



Celebrating 110 Years of Public Water Service

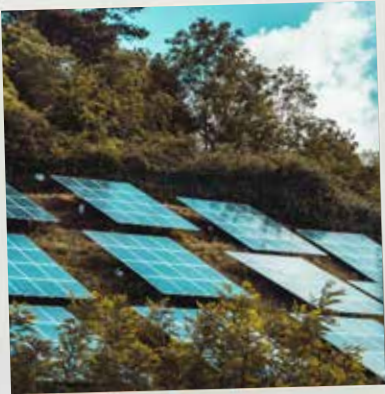
Details on page 3

JUL / AUG
2026

You Asked, We Answered

An open discussion on questions facing utilities today.

Earlier this spring, RPU joined Mayor Kim Norton for a community town hall focused on some of the biggest questions facing utilities today, including reliability, rates, renewable energy, infrastructure, advanced metering, and Rochester's future water supply. During the event, residents submitted questions ranging from thoughtful to humorous, but all rooted in topics we know customers care about. Here are a few of those questions, along with answers from RPU General Manager Tim McCollough.



Q: "Are these new advanced meters going to spy on me?"

A: No. Advanced meters are designed to improve customer service and system reliability, not monitor personal activity. The new meters help detect outages faster, identify potential water leaks earlier, improve restoration times, and provide more accurate usage information. Protecting customer privacy remains a priority throughout the deployment process.

Q: "You run the utility, so I assume you personally control the weather, squirrels, tree branches, energy markets, water demand, inflation, and my bill. Why are you making all of those things so difficult?"

A: We don't control the weather, regional energy markets, inflation, or squirrels, but we do control how we prepare and respond. Our job is to keep power and water reliable, safe, and affordable while planning for Rochester's future. That means maintaining infrastructure, responding quickly to outages, and making smart long-term investments that protect reliability and help control costs over time.

Q: "Why don't we just shut down all the old power plants and run everything on wind, solar, and batteries?"

A: Renewables are an important part of the future, and they continue to grow. But reliability still requires a balanced mix of energy sources. Wind and solar depend on weather conditions, and battery technology is improving but not yet large enough to fully support around-the-clock demand. At the same time, energy demand is expected to grow significantly over the next decade. Our responsibility is balancing reliability, affordability, and sustainability for our customers.

Q: "Why don't you just bury all the power lines so we can stop cutting trees over and over again?"

A: Underground power lines can improve reliability, but they are expensive, costing roughly \$1 million per mile. RPU currently invests about \$500,000 annually into undergrounding projects, often coordinated with road reconstruction to reduce costs. Tree trimming remains necessary for overhead lines to operate safely and reliably. Our crews follow a regular trimming cycle to reduce storm-related outages and improve public safety.



Q: “I heard Rochester is going to run out of water. Is that true, or is that just Facebook doing Facebook things?”

A: Rochester is not running out of water. RPU currently draws from the Jordan Aquifer, a high-quality groundwater source that supplies about 5 billion gallons of water each year. What customers may be hearing about is long-term planning for future water sustainability. Like utilities across the state, RPU is studying future water supply options to ensure Rochester has reliable water service for generations to come.



Q: “If RPU is not-for-profit and community-owned, why do my bills keep going up?”

A: Being community-owned means revenue stays here in Rochester and is reinvested directly back into the utility system instead of going to shareholders. However, utilities still face rising costs tied to materials, equipment, labor, infrastructure upgrades, and long-term planning. Our goal is to keep rates as low and stable as possible while continuing to provide safe, reliable electric and water service our community depends on every day.

MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Celebrating 110 Years of Public Water Service

This July, Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) is proud to celebrate 110 years of public water service to the Rochester community.

In July 1916, the City of Rochester officially purchased the Rochester Water Company, establishing a municipally operated water utility focused on serving the public and supporting the community's future growth. Historic newspaper articles from The Daily Post and Record documented the milestone and the beginning of Rochester's public water utility.

More than a century later, that same commitment to public service continues to guide the work we do every day.

Today, RPU delivers millions of gallons of safe, reliable drinking water daily

to homes, businesses, schools, and healthcare facilities across Rochester. Behind the scenes, dedicated utility employees work around the clock to maintain infrastructure, monitor water quality, respond to emergencies, and prepare for the future needs of our growing community.

While technology and infrastructure have evolved significantly since 1916, our focus remains the same: providing dependable service our customers can count on. Public utilities are built on service, accountability, reliability, and long-term planning for the communities they serve. Those values continue to guide our work today just as they did 110 years ago.

As Rochester continues to grow, RPU continues investing in the future through infrastructure improvements, water supply planning, reliability projects, and new technologies

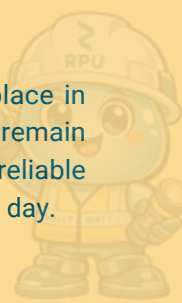
designed to better serve our customers for generations to come.

In this issue of Plugged In, you'll find updates on several programs and initiatives happening across the utility, including our Neighbors Chipping In program, advanced metering deployment timeline and project updates, summer cooling rebates, Bring Your Own Device smart thermostat opportunities, and a special 'You Asked, We Answered' feature highlighting questions submitted during our recent community town hall with Mayor Kim Norton.

Thank you for the trust you place in Rochester Public Utilities. We remain committed to delivering safe, reliable service to our community every day.



Tim McCollough
General Manager,
Rochester Public Utilities



Find Wally Watt!

Wally Watt is a cheerful water drop who represents the services we deliver every day and a simple reminder that we all play a role in keeping our community safe and running strong.

Where's Wally?

Wally Watt is hiding somewhere in this Plugged In edition. He may appear in different colors, so keep your eyes peeled. Can you find him?



Did you find Wally Watt?

Scan the QR Code to submit your entry.

Find Wally Watt and Win!

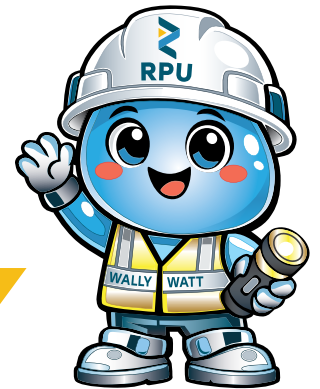
Wally Watt is hiding somewhere... Can you spot him?

1. Find Wally
2. Scan the QR code
3. Tell us where he is (page number and what he is next to)

Correct entries are entered into this issue's prize drawing.

Wally's Safety Tip

Before anyone digs outside, make sure a grown-up calls 811 first. Underground utility lines are not always visible. Damaging them can be dangerous and may disrupt service.



Congratulations to Our Last Winner

Congratulations to 11-year-old Morgan, our May-June Plugged In Find Wally Watt winner! After successfully spotting Wally, they took home some fun prizes.



Official rules summary

Eligibility: Open to children 17 and under who live in an RPU customer household.

How to enter: Find Wally Watt in the current issue and submit the entry form.

Deadline: Entries must be received by 11:59 p.m. on July 30.

Winner selection: One winner will be selected at random from all correct entries received by the deadline and will receive a prize.

Privacy: Information collected is used only for contest administration and prize delivery.

Notification: Winner will be contacted using the email or phone provided. If the winner does not respond within five business days, another winner may be selected.

Neighbors Chipping In Helps Local Customers in Need

A small act of kindness can make a big difference for a neighbor in need.

RPU's Neighbors Chipping In program allows customers to voluntarily round up their monthly utility bill or make a fixed donation to help fellow residential customers experiencing financial hardship.

The program is administered in partnership with Three Rivers Community Action, helping ensure assistance reaches income-qualified customers with demonstrated need. Over the past three years, the program has helped 48 local

customers maintain essential utility services during difficult times.

Every contribution stays local and helps Rochester families keep the lights on and water flowing when they need it most.

Customers interested in participating can enroll by contacting RPU Customer Care at **507-280-1500** or by downloading an enrollment form at **rpui.org**.



2026 ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION

RPU celebrated another successful Arbor Day Celebration this spring with strong attendance, beautiful weather, and opportunities to connect with the community.

The annual event welcomed community members, students, volunteers, and local partners for a day focused on trees, environmental stewardship, and education. Thousands of trees were distributed, and attendees enjoyed educational activities and family-friendly experiences throughout the event.

RPU also recognized the winners of the 2026 Arbor Day Poster Contest during the celebration. Winning artwork from local students will be featured in RPU's 2027 calendar.



Thank you to the many RPU employees, volunteers, partners, and sponsors who helped make this year's Arbor Day Celebration a success.



OVERALL

Zara Ramana

Ms. McRae, Bamber
Valley Elementary



1ST GRADE

Kinsley Adams

Mrs. Schad, Jefferson
Elementary



2ND GRADE

Grace Langton Gonsalves

Mrs. Graff, Lincoln
Elementary



3RD GRADE

Charis Olson

Mrs. Butler, Gibbs
Elementary



4TH GRADE

Sophia Fritz

Ms. Reishus, Bishop
Elementary



5TH GRADE

Brianna Hromis

Mrs. Olson, Lincoln
Elementary

Save Water. Save Money.

At RPU, we are always looking for ways to help customers save money while using resources more efficiently. One easy way to do that is by taking advantage of RPU's water rebate programs.

RPU offers rebates on a variety of water-efficient products and equipment, including high-efficiency toilets, clothes washers, rain barrels, and weather-based irrigation controllers. These upgrades can help reduce water usage, lower utility costs, and improve efficiency around your home.

Eligible residential customers may receive rebates such as:

- **\$25** for high-efficiency toilets
- **\$25** for clothes washers and all-in-one washer/dryer combinations
- **\$10** for rain barrels
- **Up to \$75** for weather-based irrigation controllers

Using water wisely is a win-win for our community. Customers can lower costs while helping protect Rochester's water resources for the future.





Advanced Metering Project Underway in

NORTHWEST ROCHESTER

RPU's advanced metering project is officially underway as part of a multi-year, systemwide effort to modernize service, improve reliability, and enhance the customer experience.

The project began in northwest Rochester, with electric meter installations starting June 1 and water meter installations beginning June 22. RPU will continue deploying advanced meters region by region across the

community over the next several years.

The upgraded electric and water meters will help improve outage response, support earlier leak detection, provide more timely meter reads, and offer customers better visibility into utility usage through enhanced customer tools in the future.

Electric meter installations typically take less than 15 minutes and do not

require an appointment or customers to be home. Water meter installations require a scheduled appointment since the meter is located inside the home or business.

Customers in upcoming deployment areas will continue receiving direct communication from RPU with additional project details and scheduling information.

Help Reduce Energy Demand During Peak Savings Events

Participate in RPU's Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program. During periods of high electricity demand, from May 1-September 30, you'll agree to allow RPU to make minor temperature adjustments (2-4 degrees) to your smart thermostat[^] during Peak Savings Events. *(Peak Savings Events will not occur on weekends or holidays.)*

When you join BYOD, you'll receive a one-time **\$50** enrollment incentive bill credit plus a **\$25** annual, year-end bill credit for participating.



[^]RPU electric customers who have installed a qualifying connected smart thermostat controlling their central air conditioning or heat pump system are eligible. Read the BYOD FAQs and Terms and Conditions at www.rpu.org.

Visit www.rpu.org to enroll today:



Residential Cooling Rebates

Scan the QR code to download rebate applications.



Keep your cool.

Efficient cooling systems use advanced technology to keep you cooler while saving energy and money. Upgrade and save with rebates from RPU!

- Air Source Heat Pumps
- Central Air Conditioners
- Mini-Split Air Conditioners
- Room Air Conditioners



CONSERVE & \$SAVE™





Healthy Home Helpers Program Launches Through RPU Partnership

The City of Rochester recently launched **Healthy Home Helpers**, a new program designed to help residents improve indoor air quality, better understand home energy use, and create healthier, more efficient living environments.

Healthy Home Helpers builds on RPU's long-standing partnership with the Neighborhood Energy Challenge by expanding support beyond energy efficiency to include indoor air quality and overall home health.

The program offers **free in-home visits** with trained Healthy Home Helpers who provide personalized guidance on topics such as ventilation, indoor air quality, comfort, and energy efficiency. Participating households also receive a free Healthy Home Kit with items that may include LED light bulbs, weatherization materials, water-saving fixtures, cleaning supplies, a radon test kit, and a carbon monoxide detector.

The program is open to both renters and homeowners and connects residents with additional local programs, rebates, and resources focused on energy efficiency and home health.

Residents interested in participating can learn more or sign up at RochesterMN.gov/HealthyHomes.

FREE Healthy Home Kit

Included in every visit! More than \$120 value.



LED Lightbulb



Radon Test Kit



Weatherstripping



Low-Flow Showerhead



Carbon Monoxide Detector



Green Cleaning Supplies



Workshop Dates

Wednesday
JULY 22
12pm (via Zoom)

Wednesday
AUGUST 19
7pm (via Zoom)

Thursday
SEPTEMBER 17
6pm (in-person)

Saturday
NOVEMBER 14
10am (in-person)

For questions regarding the Neighborhood Energy Challenge, contact Stacy Boots Camp at **888-734-6365** or sbootscamp@mncee.org.



PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
ROCHESTER, MN
PERMIT NO. 4

4000 East River Rd NE
Rochester, MN 55906
507-280-1500
www.rpu.org



Neighborly

RPU Plugged In is designed
and printed locally in Rochester.



RPU will be closed Friday, July 3, in observance of Independence Day.

Our crews are available 24/7 if an outage occurs.
If you experience an outage, call 507-280-9191.

Social Media:



@rochesterpublicutilities



Rochester Public Utilities



blog.rpu.org



RPU TV



Rochester Public Utilities

Mobile App:

RPU Connect



RPU Service Center Hours:

Monday - Friday (8am - 4:30pm)

Customer Care By Phone:

Monday - Friday (8am - 5pm)
507-280-1500

Electric Emergency:

507-280-9191 (24 hrs)

Water Emergency:

507-280-1500 (8am - 5pm)
507-280-9191 (5pm - 8am)

Ready 24/7 When Outages Happen

Power outages can happen during severe storms, high winds and unexpected equipment issues. When they do, Rochester Public Utilities crews are ready to respond 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Reliability remains a top priority at RPU. Our crews work year-round to maintain and improve the electric and water systems that serve our community while responding quickly and safely when outages occur. Whether restoring power after a storm or responding to a water emergency, customers can count on RPU to be there when it matters most.

If you experience an outage or utility emergency, report it right away so crews can respond as quickly as possible.



TO REPORT AN OUTAGE OR EMERGENCY:

Electric Outages (24/7)

507-280-9191

Sewer Backup or Overflow

507-328-2640

Water Outages

8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
507-280-1500

5 p.m. to 8 a.m.
507-280-9191

RPU crews are available 24/7 to keep essential services running safely and reliably.