



MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

The *joys* and *struggles* of budgeting

The month of September is actually one of the busiest times of the year. We take advantage of the hopefully cooler, dryer weather to complete construction and maintenance projects before the snow flies. We also use this time to review how the year has progressed so we can formalize plans for the upcoming year.

One of the largest undertakings every year is constructing the annual budget. Those unfamiliar with such undertakings (my wife) tend to take a negative view of a budget and consider one to be the formulation of unreasonable goals. In truth, a budget is a compilation of historic data, known changes to the data, and a somewhat specific plan on what can be done in the upcoming year within the current financial constraints. For many, the most stressful part of creating a budget comes from having to plan in advance (again, you know who).

The basis of the budget is to predict revenues so we can then predict what expenditures can be made. The variables that have to be considered leave room for a rather wide range of potential outcomes to each and every facet covered in this process. These variables include obvious things, like the weather, and the not-so-obvious, like legislative actions and

load growth/decline. Typically, using the worst-case scenario in making budget predictions ensures the best potential for having a successful year. If revenues are predicted low and expenses high, then we have room to add on to our yearly goals if reality turns out to be better than expected. We have utilized this philosophy in the past to address things much earlier than we had anticipated, which has enabled us to avoid rate increases over the last seven years.



Terry Stout
CEO/General Manager

A solid, attainable budget requires grounded decisions based on factual data and a clear plan for the future. Historical data, if it is available, serves as a great base from which we can build. Adding in or replacing that data with the most current information is a vital step in this process. A good example of this would be right-of-way clearing. When moving from the old cycle to the new, shorter cycle, we expect that costs will be reduced, but we cannot predict by how much. When we bid that work out the next time, we will know the revised, reduced cost associated with the shorter cycle. The same holds true for work performed by our other contractors. Obviously, things like severe storms can alter each year's reality, so consideration has to be given to and accounted for this in the budgeting process. If they do not materialize to the degree expected, we can potentially shift budget dollars around to try to get ahead in other areas. If they end up being worse than expected, we may have to

Continued on Page 20

Happy Birthday!

If you see these HREA employees this month, be sure to wish them a very happy birthday!

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Richard Crouser | Sept. 1 |
| Rachel Rollins-Forinash | Sept. 15 |
| Chris Davison | Sept. 29 |
| Lloyd Mason | Sept. 29 |



The office is closed **Monday, Sept. 4,** for Labor Day.

Emergency service is available at
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MAPPING MINUTE

BY MICHAEL GRIFFITH

LET'S GET FESTIVE

Howdy everyone! I'm beaming with excitement this month because my favorite season is coming. Fall! When I'm not at work doing the usual GIS fall planning of next year's pole inspections, readying maps, and other data analysis, I like to spend the weekends with my wife and kids enjoying the sights, sounds, and smells of autumn. I know that with fall brings not only changes in the weather, but also changes in daily routines and our geographies as well.



I know you may be thinking that I'm being a huge nerd, but hear me out. During the summer, you are more inclined to travel, or maybe you didn't travel much and had to take your kids to a babysitter in the mornings. However, now that kids are in school, your morning routines are changing, which means that your route to work may be changing. Or maybe your kids have extracurricular activities and any chance of normalcy is out the window as you travel all over the tri-county area (in frustration because it is a school night and you know you won't be home until at least 10 p.m. Ugh!). So while you may not think about how your geography changes, think again! Pay attention to your surroundings the next time you are joyfully (read: writhing in agony) driving your kids to a tournament that changed locations last minute from Bridgeport to Moorefield. Watch as how the low, rolling hills slowly change to steep peaks and winding switchbacks, or how you have great cell

service and suddenly have to wave your phone around like a crazy person to just get that one bar. You'll see that West Virginia has a diverse ecology and geography. Maybe that's why our state motto is "Wild and Wonderful."

Speaking of fall and traveling, it's important to note that one of my family's favorite fall activities is visiting some of the amazing autumn festivals that our state has

to offer. In September alone, there are 31 festivals and activities. Holy moly! The month is jam-packed with things to do, from the Italian Heritage Festival in Clarksburg to the Buckwheat Festival in Kingwood. There are so many places to visit around West Virginia!

What festivals, if any, do you visit in September? For my family, fall doesn't really begin until the week of the Buckwheat Festival (which usually puts a damper on archery season plans). In researching for this article, I found many new festivals that I might take my family to. You should, too! Take this map as a guide and go on an adventure! You never know what you may find!

So until next time, let's roll out the maps and blaze some trails! This has been your Mapping Minute.

MICHAEL GRIFFITH is the geographic information systems (GIS) specialist at Harrison REA. He writes monthly on geography, mapping, and environmental topics.

Continued from Page 19

delay some expenditure in other areas and fall behind in our long-range plan.

There are risks involved in every budget development, but with experience and an honest opinion on what can actually be accomplished, those risks can be somewhat mitigated. Sure, there

will be predictions that are off — none of us know exactly what will happen in the future. If we did, we probably would not be going to work every day.

I hope your summer has been good, but start getting ready for the upcoming winter while you can.



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JOHN DEERE



Common Ground Alliance



TECHNOLOGY

BY LLOYD MASON

SMART BILL PAYMENTS ARE **HERE**

These are exciting times. Automation is finally getting to the general public. As the ever-growing technology sector blossoms, we are starting to see the integration of code and hardware produce benefits for regular folks. In recognizing this trend, we are now capable of offering services on a much higher level than ever before. In past articles, we explored various devices and terms and what effect they may have on our lives. As a cooperative, we accept the responsibility of procuring and distributing

power at the most affordable price possible. Along this line of thinking, we as a group have been exploring just what it may take to move us into the future.



One of the newest tools in this endeavor is called SmartHub. This is an easy-to-use app for your iOS

or Android device, as well as a web interface similar to the one you are already using. This new software adds many more tools to help our members control their bill payments and monitor their energy use. Here are some of the new benefits of SmartHub:

- 1) Recurring payments — one of the most common requests for online payments — are now possible.
- 2) Manage your account and pay bills anywhere and at any time of the day.
- 3) Add your credit card or checking account to auto-pay. We do the rest for you.

- 4) Take an active role in your energy management with the new member management screen.
- 5) Report an outage from your smartphone or tablet.
- 6) Should you need further service to contact someone directly, SmartHub has in-app e-mail and call functionality.
- 7) Viewing your bill online is just a tap away.
- 8) Another nice feature is the ability to view past bills with energy use history and discover deeper insight with the Trending Data tool.
- 9) Did you say “social media?” View and respond to social media posts directly inside the application!
- 10) Need a little help with all that? There are member help videos right inside the app and even step-by-step instructions to ensure a successful session.
- 11) Still need some help? Just call us and we will be happy to assist with patience and understanding.

We are spreading the word to ensure everyone is up to date with SmartHub. We are always looking for the next right step. By focusing on improvement, we continue to uncover opportunities to get better at what we do.

Till next time @TechCorner.

LLOYD MASON is the manager of information technology at Harrison REA. He writes monthly on technology issues.

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