

TMEPA Annual Meeting 2017 Wrap-Up

By Jeremy Elrod, TMEPA

Last week TMEPA held its 51st Annual Meeting at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee. The three day conference is an opportunity for Tennessee's public power providers to learn about some of the latest trends, meet and mingle with their peers, and to recognize excellence in their industry. Let's take a brief look at the meetings, discussions, awards, and a farewell and a beginning.

Lead Without Speaking – Nonverbal Influence

The meeting's keynote speaker was Erick Rheam, a West Point graduate with nearly a decade in the utility industry. He shared how people give cues through their body language – how they hold their arms, cross their legs, or where they look when asked a question. Learning about these cues can aid professionals in reading others in a meeting, and help project the right message to others. Rheam's session left an impact on attendees and made everyone much more aware of how their bodies give a message almost as much as what they say. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about his session was him being there at all, as Rheam suffered second and third degree burns after a campfire accident less than a week prior.



Learning About the Latest Issues in the Public Power and Electric Utility Industry



Every TMEPA Annual Meeting is put together with input from utility managers and staff to make sure speakers and presentations are on topics their utilities are facing. This year's meeting included information on wireless antennas and small cells, ethics in municipal government, workplace security and active shooters, transformer performance, cybersecurity, employee insurance and enhancing customer experience. From presentations from experts to panels made up on utility employees sharing their knowledge, the Annual Meeting is a great opportunity to up-to-date briefings on a wide range of topics.

Legislative and TVA Updates

Part of every year's program is an update on state and federal legislative issues and to invite TVA to speak to TMEPA members. Tennessee's public power lobbyists in Nashville talked about this year's legislative session and its impact on municipal power providers, along with may be coming next year. APPA's Amy Thomas gave attendees an update on public power issues in Washington, D.C. TVA was well represented with CEO Bill Johnson serving as the speaker at Thursday's Past Presidents Luncheon, and Vice President of Enterprise Planning Laura Campbell speaking on Friday.



Mixing, Mingling, Networking, Fellowship



It doesn't say it on the program, but one of the biggest benefits to TMEPA's Annual Meeting is meeting with managers and staff at municipal electric utilities across the state. This provides an opportunity to find out how other utility managers handle a particular issue or to see what is happening at other utilities. With the Annual Meeting's many sponsors and vendors attending the meeting, managers also learn about new products and services that can benefit their utility and community. The opportunity to network and mingle with other municipal power providers alone is worth attending TMEPA's Annual Meeting.

Awards

Several awards were given out last week, which highlights the positive impact public power and municipal power providers have in many communities across the state. The recipients were:

- Community Service Award – Small System – Erwin Utilities
- Community Service Award – Mid-Size System – Paris Board of Public Utilities
- Community Service Award – Large System – Sevier County Electric System
- Power of Excellence – Carlos Smith, Miller Martin
- Outstanding Service Award – Darrell Gillespie, Dickson Electric System



A Farewell...

This year's Annual Meeting marked a significant transition in the history of the organization. Mike Vinson, TMEPA's executive director for fourteen years, is retiring at the end of this month. At the Annual Meeting banquet, he was awarded the TMEPA Power of Excellence Award for his many efforts on behalf of TMEPA and public power in Tennessee. He was given a clock as a small token to commemorate his "time" at TMEPA, along with an award from MTIDA. This follows Vinson [receiving](#) the APPA Alan Richardson Statesmanship Award last month. Vinson [talks about](#) his retirement in this month's newsletter.



... And a Beginning



Last week's Annual Meeting was also the first with Brian Solsbee on board at TMEPA. He takes the reigns of TMEPA at the beginning of August as Executive Director/CEO. He has been with TMEPA since June 12, and has already hit the ground running. He shares [a few thoughts](#) in this week's newsletter on his commitment to TMEPA and its members.

We hope everyone who attended this year's Annual Meeting enjoyed their time in Memphis and took back something they can use at their utility. Also, put next year's Annual Meeting on your calendar – July 11-13, 2018 at the Chattanooga Hotel in Chattanooga, Tennessee. See you there!

