



The PSC's Year in Review: Reflecting on our Statewide Work

By Rebecca Cameron Valcq, Chairperson of the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin



As I traveled across the state this past year, I was reminded what our work at the Public Service Commission (PSC or Commission) means for Wisconsin's future. While attending community events and meeting state, local and tribal leaders and industry professionals, I saw the ways we are working together to ensure safe, affordable, reliable and environmentally responsible utility services and equitable access to telecommunications and broadband services in our state.

We had ambitious goals that we set out to reach at the start of the year. The PSC's Wisconsin Broadband Office advanced President Biden's Internet for All initiative by organizing a statewide listening tour, which included nine in-person and two virtual interactive meetings to gather public input about the ways we can improve broadband access, affordability, and adoption in the state.

Following this tour, we learned Wisconsin will be receiving more than \$1 billion to ensure all homes and businesses have access to high-speed internet. The public input gathered during the tour helped develop the plans we will use to guide the deployment of broadband funds in the following years.

I also had the opportunity to celebrate how far we have already come in getting Wisconsinites connected. In June, I visited Boulder Junction in Vilas County to celebrate the completion of their fiber optic broadband construction. Like many communities, Boulder Junction lacked access to high-speed broadband, but thanks to investments delivered by Gov. Evers, PSC awarded \$3.9 million to provide 1,349 homes and businesses access to fiber internet in Boulder Junction beginning this year.

In September, I joined local leaders at a ribbon cutting in Waukesha to recognize the completion of a historic project that now brings clean drinking water from Lake Michigan to Waukesha. The PSC approved these construction plans in recent years, making this project possible. I am proud to share that in 2023 alone, the PSC approved 42 water utility infrastructure construction projects, totaling \$192 million, for improvements to wells, water treatment facilities, and more, including the first PFAS treatment facilities to be authorized.

I had many opportunities throughout the year to highlight the exciting work being led by the PSC's Office of Energy Innovation (OEI). In March, the Commission awarded \$10 million under the Energy Innovation Grant Program to implement a wide variety of projects related to energy efficiency, renewable energy, energy storage, and energy planning. In November, we began accepting applications for historic clean energy programs to help upgrade and strengthen energy

infrastructure in the state, which will support Gov. Evers' goal of zero-carbon electricity consumption by 2050.

The entire PSC team made tremendous strides toward our agency goals. Highlights from this year include touring the Forest County Potawatomi's energy efficiency projects in Crandon, which received support from Focus on Energy; celebrating the development of a community solar project that received OEI funding in Vernon County; visiting a residential construction site in Stoughton to learn about pipeline safety efforts; meeting with representatives from the state's municipal utilities at conferences in the Wisconsin Dells and in Sheboygan; touring renewable energy project sites in southern Wisconsin; and hearing about the benefits of broadband access for the state's workforce from economic development leaders in La Crosse.

Public participation is a critical component of our work. Public input submitted before the Commission ensures we can reach the most fair and reasonable decision possible. During this year's rate cases, we heard customers loud and clear. As a result, the Commission voted to save customers of the five largest electric and gas utilities an approximate \$190 million dollars on bills over the next two years, balancing the needs of customers and utilities.

In 2023, we built strong partnerships, achieved important milestones, and moved critical projects forward to prepare for another successful year ahead. As we look to 2024, we remain committed to working with a diverse network of stakeholders to further our mission.

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