

## By Rick Nelson, General Manager

This is a busy year at the Legislature. Several bills have been introduced that may have a big impact on you, the electric customer (and bill payer). As often is the case, there seems to be some who want to see change for the sake of change.

Some bills in the Legislature would lend you to think that having a choice for your electric supplier would be a good thing. Another proposes “unbundling” your bill so you get a detailed breakdown and can see what the energy itself costs versus the cost of delivering it to you.

Let’s start with the notion of giving customers a choice in electric suppliers. It may sound good on first blush; but it sure doesn’t hold up when you look at the details and at what happened in other states that have tried it.

Turns out, the private power companies and a load of for-profit speculators are looking to skim the cream—the larger customers that are most profitable to serve. They don’t care a hoot about rural and small town customers. Strip those good accounts away from the Public Power District, and watch the bills go up if you’re one of the remaining accounts trying to shoulder all that overhead -- an ordinary consumer, small business, farmer, or rancher.

Nebraska has always enjoyed some of the lowest rates in the country because we are the only state where 100% of the electric utilities are

locally owned; and, locally controlled by the customers rather than absentee investors or foreign speculators.

In Nebraska, thanks to being 100% public power, a system about the size of Custer PPD doesn’t have to send quarterly checks for hundreds of thousands of dollars out of state and raise rates, or cut service to meet the quota. The rates stay low and the money stays here. Let’s not mess with that. Public Power is not broken and does not need to be fixed.

The idea of providing more detailed breakouts on your monthly bill has some advantages. It also adds to our cost for what appears to be only marginally useful for a handful of customers.

Transparency is a good thing. It’s one of the principles I practice from, not only in this column but also on my radio shows. I’m not afraid of sharing what we do in the boardroom every month on the radio show or in this column for that matter; but until there’s a clear and urgent need to spend all the money it’s going to take to re-do our billing system. Let’s not be wasteful.

The idea behind unbundling is something we are doing anyway, without being prodded to by the Legislature. We’re doing it because it is smart and right. It is the most fair given

changes coming to the industry.

Here’s the backstory. Your monthly bill consists



# Custer Public Power's Photo Contest Deadline is September 30, 2017



## 2018 CPPD PHOTO CALENDAR ENTRY FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Photo: \_\_\_\_\_

I grant my permission for Custer Public Power District to use this photo in the Custer PPD photo calendar, the Custer PPD website and in other printed publications or brochures developed by Custer PPD. I am the owner of the photograph and it is an original production.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Send all entries to Tarin Burrows at PO Box 10 Broken Bow, NE 68822 or email [tburrows@custerpower.com](mailto:tburrows@custerpower.com)

## Photo Contest Guidelines

1. Photo must be taken in CPPD Service territory
2. Photo must be horizontal orientation
3. Submit one form per entry
4. Digital photos of 300 dpi or higher, saved in raw/untouched format jpeg or tiff
5. Please keep the original, photos become property of CPPD and may be used on CPPD's website, social media and other printed publications.



of basically three components: the cost of the energy itself, the cost of delivering it, and various fees and taxes where applicable.

Custer PPD, like just about every other utility in the good ol' USA, has for decades recovered some of our delivery cost through the kilowatt hour rate we charge for the energy itself. That didn't matter much as long as we always sold enough energy to cover costs. What has changed is that more and more utilities around the country are now buying their electricity not just from major, traditional suppliers like NPPD; but, also from people who have installed wind or solar units on their property and sometimes have extra energy to sell.

When we reduce the amount of electricity we're selling because someone else on the system is now also selling it, we have to make sure that we receive enough money to pay for the cost of the delivery system itself. For decades, we had customarily recovered some of those delivery costs in the kWh rate. However, if you sell fewer kWhs, you've got to make up the difference somehow because the poles and wire still need attention, the trucks still need gas, and wages need paid.

What we are going to do in 2017, is leave our kWh rate alone but increase the fixed charge by \$4.75 a month for residential. The fixed charge is what helps pay for the poles and wire-the infrastructure, regardless of how much electricity is sold on those wires or by whom.

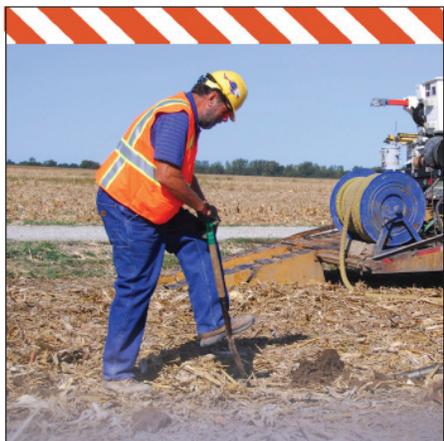
That increase will give us the added revenue we need to keep pace with rising costs and the demands of a growing system. Doing it this way will help us prepare for the day when we may be wheeling more power generated by smaller wind and solar units scattered throughout the area we serve. Making sure that everyone pays a fair share.

In some states, the failure to make these adjustments has led to a back door give-me. Ordinary folks, including in particular older and less well-off folks are in effect paying a subsidy hidden in the rate structure to affluent folks who can afford

to add a \$30,000 or \$100,000 solar unit to their house; and, have enough political clout to talk the Legislature into making everybody else help pay for it.

For the average residential customer of Custer PPD, that \$4.75 is about exactly what increasing costs would have been anyway. Custer PPD by moving it to the fixed payment, instead of putting it in the kWh rate, has a head start in terms of making sure we keep things as fair as humanly possible as these other changes begin to unfold over time.

Public Power makes Nebraska completely different from other states-in a good way! We need to make sure that any change comes carefully and thoughtfully, and is driven by what actually works here in Nebraska rather than by what works or might work in theory elsewhere.



*"You may get by with it a thousand times, but at some point it can happen to you. It can happen to anybody," warns Tom Dickey.*

*Working with Safe Electricity's "Teach, Learn, Care TLC" campaign, Tom wants to teach you from his experience. He urges everyone to keep safety first and foremost in mind and to dig safely. He reminds fellow contractors and homeowners:*

*ALWAYS call 8-1-1 to have underground utilities marked BEFORE digging into any outdoor projects.*

**811** Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

*It is a free service that could prevent a tragedy.  
See Tom's story. Visit:*

**Safe Electricity.org**

# Favorite Irish Stew Recipe



## Ingredients

- 1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour, divided
- 1-1/2 pounds lamb stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 3 medium onions, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 cups reduced-sodium beef broth
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 4 medium carrots, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce



## Directions

1. Place 1/3 cup flour in a large resealable plastic bag. Add lamb, a few pieces at a time, and shake to coat.
2. In a Dutch oven, brown lamb in batches in 2 tablespoons oil. Remove and set aside. In the same pan, saute onions in remaining oil until tender. Add garlic; cook 1 minute longer.
3. Add broth, stirring to loosen browned bits from pan. Return lamb to the pan. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 1 hour or until meat is tender.
4. Add potatoes and carrots; cover and cook for 20 minutes. Stir in peas; cook 5-10 minutes longer or until vegetables are tender.
5. Add seasonings and Worcestershire sauce. Combine remaining flour with water until smooth; stir into stew. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Yield: 8 servings (2-1/2 quarts).

## Nutritional Facts

1-1/4 cup: 271 calories, 10g fat (2g saturated fat), 58mg cholesterol, 618mg sodium, 24g carbohydrate (7g sugars, 4g fiber), 22g protein. Diabetic Exchanges: 2 lean meat, 1 starch, 1 vegetable, 1 fat.

Recipe can be found online at [www.tasteofhome.com](http://www.tasteofhome.com)

# CUSTER CURRENTS

## Newsletter of the CUSTER PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT

Broken Bow, NE - Phone 872-2451  
[www.custerpower.com](http://www.custerpower.com)

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

## Officers & Directors

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Greg Smith, Milburn.....Secretary  
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## Staff

Rick Nelson.....General Manager  
Tom Knott.....Director of Operations  
and Loss Control  
Cheryl Taylor.....Director of Finance and  
Administration

## 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.