

Budgets and Reliability

by *Rick Nelson*

It is that time of year when Custer Public Power District looks at its 5 Year Plan to make sure budget and reliability objectives are met. When we look at the long term plan for Custer PPD, we take many things into account. Among them are expenses that we can control, and for ways to be cost effective while doing key things that are necessary to maintain a reliable system.

I presented to the Board of Directors a 20 Year Plan about a year ago that included such things as replacing all of Custer's aging copper conductor; increasing pole treating to a 12 year cycle; and, building some much needed transmission line in the Sandhills. If you remember correctly, and yes, I'm going to say it again when you plan for the future you can do so without financial loss. In other words, without rate increases to pay for the maintenance and construction that is planned over the next 10 years at least.

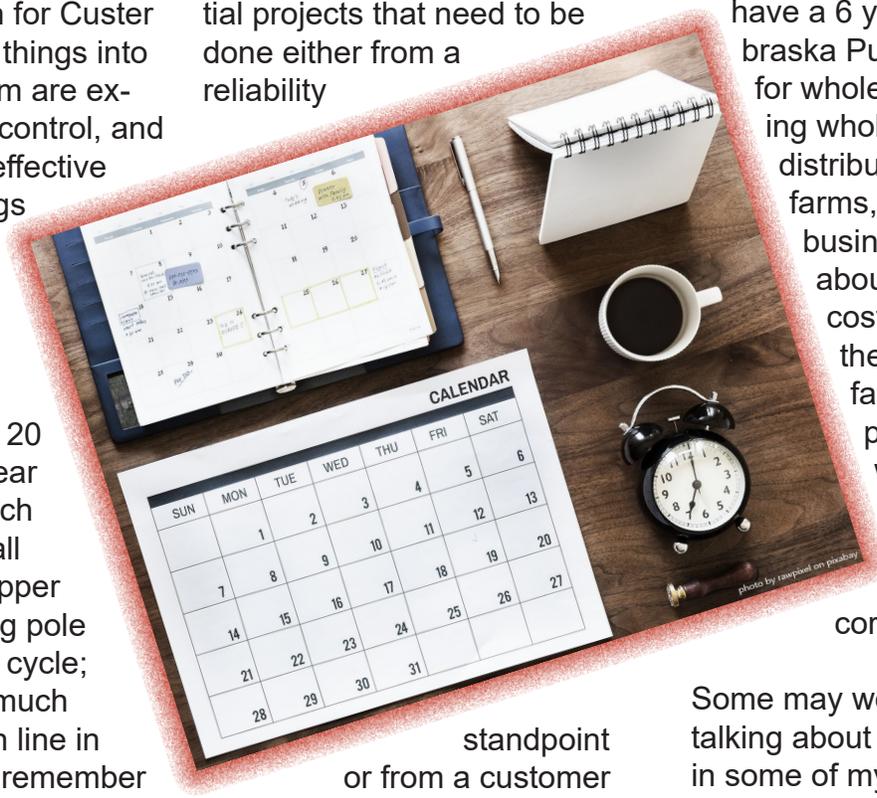
The 20 Year Plan is broken down into a fluid 5 Year Plan

with all of the components of the 20 Year Plan in five year cycles.

So, when we created the 5 Year Plan, this year it looks at potential projects that need to be done either from a reliability

years. The current 5 Year Plan takes that into account.

Planning also helps us calculate what will happen to rates. We have a 6 year plan from Nebraska Public Power District for wholesale power. Buying wholesale power to distribute to your homes, farms, ranches, and businesses represents about 60% of our costs. Power rates therefore are a critical factor in long-term planning. Once wholesale power costs are factored into the plan, we can adjust accordingly.



standpoint or from a customer growth standpoint. The projects in our current plan are there to fulfill both of those objectives. The 2019 budget year cycle was the first phase of replacing the copper conductor. The next phase will be in 2021.

Customer growth has been slow but steady this year and seems likely to continue in the next five

Some may wonder why I'm talking about NPPD so much in some of my articles, and I don't want people to get confused about what that means. I talk about NPPD because what happens to them has a major impact on Custer Public Power District's costs. NPPD doesn't control any part of Custer PPD. You elect a Board of Directors to represent you at Custer PPD, but we need to keep an eye on our wholesale power costs.

**Safe
Electricity®
Storm Safety Kit**



Drinking water & food
Blankets, pillows, & clothing



Basic first-aid supplies



Prescriptions



Basic toiletries



Flashlights



Battery-operated radio



Battery-operated clock



Extra supply of batteries



Phone



Cash and credit cards



Emergency numbers



Important documents (in a waterproof container)



Toys, books, & games



Baby supplies



Pet supplies

Winter Weather Safety Tips

Make sure your home “Storm Safety Kit” is stocked and winter storm ready.

Use sand to improve traction and apply products that melt ice on walkways.

Make sure you have sufficient heating fuel. Regular fuel sources may be cut off.

Keep emergency heating equipment and fuel so you can keep at least one room of your house warm enough to be livable.

Keep fire extinguishers on hand, and make sure your family know how to use them.

Winterize your home to extend the life of your fuel supply. Insulate walls, attics, doors, and windows.

Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic.

Do not over exert yourself or work outside for extended periods of time.

For more information go to the National Weather Service website at weather.gov/safety/winter

(continued) Therefore, the need to keep an eye on the factors driving NPPD’s rates.

Getting back to the 5 Year Plan and budget, the 2020 budget is based on that 5 Year Plan and is the basis for the rates in 2020. We will continue to see savings from actions taken in the last couple of years and some decisions we made that helped reduce our cost of service. Since we’ve taken steps to control the costs that are within our power to control, we are able to keep our rates stable in 2020. Yes, that means an overall increase of 0%. I think this is a tremendous accomplishment

in another year of economic uncertainty. Kudos to all the staff inside the office, in our shop, and to our outside crews for helping Custer PPD meet the challenge.

Wholesale power costs are not expected to increase in the near future. Since wholesale power is 60% of our total bill, by holding the line on our local distribution expenses and not seeing increases in wholesale power costs, we’re finding revenues and ways to work with inflation.

Custer Public Power District has been as conservative as possible, but I must remind everyone

that we have 4,577 miles of line that cover 8,000 square miles in the wind, rain, and snow along with physical plant and equipment that’s worth \$100 million. At some point penny-pinching becomes pound foolish if we can’t make the investments necessary to maintain and upgrade the system to keep it running safely and reliably. There will be some big projects in 2020 that will serve our growing electrical demand and provide reliable power to everybody who needs it.

Many thanks for your continued support and understanding.

Powering Up After a Storm

Lights out? Thirty-one percent of power outages are triggered by the weather. Lineworkers must battle the elements to find problem areas and restore service as quickly and safely as possible.

“We know our members want to know why the lights are out and when they’re coming back,” shares General Manager Rick Nelson. “First we must find the problems. Then we follow a series of steps to bring the lights back on.”

Efforts are made to restore power to the largest number

of members as quickly as possible. Then crews fix problems impacting smaller groups of members.

Restoring power

When an outage occurs, line crews work to pinpoint problems. They start with high-voltage transmission lines. Transmission towers and cables that supply power to thousands of consumers rarely fail. But when damage occurs, these facilities must be repaired before other parts of the system can operate.

Next, crews check distribution substations. Each substation serves hundreds or thousands of members. When a major outage occurs, line crews inspect substations to discover if problems stem from transmission lines feeding into the substation, the substation itself, or if problems exist down the line.

If the problem cannot be isolated at a distribution substation, distribution lines are checked. These lines carry power to large groups of members in communities or housing developments.

If local outages persist, supply lines (also called tap lines) are inspected. These lines deliver power to transformers, either mounted on poles or placed on pads for underground service, outside businesses, schools, and homes.

power, the service line between a transformer and your home may need to be repaired. Always call Custer Public Power District at 1-888-749-2453 to report an outage. This helps crews isolate local issues.

Outage Safety Tips

Follow these safety steps at home during a power outage:

- Before calling Custer Public Power District to report an outage, first check to see if your home’s circuit panel or fuse box hasn’t tripped or blown a fuse. This can also cause a power failure. If tripped, reset the breaker or replace the blown fuse.
- Turn off and unplug all unnecessary appliances and electrical equipment. When power is restored, turn on items one at a time.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. An unopened refrigerator keeps food cold for about 4 hours. A full freezer keeps food cool for about 48 hours.
- Individual households may receive special attention if loss of electricity affects life support systems or poses another immediate danger. If you or a family member depends on life support, call Custer Public Power District before a power outage happens.

Sources: NRECA, American Red Cross

**Custer Public Power
District Office &
Area Outposts
will be closed on
November 11
for Veteran’s Day
and November 28 & 29
for Thanksgiving.**

**Report after hour
outages to
1-888-749-2453**



If your home remains without

Squasage (Sausage-stuffed Squash)



Ingredients

- 2 acorn squash, halved and seeded
- 1 pound ground sausage
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1/2 cup chopped mushrooms
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese



Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). Grease a baking sheet or line with aluminum foil.

Place squash, cut sides down, on the prepared baking sheet.

Bake in the preheated oven until tender, about 1 hour. Flip squash halves over and set aside to cool.

Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook and stir sausage in the hot skillet until browned and crumbly, 5 to 7 minutes; drain and discard grease. Add celery, mushrooms, and onion; cook and stir until celery is softened, 5 to 10 minutes. Remove skillet from heat.

Beat egg in a large bowl; stir in sour cream and Parmesan cheese. Stir cheese mixture into sausage mixture. Fill squash halves with sausage filling. Cook for approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes until done.

Recipe can be found on allrecipes.com



Newsletter of the Custer Public Power District



Broken Bow, NE - Phone 872-2451
www.custerpower.com

Serving Custer, Loup, Blaine, Thomas, Hooker, McPherson, Logan and parts of Sherman, Garfield, Brown, Cherry, Lincoln, and Dawson Counties

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Board Meetings

The regular monthly meeting of the Custer Public Power District Board of Directors is on the last Thursday of each month, beginning at 10:00 a.m. in the main office in Broken Bow on Hwy. 2.

An agenda for each regular meeting of the board is available for public inspection during business hours.

In the event of matters of an emergency nature or conflicts with other meeting dates, the Board of Directors will set changes. Any change in the monthly meeting date will be posted in the legal notice at the main headquarters building at Broken Bow and at each of the District's area service centers located in Callaway, Sargent, Stapleton and Thedford, Nebraska.

