

# PUBLIC WORKS & UTILITIES

PAVING THE WAY FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE BY EDUCATING, ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING OUR EMPLOYEES.

August / September 2015

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<http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/pworks/docs/newsletter/>

## Disaster Declaration to Assist City and County Departments

President Obama signed the disaster declaration requested by Governor Ricketts following the storms and flooding that occurred May 6 and June 17. This declaration will allow 12 counties in Nebraska, including Lancaster County, to request public assistance for emergency work and repair and replacement of disaster damages. This declaration will not provide assistance to individual households.

A briefing conducted by federal and state emergency management officials was held July 15 at the Municipal Service Center for all potential applicants from state, county and local government. Each department or agency will submit project requests that will be reviewed and considered for funding based on federal and state guidelines.

Public Works and Utilities projects would potentially include eligible labor hours and equipment used during and immediately following the disaster, debris clean-up and restoration of damaged equipment or facilities. Other City departments could submit project requests. Parks and Recreation, for example, could request assistance for damage to trails. The County Engineer will also request assistance for debris removal along county roads and damage to bridges. These projects can also reflect contractual services that meet federal and state guidelines.

Additional news releases on the disaster public assistance process will be posted on the City website as they become available.



By Rick Hoppe  
Mayor Beutler's Chief of Staff

## "I Wouldn't Trust You Guys to Run a Laundromat:" Building Public Confidence at City Hall

*"I wouldn't trust you guys to run a laundromat."*

The Lincoln citizen who said this to me in 2007 was actually a pleasant person. He wasn't some kind of anti-government extremist, and his words didn't hold a trace of malice. The guy loved his community and wanted the best for it – he just didn't trust us to make those choices.

A week after Mayor Beutler was elected for the first time, we were given an enormous budget book and told we had six weeks to build a budget. Two things became clear immediately:

- First, the public's lack of faith was impacting budget decisions by elected officials. In other words, the laundromat guy wasn't alone.
- Second, there wasn't a road map for solving the budget gap we faced.

A clear decision-making framework was needed for two reasons: to provide that road map for solving the City's budget challenges and to help the public better understand our policy choices. If citizens continued to believe that their tax dollars were being wasted, it wouldn't be possible to convince them that budget cuts and/or revenue increases were necessary.

That's why the Mayor's Office and budget staff developed the "Taking Charge" outcome-based budgeting and public engagement process.

"Taking Charge" evolved from some fairly simple ideas:

- We would engage the public to determine the outcomes they wanted City Hall to achieve (*i.e., efficient transportation*).
- We would adopt performance measures to determine our progress toward their preferences (*i.e., average resident commute times less than 20 minutes*).
- We would then use this information to offer the public a list of all the City's general fund programs and their cost in priority order (*i.e., snow removal, roadway signing program*).
- At budget time, we would determine what revenues were available and draw a line that showed what programs we could fund. Those programs below the line would be the areas where we would seek cuts if no additional revenues were made available (*i.e., Star City Holiday Parade was below the line and cut*).

From a management perspective, "Taking Charge" has fundamentally altered how we review the budget. In the past, we spent the vast majority of our time in the Mayor's Office discussing cuts. That meant we would spend 90 percent of our time on 5 percent of the budget. Now, our budget discussions involve a review

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# STRONG LINCS

**"THERE IS NO 'DIVISION' AMONG OUR DIVISIONS."**

Miki Esposito

PWU Director Miki Esposito is pleased to announce the Strong Linc Award recipients for the workplace principle of **competency**. Please congratulate these Strong Lincs for their valued service.

Sandra Finn (*Water*)

Sandra processes payment vouchers and purchase requisitions, tracks electrical usage and costs at various pump stations, and is responsible for a variety of customer service-related duties for Lincoln Water System. Sandra supports the Mayor's Water Conservation Task Force annual poster contest and does an excellent job organizing the event. Sandra is highly competent and possesses a high level of accuracy in performing all of her assigned duties.

Robyn Cruse-Miller (*Water*)

Robyn keeps operations running smoothly and efficiently in the front office. She addresses all situations professionally and follows up on issues when needed. Robyn is proactive in providing staff cross-training for office functions, and she is willing to try different ideas in order to improve overall work efficiency. Robyn has shown she is willing to take risks and address situations to make improvements. All of these qualities speak to Robyn's high level of competency and make her worthy of recognition for this workplace principle.

Paul Wimmer (*Water*)

Paul manages the Lincoln Water System's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system and associated control devices, industrial wireless networking and electrical maintenance. Paul has extensive knowledge of these complex control and electrical systems as well as treatment, transmission, storage and distribution. Paul has been involved in numerous system outages and troubleshooting events, and his knowledge and expertise have prevented disruption of service and damage to assets. Paul would say that any recognition directed at him is a result of the proficiency and competency of his staff and the entire Ashland and Lincoln water team.

Lisa Adams and Meagan Pratt (*Water*)

Lisa and Meagan research and help answer the "what happened or is happening here" questions related to utility locates and digging. They provide a service to the community and help eliminate time other staff spend trying to figure it out. Recently, Meagan spent a lot of time helping an insurance researcher on such a request, and Lisa helped educate staff on where information could be found. Each is a great "Strong Linc" in the chain of public service here at the City.

Andrea Ludwig (*StarTran*)

Andrea is highly-skilled and competent at ensuring that employees are paid accurately. The Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) contract has a complex set of rules to calculate employee pay. Andrea has mastered the tracking and calculation of hours, correctly interpreting the contract language into accurate payroll records. Supervisors and employees rely on her for payroll and human resource procedures.

Gene Garza, Gaylon Masek and Erika Nunes (*Engineering Services*)

This construction team is being recognized for their work on the 27th and "O" street intersection. They more than competently dealt with the public, utilities, businesses, media and contractor in order to ensure an early-opening, on-budget project.

Curt Weber, Taylor Buss, Nick Castillo,

Kirk Drake and Jeff Hohn

(*Engineering Services*)

When the inspection team unexpectedly changed during the middle of the 27th and Superior turn-lane project, Curt and Taylor showed they are more than just great designers by leaping into action to help complete it. Special thanks to Nick, Kirk and Jeff for juggling duties to ensure N.W. 48th Street and S.W. 40th Street continue toward completion.

Zach Becker (*Engineering Services*)

Zach deserves mention for his leadership of five student interns this summer. He worked closely with the interns to help improve their knowledge of municipality responsibilities and provided them good real world experience in engineering.

Melissa Ramos-Lammler and Amy Cornelius-Jones (*Engineering Services*)

Melissa and Amy are recognized for continuing to operate the Engineering Services front office at a high level, despite a one-third reduction in regular staffing during the busy summer calling season.

Susie Filipi (*Engineering Services*)

Susie quietly and efficiently prepared the State Board of Public Roads reports – the Standardized System of Annual Reporting (SSAR) and the One- and Six-Year Streets and Highways program. These are required to secure Lincoln's share of the State gas tax. Her work is always complete and accurate.

Tina Baker (*Solid Waste*)

Tina works to optimize the landfill gas system through the "balancing" of the wellfield (74 wells and 20 other extraction points) and the maintenance of the extraction and treatment process equipment. These are just a few of the responsibilities she performs very competently. The Clean Air Act regulations governing the landfill gas system are very rigorous. Each extraction well is affected by many factors, including weather and the influence from another nearby extraction point.

Jeremy Lackey (*Solid Waste*)

Jeremy has competently managed the site operations at the Bluff Road Landfill since his assignment to the Solid Waste Operations Supervisor position in November 2014. He is technically competent in the various construction, equipment, soil management, environmental and regulatory aspects of the landfill. But his competency also extends to ensuring adequate and appropriate staffing is maintained throughout each day of the week and weekend.

The next workplace principle will focus on being **community focused**. Nominations are due to Miki by September 18.



**Sunday, August 23**  
Big Red Welcome

**Saturdays,  
September 5, 12 and 26  
October 10 and 24**  
Big Red Express  
Husker football shuttle

**Sunday, September 20**  
Streets Alive!

**Monday, Thursday and Friday,  
September 28  
October 1, 2**  
PWU Employee Appreciation  
8 to 10:15 a.m.  
Auld Recreation Center

## A FAREWELL NOTE...

Best wishes to our Public Works and Utilities colleagues on their retirement from City employment. We appreciate their service to our community. May they find success in all their future endeavors!

**Douglas Schwartz**  
(Engineering Services) – 41 years

**Robert Ele**  
(Wastewater) – 31 years

## WHY LEARN CPR?

Cardiac arrests can happen to anyone at any time, and 88 percent occur at home. Effective CPR provided immediately after sudden cardiac arrest can double or triple a victim's chance of survival, but only 32 percent of cardiac arrest victims get CPR from a bystander.

Employees are urged to take advantage of a great in-house opportunity to be trained and certified in first-aid, CPR and use of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED). Certification is valid for three years. To date, 69 PWU employees have received the in-house certification. In order to be certified, an individual must complete training in both first-aid and CPR/AED.

Contact your supervisor to register today. Supervisors should register employees on line or by contacting Victoria Keating at 1-7558 or [vkeating@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:vkeating@lincoln.ne.gov).

All training occurs from 8 a.m. to noon Tuesdays:

- Sept. 1 at Lincoln Water System (LWS), 2021 N. 27th St. (CPR/AED)
- Sept. 15 at Municipal Service Center (MSC), 901 W. Bond (first-aid)
- Oct. 20 at MSC (CPR/AED)
- Nov. 3 at LWS (CPR/AED)
- Nov. 17 at MSC (first-aid)
- Dec. 1 at LWS (first-aid)
- Dec. 15 at MSC (CPR/AED)

Additional training dates may be added in the future. To check on availability, contact Victoria.

## BIG RED EXPRESS

StarTran will provide its Big Red Express service on Husker game days starting two hours before kickoff from six locations:

- **The City Municipal Service Center** (airport exit 399)
- **Southeast Community College**
- **Holmes Lake** (north end of the lake)
- **Gateway Mall** (north of JC Penney's)
- **SouthPointe Pavilions** (south of Von Maur)
- **North Star High School** (I-80 airport exit #403)

Buses will drop off and depart from "R" Street between 12th and 14th streets. The cost is \$5 each way, and passengers will need exact change. Electronic signs will help direct fans to the Big Red Express locations. Big Red Express season tickets, good for round-trip travel for all home games, are available for \$50, a \$20 savings, at StarTran, 710 "J" Street; the SouthPointe Pavilions office; or at the lots on game day. For more information, visit [startran.lincoln.ne.gov](http://startran.lincoln.ne.gov).

## Health Risk Appraisal Results

**Thank you** to everyone who completed the Health Risk Appraisal (HRA) that was offered in late June and early July.

According to City Wellness Coordinator Keerun Kamble, 939 City employees completed the survey, which is 47 percent of all employees and the highest participation rate in the past four years! PWU claimed third place in the category of total number of employees participating with 132 completing the survey. LPD finished first with 203 employees followed by the Health Department with 134.

The PWU winner of the \$20 Hy-Vee Gift Card drawing was Dave Beyersdorf.

Some highlights of the pooled HRA results from PWU include:

- 50 percent of respondents (66 employees) said they have become more physically active in the past year.
- Walking was the top activity that employees said they did more of over the past year in an effort to increase their overall physical activity.
- 47 percent of respondents (62 employees) said they have increased their fruit and vegetable intake over the past year.

Stay tuned for additional aggregate HRA results from PWU and all City departments. These highlights provide an overall snapshot of the health status of City employees and help shape the wellness program to reflect identified health priorities.

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of all programs and their performance measures to determine whether proposed funding allows us to meet the outcomes and goals outlined by the community and our elected officials.

From a public perspective, "Taking Charge" has altered how the public perceives City operations. Thousands of Lincoln residents have participated in one of the City's budget surveys or community conversations. Our partner over the last eight years, the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, can document increased trust and confidence in City decision-making by those who have participated in the "Taking Charge" process.

Trust and confidence is earned when you are willing to take an unflinching look in the mirror and make changes. During Mayor Beutler's time in office, we have cut more jobs than any Mayor Administration in history. We've also raised property taxes by 10 percent and the wheel tax by 37 percent. We were successful in convincing the public to increase the sales tax by a quarter cent to fund a new 911 radio system and new fire stations. The public has allowed us to make these tough choices because the "Taking Charge" process has helped them better understand our budget options.

We have more to do. Our success has encouraged us to expand "Taking Charge" to the street construction fund. Roads are a high priority for Lincoln residents. I am currently working with Public Works and Utilities leadership to expand "Taking Charge" to the City's street construction fund so the public has a clearer picture of what we do, what it costs and how we will measure success.

It is important that the Mayor's Office, Department Directors and management staff clearly articulate our goals to City staff who work hard every day to serve the public. You should know the performance indicators we use to measure our progress and how your job contributes to the outcomes we want to achieve. We want City employees to review the data on our performance and give us ideas on how we can improve. By instilling responsibility for success throughout the organization, we will achieve better results and further increase public faith and confidence in the services we deliver.

I haven't run into the gentleman who made the laundromat comment since that day in 2007. I often wonder what he thinks of City Hall today and whether the City's commitment to outcome-based budgeting and performance measurement has changed his outlook. It has definitely changed the outlook of many of his fellow citizens and those of us who serve them at City Hall.

## A Look Back at LWS History

The City sunk its first well in 1875 in the center of Market Square, near Old City Hall. The water was too salty for drinking, but the artesian well became famous for its curative powers. People traveled from miles around to fill buckets and jars.



In 1915, 93 miles of water main were in place, an additional 35,969 feet of cast iron pipe were scheduled to be installed, 37 fire hydrants were installed, and six new well houses were constructed. The main station for the water department was at 30th and "A" streets, with substations at 6th and "F" and 17th and Van Dorn. With an increase in demand came conservation concerns, which left the City researching alternatives to persistent problems with salt water wells.

In the late 1920s, Lincoln's first 36-inch transmission main from Ashland to Lincoln was constructed after voters approved a \$2 million bond issue. The project also included five wells and a pump station to help establish the wellfield site along the Platte River. That 36-inch pipe still serves water to Lincoln residents.

In Lincoln alone, LWS currently maintains 1,190 miles of water mains, 11,243 fire hydrants, 26,138 water valves, 18 storage reservoirs and 11 pumping stations. This does not include infrastructure associated with raw water pumping, treatment or transmission of water to Lincoln.

Even with an aging infrastructure, providing clean, quality drinking water is at the forefront of everyday activities.

The cost of those six well house built in 1915? \$1,046!

## Haulers Helping the Homeless

The People's City Mission and local waste haulers have joined forces on an initiative to offer curbside recycling for used clothing. This effort will help the homeless and extend the life of Lincoln's landfill. For more info, contact your local garbage hauler or visit [recycle.lincoln.ne.gov](http://recycle.lincoln.ne.gov).



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