

Spring 2016

Merrimac Municipal Light Department

LOCAL CURRENTS

Making a Difference in the Community We Serve

On February 25, 2016, the Daily News newspaper published an article regarding the budget increase approval by the Pentucket School board. In the article, Superintendent Jeff Mulqueen explained that one of the reasons for the increase in budget was due to a 37 percent hike in electricity costs from National Grid. Hikes in electricity in this region, as explained in previous newsletters, are and will be taking place in most communities, due to rising costs of Transmission and Capacity; however communities with municipal light departments, such as Merrimac, will continue to benefit by having not-for-profit light departments working hard to keep electricity costs down.

The Merrimac Municipal Light Department ("MMLD") and the Board of Light Commissioners are well aware of the rising costs of electricity; however we are working hard on behalf of the residents, businesses and other town departments to fulfill the Mission Statement of the MMLD. The MMLD strives to maintain a reliable and safe electrical system with very few short outages each year, keep energy rates low and provide many other benefits to the Town.

System Reliability: In 2015, the MMLD had a total of 26 power outages spread through Town which affected 866 customers. Of these customers, 99 percent had power restored in less than 2 hours. Quick power restoration, minimizing inconvenience to our customers, is something the MMLD's staff, General Manager and Board of Commissioners are very proud of. We very much appreciate those of you who, on occasions, take the time to

pass by our office, call us or send us a note thanking us for the service provided after power outages or for responding to an afterhours trouble call.

Electric Rates: On January 12, 2016 the MMLD's Board of Commissioners agreed to keep energy rates unchanged through 2016 and reevaluate the impact of rising power costs at the start of next year. Currently, a Merrimac residential customer with an average consumption of 800 kWh and who takes advantage of the early discount payment would pay about \$0.1657/kWh compared to \$0.202/kWh if being served by an Investor-Owned company like National Grid. That is 22 percent difference.

Other Benefits to Town: The Light Department contributes in a number of ways to Town departments and the community. The MMLD accommodates all municipal buildings with a much lower electric rate compared to the commercial customers in Town. As opposed to many towns and cities, the MMLD pays for the maintenance and energy used by the streetlights in Town. At a reduced rate of \$0.105/kWh, this amounts to about \$24,000. The MMLD also gives the Town a cash payment of \$10,000 and pays \$3,000, half of the total cost of the Code Red System, every year. Although the MMLD does not use this system, we see the value it brings to the Town and therefore gladly contribute to the cost of having this emergency call system.

In 2013, the MMLD signed an agreement to take the energy of a local solar farm build by Consolidated Edison Development. This solar farm, 1.8 MW of power, makes 8% of the energy used by the Town. The installation of this solar farm made it possible for the Town to obtain a tax payment from the solar developer, of \$18,000 per year for the next 20 years, which is the period the MMLD and Consolidated Edison Development agreed to have a Purchase Power Agreement in place for the purchase of solar energy from the solar farm.

Some of the other municipal light departments do not provide a reduced electric rate for municipal buildings, have very small Payment In Lieu of Tax ("PILOT") or in some cases have no payment at all. The MMLD assists other town departments in some tasks needing equipment such as our bucket and digger trucks and our experienced linemen to operate the equipment. Two of the most rewarding things the MMLD does each year is the Christmas Tree Lighting event at the Kimball Park and the Electrical Safety program held at the Donahue School. Our linemen meticulously install the Christmas lights and make all the arrangements, which at the end is all worth it when we witness the reactions on the faces of the children and adults alike when the lights are turned on. Additionally, the Electrical Safety Program allows the Department to teach children about electrical hazards, and energy conservation, which are topics that will have an impacting and lasting result. The MMLD is very proud of doing this every year and possibly expanding this program to make sure this information is retained by the children of our community.

The MMLD is proud to serve the Town of Merrimac residents and businesses. We are owned by you and pleased to serve you.



It is with mixed emotions that we announce that after almost 30 years as an employee at the Municipal Light Department Carol Denault will be retiring in the month of April. Carol will join her retired husband MMLD Board Chairman Norman Denault to do the things that they enjoy the most: traveling and spending time with their friends and family, especially their grandchildren. Carol first started working for the Municipal Light Department



Municipal Light Department
 10 West Main Street
 Merrimac, MA 01860
 978-346-8311

Commission Meetings:

Meetings are usually held the second Tuesday of each month at 4:00 p.m. in the Administrative Offices at 10 West Main St., Merrimac. Please call 978-346-8311 to confirm dates and times.

Payment Options:

www.merrimac01860.info
 Click on "Departments", then "Municipal Light Plant" and on the left click on "Pay Your Light Bill Online" to pay your electric account using credit card or eCheck.

Remember that you can always contact our office to enroll in our secure ACH program, which automatically withdraws your monthly electric bill balance, taking one more thing off from your mind and allowing you to take advantage of our early payment discount.

Payment Locations:

10 West Main Street
 Our office is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. During off hours you can drop your payments in our drop box on the left front corner of our building.

in 1986 as a part time office clerk and after a number of years she became a full time employee earning the position of Senior Clerk, a job that she has mastered for many years. Carol has been second to none when it comes to customer service and has displayed, in every part of her job, the Mission Statement of the Municipal Light Department. In her journey with the MMLD, she has come to know the customers served by the Department and has established a great relationship with them. Her pleasantness, professionalism and devotion to both the Municipal Light Department and all its customers is something that will be greatly missed, but we are extremely happy for this new stage in her life. **HAPPY RETIREMENT CAROL!!!**

Last year, around this time, we shared these energy saving tips which were very well received by the readers. We decided to include them again to spring you into saving!!!

1. **Service your air conditioner.** Easy maintenance such as routinely replacing or cleaning air filters can lower your cooling system's energy consumption by up to 15 percent. Also, the first day of spring could serve as a reminder to check your air conditioner's evaporator coil, which should be cleaned annually to ensure the system is performing at optimal levels.
2. **Open windows.** Opening windows creates a cross-wise breeze, allowing you to naturally cool your home without switching on air conditioners. This is an ideal tactic in spring when temperatures are mild.
3. **Use ceiling fans.** Cooling your home with ceiling fans will allow you to raise your thermostat four degrees. This can help lower your electricity bills without sacrificing overall comfort.
4. **Cook outside.** On warmer spring days, keep the heat out of your home by using an outdoor grill instead of indoor ovens.
5. **Install window treatments.** Energy efficient window treatments or covering such as blinds, shades and films can slash heat gain when temperatures rise. These devices not only improve the look of your home but also reduce energy costs.
6. **Caulk air leaks.** Using low-cost caulk to seal cracks and openings in your home keeps warm air out -- and cash in your wallet.
7. **Bring in sunlight.** During daylight hours, switch off artificial lights and use windows and skylights to brighten your home.

8. **Set the thermostat.** On warm days, setting a programmable thermostat to a higher setting when you are not at home can help reduce your energy costs by approximately 10 percent.
9. **Seal ducts.** Air loss through ducts can lead to high electricity costs, accounting for nearly 30 percent of a cooling system's energy consumption. Sealing and insulating ducts can go a long way toward lowering your electricity bills.
10. **Switch on bathroom fans.** Bathroom fans suck out heat and humidity from your home, improving comfort.

