



Johnsville Public Utility District

2020-21 Winter Newsletter

The Board of Directors and General Manager of the Johnsville Public Utility District (JPUD) present this annual year-end wrap up of the District's activities of 2020.

2020 certainly was a year that we won't soon forget, even though many may want to. However, for our small Johnsville water district it was a year of achievements as well as challenges.

Many of our citizens and ratepayers are aware that we have embarked on a very important and fundamental mission to replace our aging water tanks that have reached the end of their life expectancy. Back in 2016, the Board and General Manager committed to doing this as effectively and efficiently as possible. We knew then that this wasn't an easy task and would likely take years to get engineering, approvals, grant deeds and ultimately funding; all of this before a single shovel of dirt could be moved or a set of storage tanks could be constructed. Here we are, almost five years into the project, and we are just now entering the pre-construction phase. It hasn't been an easy road, however, with a great team and tenacious individuals committed to seeing this through, we are finally seeing light at the end of the tunnel.

A brief run down:

"The Project" The first step required engineering. Fortunately we were able to hire one of the best in the area (Bastian Engineering) who defined the project along with a few options for the Board to consider. Every angle was studied, and unanimously the Board decided to replace our two existing wooden tanks with two new steel tanks. With proper maintenance the new steel water tanks will provide water storage for our community for many years to come. Next, the District needed to renew its long-term lease and secure our Right of Way with the California State Parks which surrounds the town of Johnsville and currently owns the property that our tanks occupy. (Currently we are working on a draft of that document that both the State and our District need to agree upon.)

"The Cost"; The project itself will cost our District close to \$1 million dollars and unfortunately, prior to this large scale project, the District had not allocated for a tank replacement project.

"The Million Dollar Question"; Where will the project funding be coming from? This is where the rubber meets the road, and we knew this wasn't going to be easy. However, we had a very good group that came together, including Dave Hartwell who has spent a lot of time in Johnsville, and had recently retired from the USDA. Mr. Hartwell was extremely helpful in getting us connected with the right people and the right funding opportunities. With a lot of hard work (blood, sweat and tears) we were able to secure a 40 year loan at an unbelievable interest rate of 1.5 percent. More importantly, we received a grant for \$350 thousand dollars which pushed us financially to the finish line. We were awarded this loan and accompanying grant in late 2020.

While this grant and low interest rate loan are significant, the entirety of this project will also have a cost to JPUD customers. District rates have increased and will continue to increase as we focus on our primary goal of providing safe and reliable water delivery to the Town of Johnsville and Plumas Eureka State Park.

Our last hurdle was subsequently cleared, as we learned that Plumas County who has served as our banker and treasurer over the years, had erroneously considered the JPUD a “Dependent District” which gave us very little financial autonomy. Through a process of education and awareness, Plumas County now understands that the JPUD is in fact an “Independent Special District” and as such we have independent control over our own governance and finance. This recognition was pivotal for us to meet the conditions of the USDA loan and our direction in the future.

We are currently working on the extension of our long-term lease with the California State Parks System. Once this is complete, the District will put the project out for bid, so that we can get the physical project underway. Needless to say, this has been a big project for our small community; but we are well on our way. The Board and General Manager wish to extend our deep appreciation to everyone that has helped us along the way.

“Never a Dull Moment”; As the first snow began to fall last December, we developed a water leak that could have been catastrophic. Fortunately for all of us, Barry and Melissa Sheets were able to aid in tracking down the leak and coordinating a repair with our contractors while keeping communication open with the Board of Directors. We were fortunate they were available to identify and resolve the issue expeditiously. The JPUD Board wishes to recognize and thank both Barry and Melissa Sheets for their constant efforts in aiding the District.

COVID-19 brought many challenges to an already challenging year. We as a board have tried our best to keep everyone informed, held our scheduled public meetings with social distancing, and eventually via Zoom. We will continue to post updated information on our website including a schedule of our upcoming meetings for 2021.

The JPUD Board encourages you to visit our website www.JohnsvillePUD.org , stay informed and attend our public meetings.

Sincerely,

David Piepho, Chairman
John LaTourrette, Director
Norm Hattich, Director
Melissa Sheets, General Manager