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WA-18

Looking Back on 2020

What a year 2020 was. I think it was a year that showed the best of our community in the worst of times. The varied efforts of many organizations in our county working to lessen the impacts on our small communities have been heartwarming.

Your PUD alone has provided almost \$150,000 in direct relief to residents and small businesses through our low-income elderly discount, small business COVID support and Operation Warm Heart programs.

We have worked with several thousand customers on payment arrangements during these unprecedented times, and I have been impressed with the integrity of those in our communities. These times have been hard on many, and I expect these effects to continue through at least the end of next year.

During 2020, in spite of these issues, our employees completed our maintenance programs and new capital projects, completed a RNG long-term contract, successfully ran wildfire mitigation legislation and developed new financial models. Staff revised our strategic plan, expanded the drone inspection program, made it through micro-wind bursts, and completed the normal day-to-day paperwork, documentation, reporting and procurement necessary to sustainably run a utility.

When water service is interrupted or there is a power outage, our employees respond. We need all our systems functioning to ensure we can respond and remain sustainable over the long term. Our employees have exemplified public service by modifying schedules and how

we interact with each other, adjusting reporting headquarters and getting used to different physical workspaces. In short, they did what was needed to continue to serve you.

“As the board, we were comfortable delegating the authority necessary to our staff to make the necessary adjustments,” Commissioner Randy Knowles says. “We have shown over and over that our employees are a team that believes in public service and looking after our customers.”

KPUD staff also completed a 20-year contract for the sale of renewable natural gas from our facility in Roosevelt. This contract will provide more stable revenue streams from the project, which will help meet our board’s directives to work toward reducing our debt.

We also have been able to work with new customers and install water, wastewater and electrical services. That has not been without challenges, as there have been restrictions on all parties involved. I am proud of the work we have accomplished and the flexibility customers have shown.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of our customers. This year has been hardest on many of you. Klickitat PUD staff is still working, and we understand many of our customers are not. We are fortunate in that regard. We are also thankful for the support of our customers and the efforts you have made. I sincerely hope 2021 is a better year for us all.

Jim Smith
General Manager