



## Save the Date!

### **\*New Location\***

### **PMEA 2023 Annual Conference – September 6 – 8, 2023 @ Omni Bedford Springs Resort, Bedford**

The PMEA Annual Conference is on the move! Next year, plan to join us at this beautiful and historic property – the hotel has hosted 10 U.S. presidents, including visits by seven presidents during their time in office. *Watch your inbox for exciting updates and details!*

### **2023 Trainings for Line Crews – \* Dates Set and Details Coming Soon \***

Classes to be included for 2023 are:

- ❖ **Advanced Transformers** - March 6 & 7 in Lansdale and March 9 & 10 in Grove City
- ❖ **Rubber Glove Certification** - May 8 - 12 either Lansdale or central
- ❖ **EPZ Grounding** - August 7 & 8 in Lansdale and August 10 & 11 in Grove City
- ❖ **Rigging** - October 23 & 24 in Lansdale and October 26 & 27 in Grove City

Stay tuned for more details and please remember that class sizes are limited so be certain to register as early as possible to take advantage of this free training!

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## The Success of Our Electric Utilities Depends on You

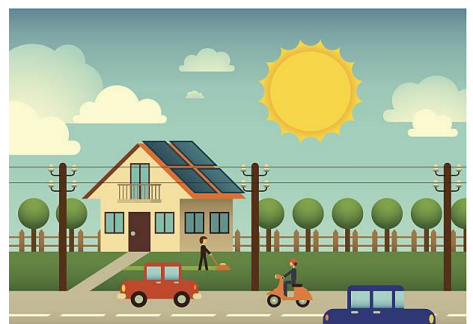
*By: Nicole Beckett, Associate Director for Public Service,  
Meyner Center for the Study of State and Local Government at Lafayette College*

In any new position, there is a transition period. Newly elected officials transition from the role of citizen to that of a local decision maker. Many new board members are surprised by the amount of knowledge needed to serve in office. Immediately upon taking office, the decision making starts and newly elected officials are thrown into the policy-making arena on a wide variety of topics. Research shows that local government is the level of government which people trust most, and it is all our jobs to value and build ongoing trust.

The reality is that becoming an effective council member is hard work. There is so much to learn in public safety, public works, finance, labor relations and other areas specific to the municipality. As one of the thirty-five municipalities that own their own electric utility, your borough is unique in the electric business, and it should not be taken lightly. Being in this business together with the thirty-five municipalities, you are one of the 1.4% in the Commonwealth and the stakes are high. Awareness, Character, Community, Empowerment, Service and Preparedness are key components to successful leadership in public power. Importantly, you are not in this alone, there are resources to assist with developing the leadership needed to operate an electric utility.

As a public power utility, the elected and appointed officials are directly accountable to the customers. Public power customers own the utility. Effective decision-making requires knowledge and understanding. As an elected official, it is not your responsibility to know everything; however, it is your responsibility to understand the utility. It is important for elected officials to know how to answer questions from the community and where to refer the questions to in staff. It is vital to understand the votes you will be making and their long-term impacts to the community you serve.

It is crucial to understand the differences between governance and management. Governing boards are responsible for policymaking, planning, and oversight. They also hire professional staff to handle the management of the utility. It is the responsibility of the elected officials to create a positive work culture as a good employer and to empower their staff. Understanding elected terms exist along with staff turnover, it is important to create structure and consistency along with easy references for the future of the operation. PMEA has tools available to create consistency for their municipalities including a Best Practices Guide and samples of Utility Services Manuals.



## Success of Our Electric Utilities *(continued)*

The success of an electric utility depends on management receiving clear guidance from engaged and knowledgeable government boards. Officials must understand their responsibilities, stay current on the challenges, and serve as an ambassador for their public power community. Board members serve as stewards of the utility and as advocates for the utility and staff. It is important to celebrate Public Power Week and recognize the staff members who keeps the lights on and the operations running smoothly. It is also important to celebrate the community as a stakeholder.

Owning and operating an electric utility is an asset to the community; however, it is complex. There are different challenges. There are risks if the board and management are not well-trained. It is your responsibility to be engaged, attend annual conferences and trainings, learn your network, and connect with the PMEA Board and electric municipalities. Many resources are available through the American Public Power Association, American Municipal Power, and Pennsylvania Municipal Electric Association. Be progressive, ask questions, research the resources, seek to understand and, through these steps, serve in your role as a leader in the public power world.

The PMEA board understands the necessity for onboarding, education and providing resources. The Meyner Center for the Study of State and Local Government at Lafayette College is assisting PMEA with a program on Electric Governance 101 for local government leaders. Stay tuned for more information.

For additional information, please contact Nicole - [beckett@lafayette.edu](mailto:beckett@lafayette.edu).

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## PA Broadband Development Authority: Setting a Future Direction

*An interview with PBDA Executive Director Brandon Carson*

The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority, signed into law on December 22, 2021, is charged with creating a statewide broadband plan and distributing Federal and State monies for broadband expansion projects in unserved and underserved areas of the Commonwealth. The Authority will seek to close Pennsylvania's ever-present digital divide, allowing all citizens to get connected at home, at work, or on the road.



This newly established Authority acts as an independent agency of the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and is charged with administering Federal and State funds allocated for the purposes of expanding broadband services in Pennsylvania.

Brandon Carson was appointed as the Executive Director of the Authority. He comes to this role with more than 15 years of experience working in non-profit and local government management advancing community and economic development projects and initiatives across Pennsylvania. Most recently, he has focused his efforts on increasing access to affordable broadband services in unserved and underserved areas. With the Authority, Brandon is working to develop and implement the state's broadband mission, to foster and create equitable, affordable, and robust high-speed broadband services connecting Pennsylvania for the 21st century and beyond.

*Brandon sat down with The Live Wire to share more about the work of the Authority and its role in broadband deployment in the Commonwealth.*

**Q: It has been almost a year since the PBDA was signed into law. In this time, what have been the priorities of the authority?**

The Authority has been working on several priorities over the last year. We've increased staff capacity to include a compliment of 5 and will continue to grow in the coming months. Work on a coordinated statewide broadband plan began late last year and included a stakeholder engagement process that generated a significant amount of feedback and input. The plan was recently approved by the Authority Board and will serve as a foundation for future planning and investments.

Additionally, staff have been proactively meeting with a diverse group of stakeholders who will be instrumental in accomplishing our goal of high-speed internet access for all Pennsylvanians. We've established a series of sub-committees, each with their own specific focus, that will help to inform the Authority's work. Looking ahead, we're planning a series of roundtables to engage providers, local governments, digital equity groups, and others with an interest in the efforts of the Authority.

**Q: The need for data is critical to making the appropriate investments. What is the charge of the subcommittee? Once the state has baseline data (or maps), what will be the strategy in the longer term for ensuring the data is accurate and updated?**

Initially, the Data & Mapping Sub-Committee will assist the Authority and its partners in verifying the accuracy of the Fabric and broadband availability data being released by the FCC. It's important that we accurately identify areas that are unserved or underserved so we can plan grant investments accordingly. Additionally, the group will work to create a robust statewide broadband map that will be publicly available. This map will assist in identifying eligible project areas for grant funds administered by the Authority and to estimate the cost of deploying services in an area. Development of the statewide map will be an iterative process and will be updated as projects are identified, grant funds are awarded, and projects are completed.

*(continued on next page)*

## Broadband Authority (continued)

**Q: Tell our readers more about the three pots of funding under the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and how will the Commonwealth prioritize its focus and investments in these areas?**

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) allocated funding to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to stand-up three programs focused on broadband infrastructure and digital equity. Two of those programs, Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) and the Digital Equity Act, are comprised of direct funding allocations to the states determined by need as outlined in the pending FCC national broadband map. The Authority has submitted initial planning applications for those programs, which will provide over \$6 million in funds for statewide broadband planning that will take place in 2023.

NTIA's Enabling Middle Mile Program includes \$1 billion in funding to support middle mile infrastructure needs. The program closed September 30<sup>th</sup> and NTIA recently released an [article](#) about the applications received. The Authority did not submit an application directly, but, provided Letters of Support for a number of entities across the Commonwealth that did. Based on the information provided, NTIA does not anticipate making award announcements for this program before March of 2023.

The Authority will prioritize projects for IIJA funding based on federal guidance. For example, BEAD requires that investments be prioritized as follows:

1. Unserved areas (Lacking 25/3 Mbps)
2. Underserved (Lacking 100/20 Mbps)
3. Community anchor institutions (lacking 1 Gbps synchronous connections)

**Q: While on the topic of IIJA, how much money will the state be receiving and when does PBDA expect to rollout the funding and how?**

Funding determinations have not yet been made and are pending the updated maps from the FCC. However, the NTIA plans to announce BEAD allocations by June 30, 2023. Once final allocations are made to the states, we'll submit an initial proposal to NTIA for review and consideration. Twenty percent of Pennsylvania's funding allocation will be released following approval of the initial proposal with a final proposal required before the remaining funds are released. Please keep in mind we don't expect any implementation dollars to be available until 2024. In the meantime, we will be working diligently throughout 2023 to lay a solid foundation for broadband investments across Pennsylvania.

**Q: The current PA law (Title 66: Chapter 30\*) generally prohibits municipalities from building and operating broadband networks. How does PBDA view this restriction, and will the Authority be supporting a repeal of this provision?**

While Chapter 30 does impose certain restrictions on political subdivisions (or entities established by political subdivisions), it does not prohibit those entities from deploying broadband. Similarly, Chapter 30 doesn't prevent local governments from competing for BEAD subgrants, but it will require that any political subdivision seeking to serve as a provider and offer broadband services for a fee to either be grandfathered, that is, they were charging fees for broadband service as of the effective date of the provision, or they offer the right of first refusal to the local exchange telecommunications company serving that particular area.

Any changes to Chapter 30 would need to be coordinated with the Pennsylvania General Assembly. The Authority is willing to engage in conversations as requested by legislative members and stakeholders.

**Q: How can our readers stay informed on the work of PBDA and its subcommittees?**

I'd encourage them to visit our website [Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority - PA Department of Community & Economic Development](#) where they'll find broadband resources, planning documents, information on the Authority's board and sub-committees, and funding opportunities.

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## Finance Workshop 2023 Announcement



Mark your calendars now for the 2023 PMEA Finance Workshop which will be held in person in conjunction with the annual conference. The Finance Workshop will be on Wednesday, September 6, at the Omni Bedford Springs. Additional details and registration materials will be made available closer to the date. Watch the newsletter for updates!

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## APPA Legislative Rally 2023

Plan now to attend the American Public Power Association's (APPA) Legislative Rally in Washington, DC, scheduled for February 27 – March 1. There has never been a more important time to have the voice of public power heard in the halls of our nation's capitol. It will be the start of a new session for Congress and Pennsylvania's Congressional delegation will be playing key roles in determining the fate of policy issues. PMEA will be arranging meetings with the delegation members so please let us know if you are attending. We look forward to seeing you in DC.



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## Associate Member Spotlight

RTR Energy Solutions is a multidisciplinary asset management firm specializing in project and construction management services that support the electric utility industry. They provide their customers with safe, cost-effective solutions for full-scale projects while maintaining a minimal footprint. They provide the highest quality assurance no matter the job because even the smallest of details can have the biggest impact on the power grid and the customers it serves.

The RTR team brings a diverse set of skills and decades of hands-on experience working directly for top utilities in the country. As a multidisciplinary staff working together under one roof, they have a collaborative process to the projects that allows them to best serve a client's needs. From conception to completion, RTR Energy Solutions provides value to every stage of the project. Their vast knowledge in the field gives the company the autonomy to anticipate and identify potential disruptions to project operations and create alternate strategies to maintain deadlines.



Technology and automation have revolutionized the industry. They utilize drones and LiDAR technology because these save time, money, and avoid putting people in danger. RTR has also developed a proprietary suite of web based mobile apps that can be applied to the needs of any job. The RTR team uses apps for everything from environmental inspections to project status reporting, constructability reporting, sagging and even drone flight logging.

Visit RTR at <https://rtrenergysolutions.com/wp1/> or contact Jay at [jayp@rtrenergysolutions.com](mailto:jayp@rtrenergysolutions.com).

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## We Want to Hear From You

Please share with us your exciting projects and photos for future newsletters. Your submissions should be sent to [bosak@papublicpower.org](mailto:bosak@papublicpower.org) at any time and we will use them in upcoming editions.

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