

Watts & Drops

Newsletter of the Littleton Electric Light and Water Departments

April 2018

Mutual Aid Program Benefits Ratepayers

The benefits of LELED's commitment to mutual aid were evident in March as crews from Chicopee and Groton assisted in restoring service here within 48 hours. LELED participates in regional and national mutual aid programs to both strengthen the department and build a network of utilities ready to respond.

LELED provides mutual aid to other public power systems as organized by the Northeast Public Power Association and American Public Power Association. Dispatching mutual aid crews to other towns and states financially benefits LELED ratepayers because the utility receiving the assistance provides reimbursement, which is typically double the cost of providing the service.

The mutual aid helps LELED in two other important ways. First, LELED has built relationships with public power systems in the northeast and nationally who stand ready to respond should LELED request assistance. Second, LELED employees who respond to disasters, such as crews that worked last year in Florida and the U.S. Virgin Islands, gained valuable, hands-on experience on how to approach a crisis.

Customers Reduce Electricity Use by 6%

LELED customers reduced their energy use by 6% last year when compared to 2016. Across New England, demand fell by 2.7% last year, according to ISO New England Inc., the operator of the region's bulk power system and wholesale electricity market.

Reasons for lower use can include the economy, weather and energy-efficiency measures. In Littleton and Boxborough, which enjoy among the lowest residential rates in the state, the relatively mild temperatures in 2017 and LELED's Green Rewards conservation program likely contributed to the drop.

LWD Seeking Town Approval for Whitcomb Ave. Treatment Plant

Of LWD's three well sites, the Spectacle Pond Well and Beaver Brook Wells have treatment plants. Plans are underway to improve water quality by adding a treatment plant to the Whitcomb Avenue Wells site.

While all water in the LWD system is treated with chlorine to disinfect for water-borne illnesses, about two-thirds of Littleton water is also treated to control the presence of iron and manganese.

The water from the Whitcomb Ave. wells is clean and drinkable, but not treated beyond the addition of disinfection and corrosion control additives. The construction of a Whitcomb Ave. treatment plant would result in 100% of LWD water being fully treated.

There are many benefits to treatment, including the removal of iron and manganese, nuisance minerals known for discoloring water and staining plumbing fixtures and laundry.

To add the Whitcomb Ave. treatment plant, LWD will ask Littleton Town Meeting in May to approve the borrowing of up to \$7

million to be repaid with revenue generated by the water utility and not through property taxes. The cost estimate is conservative, and LWD plans to reduce construction expenses by using the same design as the Beaver Brook treatment plant for the new facility. If approved at Town Meeting, LWD plans to have the new treatment plant constructed and in operation in 2020.

In addition to treating the water pumped from the Whitcomb Ave. wells, LWD plans to increase output from that site. While permitted by the state to pump 600 gallons per minute (gpm), the site currently pumps about 450 gpm. LWD plans to increase the output to the maximum allowed under the current permit as part of an overall plan to meet the growing demand for water in Littleton.

Increasing the output and treatment at the Whitcomb Ave. site is part of a long-term plan to meet the increasing need for water in Littleton. LWD is also pursuing a new well site near Cobbs Pond and asserting its rights to withdraw water from Nagog Pond, but those projects will likely take years to complete.



The Beaver Brook treatment plant is similar in size and design to the proposed Whitcomb Ave. facility.



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Courtesy: Scott Angell



Courtesy: Alan Rohwer



LELD Crews Tackle Nor'easter Damage

The heavy, wet snow from the March 7th nor'easter toppled trees and limbs onto power lines across Littleton and Boxborough causing widespread, scattered outages. From left to right above: crews replaced snapped poles on Boxborough Road in Littleton, restored power on Pine Hill Road in Boxborough, received mutual aid from Groton and Chicopee, and removed an entire tree from the wires. With power substantially restored within 48 hours, LELD crews then focused on individual service outages, even climbing poles inaccessible by bucket truck (left).

