

## **FROM THE BOARD**

Greetings from your OHWA Board and we hope all of you are well and safe as we are firmly headed through the initial rough start of 2021, the year we hoped would turn the corner on the stress and difficulties of 2020.

The OHWA Board continues to meet monthly via Zoom meetings due to ongoing concerns regarding the Covid 19 Pandemic. We anticipate this will be the case through much of 2021 and so any communication with the board or topics for discussion can be submitted to our office manager Mary Tucker at [officemanager@ohwassn.com](mailto:officemanager@ohwassn.com) or by calling 503-569-9731.

## **HELP WITH RENT & BILLS**

The association is aware that due to the Covid pandemic many families are suffering financial hardship. We have not been instituting shut offs or charging late fees on past due accounts, but we also don't want people to fall so far behind they can't dig themselves out. Below is a list of agencies that may have government stimulus funds to help families pay rent/housing and utility bills. If you are having trouble paying bills, please contact the agencies below to get help.

Northwest Human Services Crisis Line: 503-581-5535

Salvation Army Assistance: 503-585-6688

ARCHES (utilities and financial assistance): 503-399-9080 ext. 4600

Oregon Veterans Emergency Financial Assistance Program: 503-373-2085

Polk County Dallas Resource Center: 503-623-9664

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program: 503-588-9016

The OHWA is also willing to set up payment plans for anyone behind on their account. Please call Mary at 503-569-9731 to set that up.

## **FEBRUARY ICE STORM**

The historic ice storm and the prolonged power outage we all just experienced highlighted some of the issues and challenges we have as a small water association and we wanted to communicate with you what was done, what we learned and what we hope to do in the future. We also want to recognize David Simmons and Doug Priest and Mary Tucker for their coordinated response to the emergency.

- 1) PGE was contacted by Jennifer Meltzer, OHWA board President, and David Simmons, water operator to appeal for priority status for repairs and restoration of power because of the 200 households that rely on our water system for their water.
- 2) An email was sent out to all members whom we have an emergency contact email for, stating that there was a need to conserve water during the power outage, especially as the upper tank has less

- overall capacity and it requires several hours with a generator to pump water from the middle to the upper tank.
- 3) David Simmons was able to obtain the use of a large enough generator on a trailer to begin filling the upper tank from the middle tank before the tank ran dry. If the tank had run dry, it would have necessitated issuing a “boil water” notice, which we were fortunately able to avoid.
  - 4) The generator was not large enough to use at the pump station on the lower end of the system where we have our connection with the City of Salem, but PGE was able to restore power to the lower end of the system sooner and this then allowed us to continue to sequentially fill our tanks.
  - 5) This latest emergency showed us that there is a need to remind members of the Association, that the Water Association is not a large public water utility like the City of Salem. Our ability to keep water flowing through the pipes requires vigilance and planning to keep maintaining and improving the system. It also requires that all of the individual members of this non-profit co-op recognize that water usage during an emergency needs to be for essential use only. Having drinking water on hand is also a necessary part of every household’s emergency plan.
  - 6) The Board has finally completed the update to our Master Plan. One of our first priorities will be to decide on the best back up power generation option that meets the requirements of the System in order to be prepared for any future needs that arise.
  - 7) At the last board meeting, we received a few requests for mitigation to water bills due to leaks on the owner’s side of the system. We recognize that leaks happen, and we try to note any abnormal meter readings and inform the members affected. We would appreciate it very much if members were vigilant about draining sprinkler systems in the fall and checking to make sure pipes are well insulated, etc to avoid large losses. This is especially true for members who like to leave their properties for prolonged periods of time, especially in the winter months. Good maintenance and awareness help out all of us on the system.