

MMU celebrates gas expansion connecting Arcadia, Templeton, Manning

A Manning Municipal Utilities (MMU) recently celebrated the completion of a major gas expansion project with a ceremonial valve turning ceremony. Iowa EDA Director Debi Durham was in attendance along with officials from throughout the county.

The massive, year-long project involved construction of 24 miles of new pipeline which will benefit local utility customers, the Arcadia Cooperative, Landus Cooperative of Templeton, and provide service assurances for current customers. MMU now also has the potential to welcome new gas customers and provide them with a cost effective, reliable, fuel source.

Through persistent efforts of MMU General Manager Jeremy Carroll, Manning received a permit from the Iowa Utility Board in March to build a pipeline across Carroll County. Under the watchful eyes of inspectors from the Utility Safety Design Inc. (USDI), construction began July 7 to connect MMU to an interstate pipeline. The connection is essentially a second source of Northern Natural Gas and creates a redundancy for MMU.

A connection with the Carroll branch line was made approximately three miles north of Willey. The pipeline runs approximately eight miles west to Hawthorn and 220th Street where a large valve was installed. The valve segments connections new pipeline eight miles south to along Hawthorn to Manning's existing system, and eight miles northwest to Arcadia.



IEDA Director Debi Durham turns the ceremonial valve signifying completion of the new gas line expansion by Manning Municipal Utilities. Shown, from left, gas department staff Carla Hacker, Dick Mundt, MMU General Manager Jeremy Carroll, Denny Steffes and Durham.

Carroll said, "The back feed south to Manning enables MMU to supply more gas to Landus Cooperative in Templeton. They have two dryers, and they could only run one of them on natural gas due to the pipe size. MMU has now converted the second dryer from LP to natural gas."

"Farmers Arcadia Coop made a financial stake in the project to run a six inch line to feed its facility. MMU owns the line, maintains it and will service it, but the load that they are going to bring to us year around will directly impact all of the rest of the customers we have," he said. "We are now spreading the cost to operate the gas utility over 12 months; over the non-heating season when our

load was generally very low."

The Arcadia Coop has a significant feed mill operation which they have expanded over the last few years.

"It's constant load; daily usage, regardless of outdoor temperatures was very attractive for them to have natural gas. It was also attractive for us to buy more gas, which directly correlates to the rest of our customers. To me, that's the business model of the municipality," Carroll stated. "I don't want people to misunderstand the point of what we did this for. We needed to do this with or without the coop in Arcadia. Manning was completely subscribed of gas (no more available) from the Denison branch line. There have been

some large industrial customers over by Denison and Harlan that have been added over the years that took all of the firm gas off that line."

He continued, "If we had another large customer who needed natural gas, we could not service them, but we can do that today. Not only from an economic development standpoint, but also significantly reducing the need for customers to be interrupted because, we will be able to transfer the load back and forth a little."

He stressed the expansion was done first and foremost for MMU's customers, not to obtain a new customer, but to help the people who helped build the municipality.

The addition of the

Arcadia customer will help pay for the infrastructure quicker and help customers rates reduce over time.

"That's a feather in our hat," said Carroll.

He spoke highly of the Iowa Utility Board (IUB) for its help and cooperation -- providing awareness of regulations and being helpful to fast-track the paperwork.

He called the field crew for the contractor, fantastic. At one point they had to bore 570-feet under the Union Pacific railroad and Highway 30 all in one shot, installing carrier pipe and then the actual gas line inside it.

Carroll acknowledged Carroll County Engineer Dave Paulson and his team and the Board of Supervisors whose support was essential because most of the pipe was run in the gravel roads.

"To me, this is a 100-year commitment for our community, this isn't a short term pay back. It's going to take a little bit for us to financially recuperate the cost of the project but there is a pay back -- it comes from the large customer we've added, the potential new customers, bringing on another dryer in Templeton, bringing our interruptible customers to non-interruptible status, as we grow and share that load," he stated.

Carroll believes MMU is the only municipality in state that is fed off two Interstate pipelines - the Denison branch line of Northern Natural Gas, and the new source through the Carroll branch line, a separate source of Northern Natural.