

NEWSLINE

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Fort Valley

Utility Commission

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Commissioners

Alre' Horton, *Chairman*

Rose Marie Thompson

Robert Dickey, IV

Keytrick Jones

Stephen Lindsey

Ned Watson

Darrel West

Mayor Jeffery Lundy

*The Commission meets the second
Monday of each month at
6:00 p.m.*



October 2023

Editor: Martha McAfee

FVUC Adopts Utility Rate Adjustment Plan

The Fort Valley Utility Commission, at its August 14, 2023, meeting, adopted a plan that incorporates a series of utility rate adjustments aimed at maintaining and enhancing the reliability of the infrastructure that serves our community.

The rates at the Commission, especially electric rates, have been historically low when compared to other organizations. Although that is great for the short term, long term issues must be addressed.

To ensure the continued delivery of high-quality and dependable services, it has become essential to make investments in upgrading and modernizing infrastructure. These upgrades will enable us to meet the rising energy, gas, wastewater, and water demands, improve system efficiency, and incorporate advanced technologies for a more sustainable future.

The cost of these necessary infrastructure upgrades, including the replacement of aging equipment, expansion of capacity, and implementation of innovative technologies, is substantial. As a result, FVUC is making slight adjustments to the utility rates to help fund these critical initiatives. While we understand the importance of managing costs for our customers, these adjustments are essential to safeguard the long-term sustainability and reliability of our utility services.

The utility rate adjustments will take effect October 1, 2023, and will be implemented over a 10-year period. The impact on individual bills will vary depending on usage and service type. For the average residential customer that has water, wastewater, gas, and electricity, it is anticipated that the current year bill will increase approximately \$18.66 per month in year one. A cost of service review will be conducted within the next 3-5 years to assess any significant financial position changes.

FVUC remains committed to providing transparent information and assistance to our customers during this transition. We encourage customers to explore energy-saving measures and take advantage of programs designed to promote efficiency and reduce consumption.

"We recognize that any rate adjustment can be a concern for our customers, and we want to assure them that these changes are a necessary step to ensure the continued delivery of reliable utility services," said Clay Walker, General Manager. "We remain dedicated to providing exceptional customer service, promoting energy efficiency, and contributing to the overall well-being of our community."

The Commission is grateful for the continued trust and partnership of our community as we work together to ensure a sustainable and reliable utility infrastructure for generations to come.



Clay Walker
General Manager

From the General Manager's Desk...

In an era where digital connectivity is increasingly integral to daily life, we acknowledge the importance of high-speed internet access for everyone. Memories are still prevalent of the disruptions caused by the COVID 19 pandemic when families were forced to find ways to work from home as well as to provide internet for students' educational needs. These needs continue to be a high priority as companies are shifting to offering telecommuting for employees and schools are offering virtual learning opportunities on all levels. Furthermore, as the world becomes increasingly reliant on digital technology, those without adequate internet access are at a significant disadvantage. The Internet is not an option, but a necessity.

While recognizing its significance, the Commission also recognizes formidable financial hurdles as a primary reason we have been unable to provide universal high-speed internet access comparable to what is available from other providers. Our internet system was not designed that way. It was designed as an internal service

for the Commission's infrastructure communications. It was occasionally extended to residents that requested it and who could be easily served due to their proximity to established lines.

Interesting to note, there was a period in our history (early 2000s) when the Commission explored and made plans to fully engage and deploy a comprehensive Telecom system to serve our customers but due to the costs that raised the eyebrows of customers and some members of leadership, a decision was made to curtail those expansion plans.

The high cost of providing access underscores a complex issue. The rollout of high-speed internet infrastructure across vast and often remote areas can be financially burdensome. Infrastructure development, including laying fiber-optic cables or deploying satellite networks, requires substantial capital investment. Balancing the imperative of universal broadband access with fiscal responsibility will require collaborative efforts and creative solutions from all stakeholders involved. As technology continues to evolve, addressing these challenges becomes more urgent than ever to ensure a more equitable and connected future for all.

Finally, there has been much recent buzz regarding the upgrades and access to high-speed internet that are being provided by Flint EMC to its customers through a partnership with rural broadband leader, Conexon. In rural areas, partnerships like this may be the key to unlocking opportunities and ensuring equality in the digital age. The Commission has indicated its willingness to collaborate with public and private stakeholders to find innovative solutions to these challenges and has met with Conexon and others to explore this avenue. Public-private partnerships, government grants, and technology advancements are potential avenues to reduce costs and expedite the deployment of high-speed internet access to underserved areas. We will continue to look for resources.

"...as the world becomes increasingly reliant on digital technology, those without adequate internet access are at a significant disadvantage. "



FVUC Celebrates Public Power and Natural Gas Week

Every year, the first full week in October is dedicated to celebrating Public Power Week and Public Natural Gas Week. The Commission joins thousands of other community-owned, not-for-profit utilities that collectively provide electricity and natural gas to millions Americans and celebrate. This



As not-for-profit distribution entities, public gas utilities are completely owned by—and accountable to—the citizens they serve.

year, we focus on how public utilities are working to ensure reliable, affordable, sustainable, and customer-focused service to our community. Here are a few tips on how to save energy and money in your home as we build for the future:

- According to the Alliance to Save Energy, the average U.S. home uses 70 light bulbs. Even though modern bulbs are energy efficient, you should still turn them off when they aren't in use.
- Swap out old incandescent bulbs for new LED bulbs. According to the Department of Energy, residential LEDs use at least 75% less energy, and last up to 25 times longer, than incandescent lighting.
- Heating and cooling your home use a lot of energy. Setting your thermostat lower in the winter and higher in the summer to save energy and money on your power bill.
- Unplug appliances when you aren't using them. Even when they aren't being used, they are sometimes drawing "phantom power," which wastes energy.
- Your water heater is a big energy user. Make sure to use cold water when you can and turn off the hot water while you are scrubbing your hands.
- On average, heating and cooling account for almost half of a home's energy consumption. In fact, all the little leaks can be equivalent to leaving open a 3-foot-by-3-foot window. Take simple steps like caulking windows, sealing leaks around chimneys and recessed lighting, and sliding draft guards under your doors to save up to 20% on heating costs.
- Don't waste money heating or cooling an empty home. Install a programmable thermostat and in colder weather schedule your home's heat to lower when you are away or asleep, and increase when you are returning home or waking-up. In warm weather, schedule the thermostat to raise the temperature when you are away or asleep, and lower it at other times.
- Make sure to clean or change your furnace filters regularly. A dirty furnace filter will slow down air flow, making the system work harder to keep you warm (or cool) and costing you more money.
- Consider getting a winter tune-up. Just as a tune-up for your car can improve your gas mileage, a semi-annual or yearly tune-up of your heating and cooling system can be vital to improve efficiency, saving you money and making your home more comfortable.
- Turn the electronics off. That sounds easy, but too often we forget and leave electronics plugged in that are not in use.
- Turn off unnecessary/idle lights, appliances and electronics. A power strip can help turn off multiple items at once.

"We know that using energy wisely to lower monthly bills is important to our customers. And we recognize that even as our utility builds for the future we encourage our customers to do their part to help save energy," said Robbie Johns, Operations Manager, Electric|Gas|Telecom. "We share these tips, in hopes that our community will keep an eye on energy efficiency all year round as we work to provide reliable, safe, affordable, and renewable product."

The Commission is governed by a board of elected and appointed officials.

The Commissioners make decisions that directly impact rates and the level of service. Let's get to know them....

WHO
WE
ARE

Commissioner Ned Watson is married to Linda for 40+ years and counting. They have three daughters and a son, all of which are Georgia residents. [two RNs, a radiology technician (MRI and CT scans), and a school teacher.]

Raised on a south GA farm, Commissioner Watson lived in a little hamlet of neighbors (yes, in fact it does take a village to raise a child, with the help of a country church!) where he learned the value and honor of hard work thanks to that farm and working parents. He attended Valdosta State University where he received a B. S., Biology and served our country in the U.S. Air Force, Air Traffic Controller, Vietnam Era (1966 – 1970).



Commissioner Ned Watson

Work History: He worked as a Civilian Air Traffic Controller and at Boeing GA., Inc. as Manager of Safety, Health, and Environmental Affairs, and later Facilities Manager. His last full time paying job

was General Manager, Fort Valley Utility Commission, retiring in 2013. Sandwiched in between those were Industrial Waste Water Treatment Operator with Boeing and Water Treatment Plant Operator with the City of Warner Robins. *“Seemingly, a fellow who could not hold down a steady job, but enjoyed them all!!”* ...That’s how he described himself!! If you know him personally, you know his great sense of humor!

When you see Commissioner Watson out and about, be sure to thank him for his service.

Fort Valley Utility Commission Board of Commissioners

Alre' Horton	Chairman	At-Large – Post 3	Term Expires: 12/2025
Keytrick Jones	Commissioner	East Ward – Post 1	Term Expires: 12/2025
Stephen Lindsey	Commissioner	West Ward- Post 2	Term Expires: 12/2023
Rose Marie Thompson	Commissioner	At-Large – Post 4	Term Expires 12/2023
Jeffery Lundy	Mayor		Term Expires: 12/2025
Robert Lee Dickey IV	Commissioner	Crawford County	Term Expires: 06/01/2025
Ned Watson	Commissioner	Peach County	Term Expires: 06/08/2025
Darrel West	Commissioner	Peach County	Term Expires: 06/08/2025

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Commissioner West has served on the Commission for 2 years. He was appointed by the Peach County Board of Commissioners to a four year term. When asked why he wanted to serve on the Commission he responded, "Utility work is simply what I do. I have been helping utilities for the past 30 years and when this opportunity arose, I was both honored and excited to help not only the utility but the community as well."

When describing what he feels is the most complex about the Commission's mission he stated, "The work we do is never easy, it's too hot, too cold, too wet, too dry. Emergencies have a funny habit of "scheduling" themselves at night, on weekends and major holidays."



Commissioner Darrel West

When you see Commissioner West out and about, be sure to thank him for his service.

Stay tuned for more on your Commissioners in future Newline editions!



Commissioner Stephen Lindsey

City of Fort Valley Holds Qualifying for Municipal Offices

The qualifying period to be a candidate in the upcoming November municipal election was held in late August. Two incumbent Utility Commissioners, Stephen Lindsey and Rose Marie Thompson's terms are set to expire in December. Both Commissioner Lindsey and Commission Thompson qualified for their respective seats and have no opposition. Congratulations to them both and thank you for your willingness to serve!



Commissioner Rose Marie Thompson

An Important Message About Damage Prevention Prior to Excavating

This message is brought to you by **Fort Valley Utility Commission**. There are thousands of dig-in damage incidents in the United States every year. Striking an underground pipeline may lead to expensive fines, serious injury or death. Gas pipelines are built with safety and reliability as top priorities. Over the past 20 years, risk exposure has been rising through increased populations, energy consumption and pipeline miles. At the same time, the number of serious pipeline incidents involving death or injury has declined by 50%. Natural gas leaks do happen and may result in fire, explosion, and/or asphyxiation. Natural gas is a colorless, odorless gas; however, a chemical that smells like rotten eggs is added to help detect a possible leak. It's a bad smell. That's good!

Some of the signs of a gas leak include seeing bubbling water, hearing a hissing or blowing sound from a pipeline or appliance, dead or discolored vegetation in an otherwise green area, or dirt or dust blowing from the ground, or the smell of rotten eggs.

If you smell gas, or just think you might have a gas leak:

- **Leave** the area immediately; **Do Not** congregate around natural gas facilities.
- **Call 478-825-7701 or 911** from a neighboring home or business
- **Never** turn on or off switches, open or close garage doors, use a flashlight or phone/cellphone in the presence of the gas smell, as these devices may be a source of ignition, causing an explosion.

Stay in a safe location until the Emergency Responder arrives and gives you clearance to return to the area.

Here are five easy steps to damage prevention:

Survey and Mark – Survey the proposed excavation area and mark the dig sites in white paint.

Call Before You Dig - 48 hours prior to digging, call 811 and get free staking of underground utility lines which helps reduce the chance of injury and unneeded expense. It is the law in Georgia.

Wait! Wait the required time to allow utility owners to locate and mark the lines.

Respect the Marks! Maintain visibility of the marks and safely follow them when digging.

Dig – Dig with care. Hand excavate within 24-inches of each side of the locate marks. If you plan to dig anywhere near a marked area – especially when using mechanized equipment – use a shovel and carefully hand dig to expose the lines.

If your equipment contacts a gas line:

- **Leave** the equipment; jumping clear and shuffling away – **DO NOT** turn off the engine.
- **Warn other and leave** the area quickly.
- **Do Not operate** any gas pipeline valves or stop the flow of gas or try to fold over plastic pipelines.
- Leave the **excavation open**.
- If gas is escaping the pipeline, **call 911**, then **Fort Valley Utility Commission at 478-825-7701**

If the line is nicked, scraped, gouged, dented or otherwise damaged but not leaking, call **Fort Valley Utility Commission at 478-825-7701**; these may appear to be minor but can lead to future leaks if not properly repaired.

Natural gas is America's most popular home heating fuel and is increasingly popular for use by homeowners, schools, businesses, factories and electric power-generation plants. Natural gas is efficient, clean, reliable, and a relative bargain compared to alternative energy sources. Natural gas flows through a network of underground main lines that serve approximately **3891** customers in our system. These main lines are typically 2-inch in diameter and branch into household service lines which are typically half-inch to three-quarter-inch in diameter and buried 12- to 18-inches below the surface. The service lines end at each customer's meter where gas is delivered.

This message is brought to you by Fort Valley Utility Commission as a part of our Public Awareness Program. For additional information regarding this message, call 478-825-7701.

The Blizzard of '93 is one to be remembered for decades

On Saturday morning, March 13, 1993 at 7:30 a.m., the Commission's afterhour emergency telephone received its first call regarding the *Blizzard of 93*. The calls continued for the next 36 hours.

The storm brought snow, cold temperatures and gusty winds. The high velocity winds knocked trees across our distribution and secondary lines causing power loss to 500 customers. Our emergency plan of attack is de-energize all fallen conductors that may present some form of hazard, re-establish all distribution lines, and restore secondary lines to individual customers.

Services were restored to all but four customers by 1:30 p.m. Sunday afternoon. The remaining restoration was completed the following day after an electrician had repaired the structures service.

All seven employees of the Electric Department were assisted by 10 employees from the Gas, Water, Wastewater and Meter Departments. The Commission expended 600

manhours during this storm period.

The Commission was also able to lend two crews to a neighboring utility on Monday afternoon and evening to assist them in their restoration.

The Commission would like to thank the local businesses who assisted in providing food for the crews.

April 1993

Commission Builds New Sub-Station

Have you noticed the work being done on Highway 341 North? Have you wondered what the big concrete poles are for?

A new substation has been completed for the Commission. A substation is similar to the transformer for your home. Our utility supplier sends 115,000 volts of electric power into the substation; the substation then reduces the power going to the city down to 7,200 volts. When the power gets to the transformer on the pole, it reduces the current to 220/120 volts for your home use.

The Commission requested a new substation from the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia (MEAG). Funds for this project came from MEAG's operating budget for maintaining and upgrading their system. MEAG contracted the work, and it was completed in February, ready for our lines to be run.

The new substation will reduce the frequency of power outages and will decrease the time needed to restore power if outages occur.

Our old system had four main power feed lines going to a single substation. From those lines we distributed electricity to four sections of town.

With the addition of the new substation, two lines will be transferred from the old station to the new one. This will split the load and reduce the problem of voltage loss (power fluctuations.)

In short, the new substation allows the Commission to increase the quality of electric power to our customers and gives us a backup power source.

Blue Bird helps lower costs

Some time ago the Commission approached Blue Bird Body Company with a proposal which would reduce the Commission's overall electric cost and, at the same time, provide a valued service to Blue Bird. The arrangement called for Blue Bird to purchase a 1600 KW diesel generator, to operate it at their expense, in order to reduce their power demand during peak periods. This reduces the Commission's power cost and in return Blue Bird shares in the savings from the Commission's reduced power bill.

Chip Stenbridge, Manager of Maintenance, said, *Blue Bird would like to thank the Utility Commission for suggesting this joint venture of power cost reduction. With the installation of*

the generator to reduce our electrical demand we have realized savings for Blue Bird and the Utility Commission. Thanks for the great idea.

This venture between the Commission and Blue Bird to reduce the power demand is simply an old idea with new and more satisfactory methods. Just call it *Load Management*. Load management is not a stranger to residents in Fort Valley. Do you remember the little black box and how miserably hot you were when Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia called for load management? Now you know why all customers of the Commission benefit. The largest employer has a lower cost for power, and the Commission has a reduced power cost that is reflected in all customers' rates.

From the Archives

CUSTOMER SERVICE

ORDER CENTER

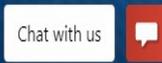


SIGN UP for e-bill! Call us at 478.825.7701 Option 3 or email customerservice@fvutil.com You can also sign up by logging into your account on-line. Visit www.fvutil.com



Lighting the way
to a brighter future

The Fort Valley Utility Commission is proud to provide electric, gas, water, wastewater, fiber optic, and wireless telecommunications to its customer service area in Central Georgia.



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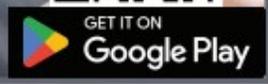
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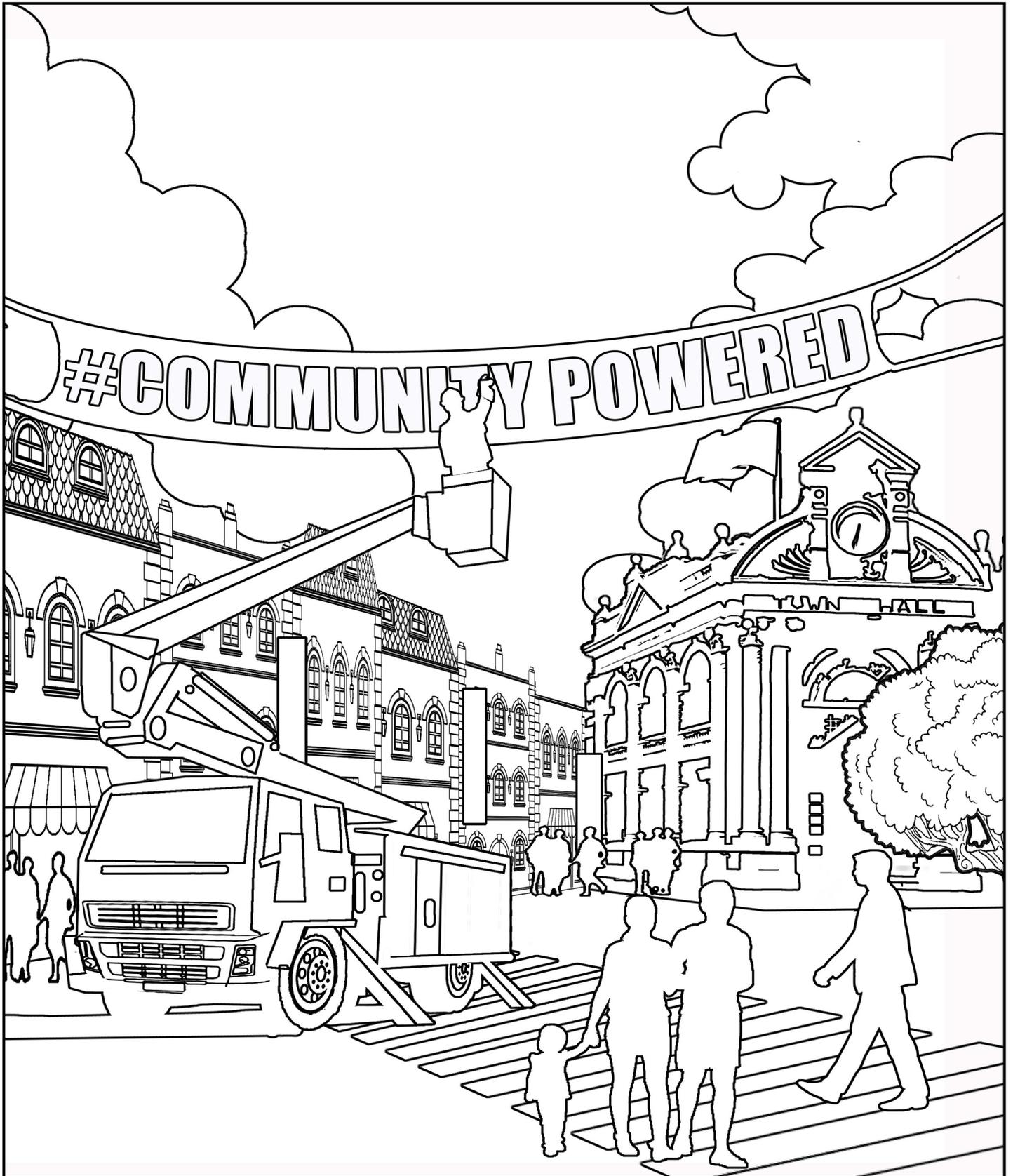
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Team FVUC



Enjoy your retirement, Esther!



Water Resources

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Artificial Eutrophication nonpoint-source pollution point-source pollution
 wastewater treatment Transporting water Thermal pollution
 Clean Water Act Water Pollution The wate cycle Sewage sludge
 Recharge Zone Surface Water algal blooms Desalination
 Heavy Metals Permeability Condensation Groundwater
 Wastewater Reservoir Pathogens Watershed Porosity potable
 Aquifer Dams

NEWSLINE

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Monday - Friday

Customer Appreciation Day!

