

# PSC DEPARTMENT DIGEST



Nebraska Public Service Commission  
September 2023  
Edition 17 /Volume 17

## Commission Opens Docket Seeks Comment for Second Round of Capital Projects Fund Grants

The Nebraska Public Service Commission opened docket [CPF-2](#) as it prepares to administer a second round of Federal Capital Projects Fund (CPF) grants to award the nearly 20 million dollars remaining in District 3 for broadband development

Comments filed in the docket were due September 15 and can be found on the Nebraska Broadband Bridge/Capital Projects Fund page of the PSC website < <https://psc.nebraska.gov/telecommunications/nebraska-broadband-bridge-program-nbbpcapital-projects-fund-cpf> >.

The Commission notes that one significant change to the eligible areas will be made due to a change in law. On May 26, LB 683 was signed by the Governor. The bill included a provision removing a restriction that CPF grants awarded in Congressional District 3, are required to be within cities of the second class and villages. The removal of this provision will allow applicants to apply for grants in rural areas, not just cities and villages.

*“We expect the that the remaining funding will be fully awarded in District 3 during the second grant cycle,” Director Cullen Robbins, Telecommunications/NUSF Department.*

In June, the Commission issued an Order ([CPF-1](#)) awarding 65 grants totaling more than \$61 million in CPF support. Thirty-eight of the 65 grants were awarded in Congressional District 3, totaling \$21.03 million. Twenty-seven grants totaling \$40.03 million were awarded in Congressional District 1.

Through an agreement with the Department of Economic Development, the Commission has been designated to administer the CPF grant program. The grant process is similar to the Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program, which also awards grant funding for broadband deployment.

The grant application and procedural schedule will be released at a later date and posted to the [Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program/Capital Project Fund page](#) of the PSC website.

## PSC Opens Investigations into 911 Outages

On September 12, the Nebraska Public Service Commission (PSC) opened separate investigations into recent 911 outages involving telecommunications carriers Lumen ([911-075/PI-248](#)) and Windstream ([911-076/PI-249](#)).

“The disruptions in 911 service that occurred in these two separate incidents is unacceptable,” said Commission Chair Dan Watermeier. “The Commission expects 911 service providers to maintain diverse and redundant connections between 911 centers and their networks.

Determining why the outage resulted in the loss of 911 service over such a wide area of Nebraska will be essential to the Lumen investigation. A primary focus of the Windstream investigation will be to determine why a fire and loss of electrical power at a single Windstream facility resulted in a disruption of 911 service to a large portion of southeast Nebraska.

In both investigations the Commission seeks an explanation as to why the redundancy required of both telecommunications carriers failed and a solution to prevent this from happening again.

## PSC State 911 Department Director to hold NASNA Leadership Role



**David Sankey**  
Director PSC State 911 Dept.

David Sankey, director of the state 911 department has been appointed to the board of the National Association of State 911 Administrators (NASNA).

Established in 1989, NASNA works to facilitate the success of 911 programming at the State, U.S. Territory, and District Level, by providing its members networking, learning opportunities and productive partnerships.

“NASNA is a top resource for states as they continue to transition to the Next Generation of 911 services,” Sankey said. “I look forward to working with my fellow board members to support these efforts.”

A member of NASNA since 2016, Sankey will fill the role of board Treasurer.

## Precision Ag Day

PSC Commissioners and staff spent time in Fillmore County on August 14 as they joined in Precision Ag Day activities. Co-sponsored by the Nebraska Farm Bureau, the day began with a precision agriculture equipment exhibit and tour at family farm in Milligan and was followed by presentations, and a panel discussion at the Public Library in Geneva.

The event provided an opportunity for farmers, ranchers, organization, businesses, and policymakers to explore issues surrounding precision agriculture and how by working together they can stimulate rural broadband expansion and grow the state's economy.



## PSC Makes a Return to Husker Harvest Days



In September, PSC staff manned the booth at the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island (Sept. 12-14).

Located in the [Diversified Industry Building](#) Exhibition area the booth provided an opportunity for attendees to learn about the regulatory process within the state and the services provided by the Commission.

With harvest season upon us, information provided by members of the grain department on Nebraska law and regulation when it comes to the selling, or storage of grain was timely and valuable to those attending.

"We want to be sure that folks in the industry know that you need to be licensed by the PSC in order to be a grain dealer in Nebraska," said Terri Fritz, Director PSC Grain Department.

Staff from the telecommunications department was on hand to answer questions about broadband. The three-day event also provided Commissioners who frequented the booth at different times an opportunity to visit with constituents on a variety of regulatory topics.

## PSC Commissioners & Staff Attend NARUC Summer Policy Summit



With the theme of understanding and preparing for the challenges ahead PSC Commissioners and staff joined the more than 1,000 attendees in Austin, Texas for the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) 2023 Summer Policy Summit (July 16-19).



District 2 Commissioner Tim Schram, chair of the NARUC Committee on Telecommunications presided over several panels, to include one on Broadband Mapping.



The Committee on Telecommunications also presented a Resolution Regarding the Use of Communications Equipment Produced by Firms Posing a National Security Risk, which was approved by the NARUC Board of Directors. Read this resolution as well as other substantive resolutions @ [bit.ly/3pVq6u2](https://bit.ly/3pVq6u2)

The summit also provided new Commissioners an opportunity to learn more about NARUC and the support it provides its members.

## Mid-America Regulatory Conference (MARC) Annual Meeting Focuses on the Grand Vision: Past, Present & Future

Grand Rapids, Michigan was the site for the annual meeting of the Mid-America Regulatory Conference (MARC). PSC Commissioners Watermeier and Kamler participated in the August event.

Commission Kamler who represents District 4, led the discussion as he moderated a panel dealing with keeping watch in the face of escalating climate risks and cybersecurity attacks.

[MARC](#) is an association of regional utility and energy regulatory agencies from 14 states including Nebraska.



# Understanding Your Natural Gas Bill

As we begin the transition from the dog days of summer to the cooler temperatures of fall it's a good time to look at your natural gas bill.

While understanding your bill can seem complicated, the PSC and its jurisdictional natural gas utilities, Black Hills Energy and NorthWestern Energy offer information to help breakdown the charges on your monthly statement.

The PSC Natural Gas Department provides a list along with the definitions of items that may appear on your bill. The list can be found on the [Natural Gas Consumer Information page](#) of the PSC website.

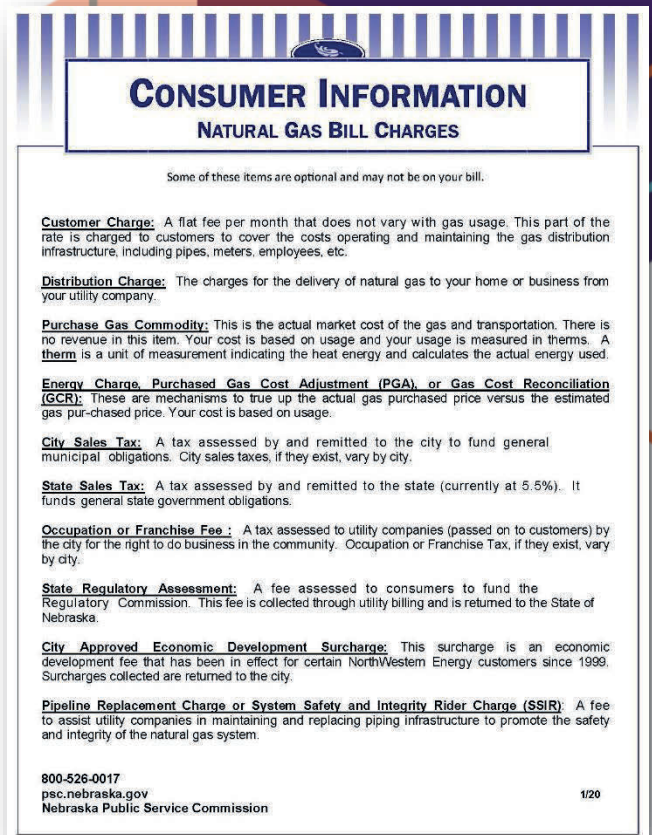
Bill information specific to both Black Hills Energy and NorthWestern Energy can be found on their websites at:

Black Hills Energy:

<https://www.blackhillsenergy.com/understanding-your-bill-nebraska>

NorthWestern Energy:

<https://www.northwesternenergy.com/billing-payment/understanding-your-bill>



**CONSUMER INFORMATION**  
**NATURAL GAS BILL CHARGES**

Some of these items are optional and may not be on your bill.

**Customer Charge:** A flat fee per month that does not vary with gas usage. This part of the rate is charged to customers to cover the costs operating and maintaining the gas distribution infrastructure, including pipes, meters, employees, etc.

**Distribution Charge:** The charges for the delivery of natural gas to your home or business from your utility company.

**Purchase Gas Commodity:** This is the actual market cost of the gas and transportation. There is no revenue in this item. Your cost is based on usage and your usage is measured in therms. A **therm** is a unit of measurement indicating the heat energy and calculates the actual energy used.

**Energy Charge, Purchased Gas Cost Adjustment (PGA), or Gas Cost Reconciliation (GCR):** These are mechanisms to true up the actual gas purchased price versus the estimated gas purchased price. Your cost is based on usage.

**City Sales Tax:** A tax assessed by and remitted to the city to fund general municipal obligations. City sales taxes, if they exist, vary by city.

**State Sales Tax:** A tax assessed by and remitted to the state (currently at 5.5%). It funds general state government obligations.

**Occupation or Franchise Fee:** A tax assessed to utility companies (passed on to customers) by the city for the right to do business in the community. Occupation or Franchise Tax, if they exist, vary by city.

**State Regulatory Assessment:** A fee assessed to consumers to fund the Regulatory Commission. This fee is collected through utility billing and is returned to the State of Nebraska.

**City Approved Economic Development Surcharge:** This surcharge is an economic development fee that has been in effect for certain NorthWestern Energy customers since 1999. Surcharges collected are returned to the city.

**Pipeline Replacement Charge or System Safety and Integrity Rider Charge (SSIR):** A fee to assist utility companies in maintaining and replacing piping infrastructure to promote the safety and integrity of the natural gas system.

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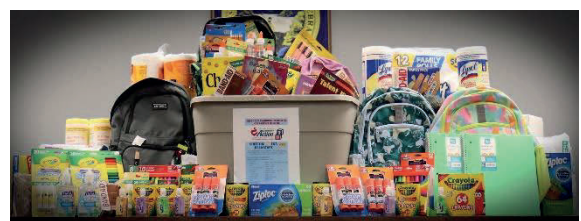
# School Supply Drive Supports Head Start

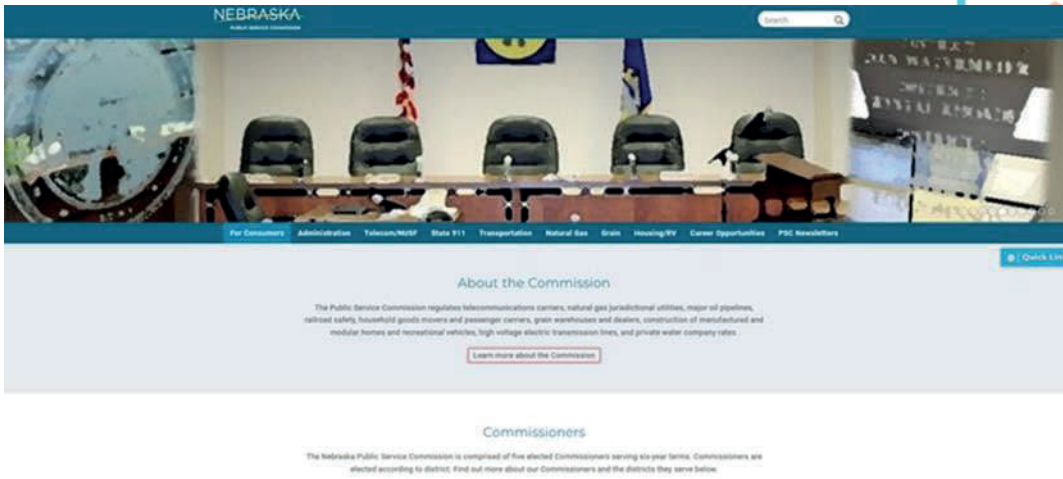
During the month of August, the PSC partnered with Community Action as staff participated in a school supply drive.

Organized by the Social Planning Committee, the drive collected items for the Head Start program. Items collected will be distributed in Lancaster and Saunders Counties.

Community Action works to provide support for local families in the areas of Early Childhood Educations, Homelessness Prevention, Financial and Family Well-Being, Hunger Relief and Health Food Access.

A big thank you to the Social Planning Committee and everyone who donated for helping to make the effort a success.





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Facebook @ <https://www.facebook.com/NEPSC/>

The Nebraska Public Service Commission regulates telecommunications carriers, natural gas jurisdictional utilities, major oil pipelines, railroad safety, household goods movers and passenger carriers, grain warehouses and dealers, construction of manufactured and modular homes and recreation vehicles, high voltage electric transmission lines, and private water company rates.

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