the project, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Community Facility Grant program.

"The safety and accessibility of a city during any kind of emergency is essential. Using our funds to assist with this project, being able to provide an alternative source of emergency power in critical locations, is an important part of the steps they are taking to improve the safety of their community," said USDA Community Programs Specialist Anthony Guenther.

CNEDD assisted process

This grant was made possible thanks to CNEDD, who assisted with overseeing the application process.

"CNEDD was happy to assist the City of Atkinson with this USDA grant application for much needed funds for these solar lights. We applaud the city's forethought in preparation before a disaster," CNEDD Deputy Director Carla Kimball said.

The lights were installed for safety purposes in the event of an electrical power outage during the night. The public and emergency personnel now will have access to and from the most critical locations within the city.

Installed lights

GenPro Energy Solutions installed the solar lights. They are SolarOne Single Arm RFS SmartLight Off-Grid Solar Street Lights.

"We are delighted to partner with the City of Atkinson to offer the world's most advanced solar street lighting solution to their community. Our Smartlight™ street and pathway solar lighting solutions offer up to a 50 percent cost savings per fixture. With remote monitoring, reporting and resiliency wrapped up in a proven power outage proof solution, we are excited to lead the way in further renewable energy adoption," said CEO of GenPro Energy Solutions Dwight

Continued on page 23

Continued from page 22

Patterson.

The solar lights feature a 936-watt hour, 24-volt nickel metal hydride battery that is rated for special extreme temperatures from -40 F to 158 F and has a 265-watt photovoltaic module that sits atop of a 20-foot round, tapered galvanized and power-coated steel pole. The Light Emitting Diode (LED) feature is 38 Watts, 4000 Kelvin color temperature and 160 lm Watt (Lumens Watt) lighting efficacy. The lights are smart and program-

mable.

The solar lights were placed at the following locations:

- Atkinson Community Center – (3) Southeast corner of building, near the west entrance and northside of the building.
- Atkinson Maintenance Shop – (1) Employee parking lot.
- Atkinson Wastewater Treatment Plant – (1) North of cellular tower.
- Atkinson Fire & Rescue Hall – (2) One on the westside and one

on the eastside.

- Elkhorn Meadows (1) – Northside of the parking lot.
- West Holt Memorial Hospital – (3) One on the southside and two on the northside.
- Atkinson Mill Race Park and Campground – (3) East of shower house, north of camping area and northside of the dam.
- Atkinson City Well – (1) Located on North Holt. ■

Atkinson's Fix given Operator Meritorious Award

■ **BY AMANDA SINDELAR**
ATKINSON ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR ■

City of Atkinson Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Ronald “Scott” Fix was honored with the Nebraska Section-American Works (AWWA) coveted “Operator Meritorious Service Award” for more than 38 years of dedicated service to his community.

“His dedication to the public not only was in the water industry but also the wastewater, solid waste, streets, along with other tasks within the community. Not only does he continuously maintain existing equipment but within the last few years took on the technical challenges of monitoring and managing a new wastewater treatment facility. Scott has worked to ensure Atkinson has an adequate quantity and quality of safe drinking water while helping keep compliance with public health standards,” said Rob Pierce, training coordinator for the League of Nebraska Municipalities.

The award was announced during the Nebraska AWWA Conference Nov. 3 at the Younes Conference Center in

Kearney. The award is designed to “recognize members of the Nebraska Section of AWWA who, over the years, have untiringly served the waterworks industry.”

City of Atkinson Utilities Superintendent Gary Thurlow noted in his award nomination that Fix has worked for the City of Atkinson since 1985. He began as a landfill operator, then moved into working on street grading and other roles.

“He has continued to take the steps to

learn the knowledge to now manage the wastewater treatment plant,” he said.

Other accomplishments noted include completing the requirements to become a Grade 6 backflow operator and tester, Grade 4 water operator and Grade 2 wastewater operator.

“In July 2014, we shut down the old mechanical plant and set water to the new plant. The company gave us three days of training. For a seasoned employee, he was willing to learn the new technology,” Thurlow said. ■



City of Atkinson Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Ronald “Scott” Fix and Rob Pierce, League of Nebraska Municipalities Utilities Field Representative/Training Coordinator. Photo by Amanda Sindelar, City of Atkinson.

HR tips and resolutions for the new year

Continued from page 7

foster the skills the employer wants its employees to develop. Poorly executed performance reviews, however, can increase litigation risks if they focus on illegitimate criteria or if they are inaccurate or inconsistent with an employee's actual performance.

To mitigate risk associated with performance appraisals and reviews, employers should take a hard look at their evaluation forms and consider whether revisions would be beneficial. For example:

- Does the evaluation template focus on objective criteria?
- If the template uses a numerical rating system to determine whether an employee is meeting, exceeding, or failing to satisfy expectations, does the rating system conflict with the employer's evaluation of individual performance?
- Does the template allow an employer to give specific examples to support its performance ratings and to provide constructive feedback to the employee where needed?
- Do the managers and supervisors who are actually completing performance appraisals understand these concepts or is additional training necessary to ensure consistent completion of evaluations?

6. Employee Benefits Review and Compliance Check

Regardless of whether your organization is midway through its plan year for its benefit programs or starting a new plan year on January 1, employers should periodically gather feedback from its employees on the adequacy of its offering of benefit programs.

Consider utilizing an employee survey to access employee satisfaction levels as well as internally reviewing actual employee utilization of the benefits offered.

In addition, increasing healthcare costs, for both the employer and employee, may prompt changes in the benefits offered. For example, employers may consider: (a) implementing health flexible spending arrangements, (b) transitioning to a high deductible health plan offering in conjunction with an employer contribution to a health savings account, or (c) offering a more comprehensive employee assistance program with bolstered mental health benefits. Less traditional benefits also may be attractive to your employees and can be investigated, including student debt relief. Investing in benefits that are valued by your employees will assist with retention and employee performance.

As a result of the pandemic, the federal government implemented several temporary changes in law impacting employee benefits that may come to an end during the upcoming 2023 calendar year. The termination of these changes may impact employer-sponsored group health plan coverage related to COVID-19 testing, mental health parity requirements and vaccinations, as well as continuation coverage offered to qualified beneficiaries. In addition, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 implemented extensive and permanent changes to employer-sponsored group health plan coverage with multiple effective dates. Ensure that you understand how these changes impact your group health plan's coverage as well as your organization's budget. Your insurer, broker, and/or third-party administra-

tor will be good resources to assist in the process and to confirm your plan's compliance with these changes.

This also is a good time to ensure your benefits documents reflect your operations as well as current law. For example, while often overlooked, a Code Section 125 cafeteria plan provides valuable pre-tax opportunities to employees to pay for benefits. Your organization should ensure that this document reflects any changes your organization made in relation to your plan related to federal legislation as well as your organization's current offering of benefits and that any necessary testing is completed by you or your designee. Annual review of your benefit documents will help ensure compliance with applicable law as well as informing yourself to better serve your organization's employees.

HR practices and procedures must be consistent to ensure their fair application to employees, yet nimble enough to adjust to changes in the workplace and developments in employment law. With the foregoing practical tips in mind, employers should be well-prepared to head into 2023. ■

Editor's Note: This article is not intended to provide legal advice to its readers. Rather, this article is intended to alert readers to new and developing issues. Readers are urged to consult their own legal counsel or the author of this article if they wish to obtain a specific legal opinion regarding their particular circumstances. The authors of this article, Tara A. Stingley and Michelle Sitorius, can be contacted at Cline Williams Wright Johnson & Oldfather, L.L.P., 12910 Pierce Street, Suite 200, Omaha, NE 68144, (402) 397-1700, or www.clinewilliams.com.

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Positions

Economic Development Director. City of Valentine is looking for full-time Economic Development Director. Must be a passionate, energetic, forward-thinking individual to help our thriving community continue to move into the future. Will require working in the fields of housing development, workforce development, daycare opportunities and community development. Lots of recreational opportunities and great location. Minimum of three years' experience in field or bachelor's degree will be required. Competitive salary and full benefit package available. City of Valentine is an EOE and positions are subject to a veterans preference. Find application and details at www.ValentineNE.gov

Water & Wastewater Facilities Director. Seward (pop 7,643) located 25 miles west of Lincoln, Nebraska's State Capitol on the I-80 corridor is seeking its next Water/Wastewater Director. Seward has the longtime distinction of Nebraska's Official 4th of July City and is home to Concordia University, wonderful schools, and many established businesses. This outstanding career opportunity will allow candidate to direct both water and wastewater operations, which includes participation in the process of constructing a new wastewater treatment facility (2024). City is seeking a visionary who possesses experience and ability to lead a great team of qualified employees (avg. of 10 years' service) and to transition a Sequencing Batch Reactor (SBR) style wastewater treatment plant.

Position is responsible for preparing and administering a 3.1M annual operating budget, coordinating and supervising up to six Water/Wastewater personnel in the operation of an anaerobic trickling filter facility (Class III) and reverse osmosis membrane treatment water production facility (Class II) that includes nine wells, three reservoirs, water distribution system, wastewater collection system with five lift stations and an advanced SCADA system.

Ideal applicant must possess strong technical knowledge and supervisory skills. Position requires ability to calculate, plan and direct personnel activities in an efficient manner; establish and maintain an annual budget; exhibit confidentiality of sensitive information; understand system-facility master planning; display constant vigilance of safety procedures; capably comprehend complex laws and regulations;

Positions

preserve meticulous records maintenance; and positively communicate with coworkers, citizens, and elected officials. Qualified applicants will have a State of Nebraska Grade II Water Operator License & Grade IV Wastewater Operator License at time of hire or be able to obtain within 12 months.

Qualified candidates should have knowledge, skills, and abilities typically acquired through a combination of education and experience equivalent to: At least five (5) years of progressively responsible experience in the operation, maintenance, and administration of a water and wastewater facility; or a bachelor's degree with major course work devoted to water/wastewater treatment, environmental, physical sciences or related field with at least one (1) year of applicable work experience. Direct experience in the operations of with a Sequencing Batch Reactor (SBR) style wastewater treatment plant is desirable.

Salary range is between \$64,032 and \$95,148 with competitive benefits package offered. Qualified and interested Applicants should submit following items: (1) Letter of interest; (2) current resume including at least three verifiable references; (3) completed and signed City of Seward Job Application; and (4) copies of applicable certifications. Questions and applications should be directed to; Derek Bargmann - HR Director, 537 Main St, PO Box 38, Seward, NE 68434-0038.

Reasonable accommodations are available for applicants needing assistance in completing City Application & should be made at time of application. Application review begins Jan. 3, 2023. Position open until filled. City of Seward Nebraska is an EOE. City Application available at: <http://CityofSewardNE.gov/category/jobs>

City Administrator, City Clerk and City Treasurer. City of Imperial is accepting applications for positions of City Administrator, City Clerk and City Treasurer. Positions have previously been combined and filled by one employee, but may be separated or combined depending on qualifications of successful candidate. Job descriptions may be found in City Code on municipal website at imperial-ne.com Imperial provides an excellent benefit package with full family health coverage including dental and vision at no cost to the employee. There is also a 6% match defined benefit pension system in

Positions

place with ability to contribute a higher level pre-tax for employees. Training is available upon hire. Resumes may be sent via mail to City of Imperial, P.O. Box 637, Imperial, NE 69033 or sent by email to jol@imperial-ne.com. Questions may be addressed to Jo Leyland at same email or by phone at 308-882-4368.

Full-time maintenance personnel. City of Sargent is looking for full-time maintenance personnel.

Job requires a variety of duties including: water, wastewater, streets, parks, primary & secondary power 2400/7200. Running the power plant and equipment. Must have a High School diploma or GED and a valid driver's license, and able to get a class 4 water license in the first year. Insurance and Retirement are included with the job. Vacation after the first year of service. You will be expected to be on call one week a month.

Application may be obtained from city at 308-527-4200, cityofsargent@nctc.net or on the web at www.sargentne.com.

Apprentice/Journeyman Lineworker. City of Wayne Municipal Utilities is currently accepting applications for an Apprentice / Journeyman lineman position. A minimum of 5 years' experience in the electrical field or an accredited technical college line technician graduate is desirable. City is willing to train the right person. Examples of work: Participates in construction, maintenance, repair of overhead and underground electrical distribution lines; sets poles, strings wire, hangs or installs transformers, lightning arresters, cut-outs, cross arms, insulators and related components; performs most skilled lineman tasks in constructing and maintaining 2,400 to 13,800 volt lines. 40-hour work week, rotating call schedule, competitive salary, excellent fringe benefits including Group Health, Accident Insurance, Life Insurance, retirement plan along with vacation and sick leave. Starting pay will be based on prior experience and certifications. Application and job description are available at the City of Wayne, 306 Pearl Street, Wayne, NE 68787. Applications will be received until position is filled and should be returned to Betty McGuire, City Clerk, with applicable resume. City of Wayne is an EOE. For more information, call 402-375-2896 and ask for Tim Sutton, Electric Distribution Superintendent.



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