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# The Beginning

The Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities has played an important part in the history of Iowa's community-owned, locally controlled utilities.

Through **IAMU** and other joint action groups, municipal utilities find many economies of scale that they need to be efficient, without the baggage of diseconomies that plague many large organizations.

***“What makes an organization great is the attitude, fortitude, and support of its membership. The Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities is a true reflection of the desire of its membership to succeed. IAMU, through its history, has proven that when we stand together united with a common goal, there is virtually nothing that we cannot accomplish.”***

**– Allen Bonderman\*, retired General Manager, Atlantic Municipal Utilities**

Iowa's history of municipal utilities dates back to before the actual creation of **IAMU**. In fact, Iowa was a leader in municipal utilities on a national level from the beginning of municipal utilities. The city of Fairfield, Iowa, marked the beginning of municipal electric utilities as we know them by lighting up six 2,000-candle-power arc lamps at about the same time as the opening of Thomas Edison's Pearl Street Station in New York in 1882, which many people cite as the beginning of the electric utility industry.

Fast forward some 35 years and by 1917, there were 218 electric systems in Iowa – 44 were municipally owned. Just 10 years later, Iowa had 156 municipal electric systems. Private utilities reacted to the growth of municipal utilities by calling on state regulation to protect their monopolies and their profits. Private utilities also began to consolidate under large holding companies. By the mid-1920s, 16 holding company leaders controlled 85 percent of the nation's electricity, and the establishment of new municipal systems came to a halt. The result of this change was that by 1937, Iowa had a net loss of 18 municipal systems from just 10 years earlier.

The 1920s represented a temporary setback for municipal utilities that soon reversed. In 1935, the Public Utility Holding Company Act, the Federal Power Act, and the Rural Electrification Act passed, spurring renewed growth of municipal systems. A major turning point in Iowa came in October 1937 when a District Court awarded the City of Corning \$9,066.64 in its suit against the Iowa-Nebraska Power Company. The suit stemmed from legal delays the company used when Corning voters approved the establishment of a municipal light plant in 1934. The judgment was based on lost revenue and increased costs resulting from the delays and was upheld by the Iowa Supreme Court in June 1939. This decision represented a change that made it easier to establish new municipal utilities in Iowa.

It was during the 1930s that Iowa municipal utilities became interested in creating some sort of unifying organization to represent and support their interests. In 1932, delegates to the annual League of Municipalities (now the Iowa League of Cities) convention initially decided to form a utilities subdivision. Two years later, the subdivision was officially established. Participation was entirely voluntary, but municipal utility communities had to be paid members of the League to join the subdivision.

During these early years, the success and public support of city electric utilities provided fertile soil for establishing municipal gas systems, as natural gas pipelines were extended across Iowa in the 1930s and 1940s.

*\*Special thanks to Allen for recording the first 50 years of **IAMU** history. Much of this publication's content for the first five decades comes from Allen's history.*

# The First Decade

## 1947-1956

**IAMU was officially established in 1947.** Partly over policy and partly over personalities, the utilities voted to withdraw from the League in 1946 and on Feb. 3, 1947, adopted a constitution for a new organization: the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities. The new constitution provided that **IAMU** would function as a subdivision of the Iowa League of Municipalities but would have its own officers and directors, have its own dues structure, budget and treasury, and act, for the most part, independently from the League. The Executive Committee met for the first time at the Kirkwood Hotel in Des Moines on Feb. 19, 1947. Originally, **IAMU** had no paid staff. All organization work was done by committees. The first **IAMU** president was Mayor T.G. Fultz of Pella, who served for three years.

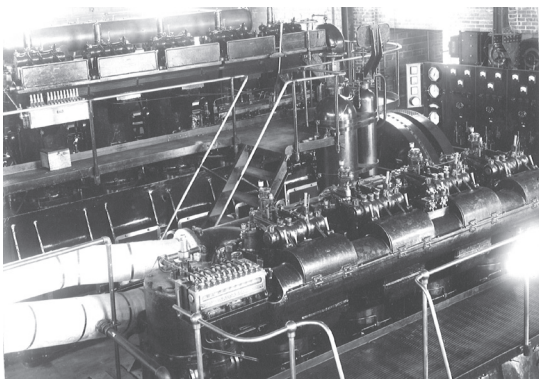
It is not known for sure who drafted the **IAMU** Constitution and Bylaws. Whether the authors were extremely far-sighted or just extremely lucky, we will never know, but whoever developed the purpose section of the Constitution and Bylaws did an excellent job. With only a couple of minor changes, this section remains exactly as it was originally adopted. The language was specific enough, yet ambiguous enough to allow **IAMU** to branch into numerous member services without jeopardizing its non-profit, tax-exempt status.

Article I, Section 2 reads:

***The objects of the Association are: (1) to render services toward the solution of problems relating to construction, operation, management, administration, and improvement of municipally owned utilities; (2) to conduct conventions where these problems may be discussed and their solutions offered; (3) to study problems and report findings; (4) to organize and conduct legislative programs directed toward the improvement and protection of municipally owned utilities in Iowa; (5) to collect and disseminate helpful facts and information; (6) to give publicity to such happenings as they relate to existing or proposed municipally owned utilities; (7) to promote cooperation between and among member cities and other public and quasi-public co-operations, organizations, or agencies, and with similar organizations or other states; to publish magazines, periodicals, or any other type of publication for the purpose of informing its members and the general public as to the improvements and objects for which the Association is organized; and (8) to do all things necessary and proper to effect the preceding purposes.***

In the fall of 1952, **IAMU** members decided to incorporate as a separate entity rather than remain a League subdivision. Relations with the League remained friendly, and the two organizations continued to work closely on common issues.

From the get-go, **IAMU** has been committed to helping members. Early on, biannual meetings provided a forum for municipal officials and managers to hear speakers address technical, political, and other issues, including how some issues might affect their operations. In those early years, programs were split fairly equally between electric, water, and general interest topics. Other conference topics included reports on the development of the Missouri River Basin by the Bureau of Reclamation, debates over board versus council control of utilities, public relations, advertising, and ratemaking. The subject of establishing new municipal natural gas systems was also frequently included during this decade.



# The Second Decade

## 1957-1966

**Many of the major issues during IAMU's first decade continued to be the focus of attention.** The state continued to attempt to establish a Public Utility Commission and to include municipals as regulated utilities. **IAMU** fought hard to be excluded from any such legislation and remain locally regulated. Resolutions of opposition were adopted at several consecutive meetings, and a lobbyist, Wilmot C. Hendrix, was hired in 1961 to represent **IAMU** at the legislature. Wilmot was later replaced by William Sueppel, and the first of many "special assessments" was requested to fund **IAMU's** legislative efforts.

The migration to Giant Power, as it was often called, was also impacting **IAMU's** member utilities. Some, who would later be considered far-sighted – such as Arie Verrips, Earl King, and others – proposed that public power become involved in owning large power plants rather than becoming dependent upon investor-owned utilities for power supply. Arie's "Tie or Die" campaign led to the establishment of the Missouri Basin Municipal Power Agency and the Missouri Basin Municipal Electric Cooperative Association for power supply and transmission for customers on the Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative system in western Iowa. A similar organization, the Northern Iowa Municipal Cooperative Association (NIMECA) was established for customers on the Corn Belt transmission system.

During the first 20 years of **IAMU's** existence, only three men served as Secretary and Treasurer. CC. McCarthy of Webster City served the first three years, from 1947 through 1949. Glen Yarger, then of Waverly, served his first stint of two years



from 1950 through 1951. Merlin Wait of Coon Rapids then served eight consecutive terms, from 1952 through 1959. Glen Yarger, who had accepted a position as Manager of the Spencer Municipal Utilities, then stepped back in for seven terms, from 1960 through 1966. The Secretary was responsible for all communications to and from the Association, for keeping all records and for paying all bill, among many other responsibilities. Because of the work load, the Secretary was paid a stipend, which began at \$200 in 1947 and increased to \$600 in 1966. As time went on, the job demands increased to the point where, in 1965, the Association began to strongly consider a full-time Secretary, or Executive Director, to take over the day-to-day functions. This person could also handle some lobbying, as well as perform member service work.

The need for a full-time Executive Director was reinforced just a year later in 1966, when legislation establishing the Iowa State Commerce Commission (ISCC) passed. **IAMU** leadership was faced with providing assistance to members in complying with the new rules and regulations related to service regulation. The difficulty of this task soon caused a change in attitude about increasing dues to fund full-time staff.

### Noteworthy Nugget

The 1960s saw the creation of the gas division.



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# The Third Decade

## 1967-1976

**The beginning of this decade marked a major milestone in IAMU's evolution – the hiring of an executive director. IAMU** hired L.A. “Pat” Touchae as Executive Director and his wife, Jean, to help him in 1968. Pat had been a four-term Mayor of Waterloo, Vice President of the Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, and Acting Director of the Iowa Development Commission.

Soon after being hired, Pat and Jean opened a 200-square-foot office in the Insurance Exchange Building in downtown Des Moines. The office consisted of two rooms. Used desks and office equipment was purchased when they could afford it, or borrowed from Cedar Falls Utilities or the Sanborn Savings Bank when they couldn't afford it.

The biggest challenge facing **IAMU** and its new Executive Director was to convince as many municipals as possible to become paid members. For the first few years, Pat's primary duties were threefold:

- ◆ Attempt to visit every municipal electric and gas system in the state and encourage their financial and general support,
- ◆ Represent the Association at the state capitol and lobbied hard on behalf of members, and
- ◆ Publish a newsletter, listing the news from members and providing a mechanism for exchanging information.

The Legislative Committee, which had been established as the first **IAMU** Standing Committee at its organizational meeting in 1947, was restructured. Legislative activity was hectic during this decade. President Jim Fuller of Muscatine made a plea at the 1971 Fall Meeting for members to voluntarily contribute an amount up to one-half of their annual **IAMU** dues to a new “L&R Fund,” which would be maintained in a separate account from regular budget moneys and used only for legal and research expenditures. The L&R Fund financed a white paper that assessed the Home Rule legislation and was used by city attorneys for many years as a “bible” on Home Rule issues.



*“Pat brought IAMU to a new beginning, and nurtured and cared for its members like a doting father.”*

- Allen Bonderman

These were difficult times for **IAMU**, as it struggled to survive. The new dues formulas amounted to an increase of 500 to 600 percent, and some municipal utilities were slow to respond. Pat played the role of a salesman as he traveled throughout the state and, slowly but surely, convinced utilities to join the Association. Despite Pat's efforts, the financial picture was usually bleak. But Pat and others did whatever was necessary to make it through these tough years.

**IAMU**'s modest office, too small to begin with, was quickly outgrown. In March 1973, **IAMU** moved up one floor in the Insurance Exchange Building, to Room 520, and provided around 600 square feet of space. A couple of attempts were made to provide Jean with some secretarial help; and in February 1975, **IAMU** hired Wanda Noble.

In 1974, **IAMU** President Allen Roos of Orange City established a standing Awards Committee and named Harold Schiebout of Sioux Center as Chairman.

By the end of 1975, Pat's health problems caused him to consider retirement plans. He then informed the Board that he had set a target date for retirement: Sept. 1, 1978. So an orderly transition could be made, Pat's replacement would be hired as soon as possible, as an Assistant Director. In June 1976, the position was offered to Bart Rule.

## Noteworthy Nuggets

In 1970, **IAMU** launched the Safety Committee and group life insurance program. A milestone was reached in 1972, when **IAMU**'s membership passed 100 for the first time.

# The Fourth Decade

## 1977-1986

**The fourth 10 years of IAMU's existence were a period of great turmoil in the energy industry.** The OPEC oil embargoes of the early 1970s were followed by steadily increasing oil prices, which caused prices of all forms of energy to rise and in turn resulted in double-digit inflation.

Due to steadily increasing regulatory activities, both state and federal, the IAMU Board decided that a standing committee was needed to monitor such activity; and in spring 1977, IAMU established the Rules Review Committee.

Although water utility issues had been a part of IAMU programs since its beginnings, the need for a Water Section was recognized and discussed by the Board in 1977. At the Annual Meeting in 1978, the membership voted to establish a Water Section.

Also in 1978, Bart Rule became IAMU's second executive director, when Pat officially retired.

By 1979, both the Rules Review Committee and the IAMU Board realized that additional staff was needed to help monitor and respond to proposed regulations and to help members comply with these new rules. In June 1979, Robert "Bob" Haug became the newest IAMU staff member. One of Bob's first projects was to develop a model electric tariff to replace the model developed several years earlier. Bob also spent time on a program that he dubbed the "Energy Race," to help member systems with the actual energy auditing process. Workshops were held to train utility staff in the mechanics of performing residential audits.

During the late 70s and into the 80s, Iowa's municipal utilities were seen as leaders in the energy conservation arena, and many of them were recognized regionally and nationally for their efforts. Wes Birdsall and the Osage Municipal Utilities received numerous awards, including the President's Award for Energy Efficiency. In the first seven years that APPA presented the Energy Innovator Award, Iowa municipal utilities received six awards, including Sioux Center Municipal Utilities (twice), Coon Rapids Municipal Utilities, Sanborn Municipal Utilities, Traer Municipal Utilities, and Osage Municipal Utilities.

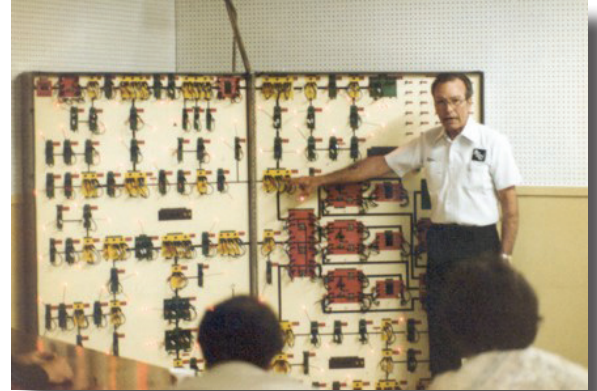
A turning point in IAMU's history, credited as significantly increasing membership and revenue for the organization, was establishing the Safety Group Insurance Program. In December 1979, the Board approved the concept of an IAMU group property and casualty insurance program. Available only to IAMU member water, gas, and electric utilities, the program was intended to reduce costs of insurance to members by providing training and safety programs to decrease losses. In addition to substantially reduced premiums, the program offered the potential for a dividend, if losses proved to be less than anticipated by the insurer, Employers Mutual Casualty (EMC) of Des Moines. The program would be overseen by an Insurance Trust, with IAMU-appointed members. The Safety Group Insurance Program enjoyed phenomenal success, not only in reducing costs and providing dividends, but in increasing IAMU membership to numbers.

Politically, the most important piece of legislation passed during this period was the "Home Rule" bill. This bill, passed and signed in 1986, effectively deregulated municipal gas and electric utilities, leaving them under the jurisdiction of the Iowa Utilities Board only as "service-regulated" utilities.

Bob Haug left IAMU in 1982 to establish a consulting firm called Public Power Services, which provided numerous services to Iowa's municipal utilities. In May 1986, Bart resigned as Executive Director. After an extensive search, the Board selected Bob as IAMU's third Executive Director.

### Noteworthy Nuggets

Iowa's first municipally owned cable television system began construction in 1981 and was the shared system built by Sanborn and Primghar. In 1986, IAMU got its first computer.



# The Fifth Decade

## 1987-1996

The fifth decade began with the establishment of the **Iowa Public Agency Investment Trust (IPAIT)**. The Association saw a need for a safe method to pool financial investments of cities and utilities, and provided the initial seed money for the legal work necessary to create IPAIT. The Iowa League of Municipalities (now the Iowa League of Cities) and the Iowa State Association of Counties became partners.

Expanding services during this time required additional staff, which also meant a need for more office space. **IAMU** moved again, this time renting a total of 1,700 square feet at 325 Insurance Exchange Building. This was an increase of 800 square feet over the former office location. An additional 430 square feet was added in 1991, in a separate area on the third floor, as Association staff continued to grow.

**IAMU** membership continued to rapidly grow during the 1990s, in part because of the creation of the Safety Department in 1991 and starting Safety Clusters two years later. Work began on an idea for model OSHA compliance manuals. The Iowa Energizer – a utility newsletter that could be customized for each member system – was also born in 1991.

Negotiations with Insurance Exchange Building managers in 1992 resulted in yet another move of **IAMU**'s office facilities, this time to the 3,197 square feet Suite 927.

The model OSHA compliance project came to fruition with the release of manuals for Hazard Communications, Bloodborne Pathogens, Respiratory Protection, Confined Space, and Hazardous Energy Control (Lockout/Tagout). The manuals not only proved to be an invaluable resource to **IAMU**'s membership, but were made available in other states and provided a revenue source for **IAMU**.

Several administrative changes came in 1993. The Legislative and Resolutions Committee, **IAMU**'s oldest standing committee, was merged with the Administrative Rules Review Committee into what is now termed the Legislative and Rules Committee. What's more, the Bylaws were amended in October to allow non-voting memberships, to accommodate entities belonging to several safety clusters. Other changes included modifying the official location of the office from Des Moines to Polk County.



The growth in size of **IAMU** staff, driven by grants from the DNR and the Iowa Energy Center and by fee-for-service activities, and the increasing cost of renting office space in downtown Des Moines led **IAMU** to begin looking at alternatives in 1993. In early 1994, the Board authorized the Executive Director to execute a lease for 6,000 square feet of office space in Ankeny. The Association almost double its office space while realizing a \$20,000 savings per year in lease costs.

By the end of 1994, a total of 10 safety clusters had contracted with **IAMU** for services, as well as 26 other cities and other groups, which desired services.

**IAMU** expanded into broadband following the 1995 Telecom Act, which allowed for municipal full-service telecoms, including data, internet, cable television, and telephone service.

## Noteworthy Nuggets

The current **IAMU** logo made its debut in 1988. The logo consists of a blue ellipse with three diamonds, which represent the three major utility sections of electricity, gas, and water. In 1990, **IAMU** announced its new Drug Testing Program for gas utilities, and its plans for a Lineman Apprenticeship Program.



# The Sixth Decade

## 1997-2006

**The Training and Office Complex opened in June 2000.** The facilities embody both the heritage of community-owned utilities in Iowa, and their future as leaders and innovators. The member utilities made the facility possible, and it has and will help give them the tools to continue to provide essential, high quality, and affordable products and services to their communities.



The building was sited and laid out to make maximum use of natural daylight, to improve productivity, and to save energy. Electric light is only used as a supplement to daytime sunlight, reducing demand at peak times. The geothermal system uses the natural constant temperature of the earth to provide cooling in the summer and heating in the winter. The Training and Office Complex's various technologies and design features reduce energy consumption by up to 45 percent compared to a typical code-compliant building.

The training facilities include:

- ◆ A 10-acre field for hands-on training on electric, gas, water, and broadband systems and equipment;
- ◆ An auditorium with seating for 70, featuring state-of-the-art projection and sound systems;
- ◆ Area for breakout groups;
- ◆ A boardroom/classroom with seating for meetings up to 30; and
- ◆ A maintenance building that can house indoor training.



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For more information, contact  
Jim Lane at 515-243-2707 or  
[jlane@jesterinsurance.com](mailto:jlane@jesterinsurance.com).

# The Seventh Decade

## 2007-2017

**During the last decade, IAMU has continued to hold true to its core mission while adapting to current and future needs.**

The decade started with a focus on expanding the training field with the addition of the Safe City and the Confined Space Building. These unique facilities allow members' employees to hone their skills in a real-life setting.

Safety continues to be a priority. The number of programs and the number of cities **IAMU** serves has grown. From 2007 – 2017, **IAMU** has added about 150 utility entities to its safety programs.

Wanting to serve as an example of energy conservation, **IAMU** installed solar capabilities at its office in 2013. In the last four years, **IAMU** has produced 93.9 Mwh of electricity. This amounts to 66.1 metric tons less carbon in the atmosphere.

Solar hasn't been the only new addition to **IAMU**. In 2014, Troy DeJoode joined **IAMU** as Executive Director when Bob Haug retired. Troy began his municipal utility experience painting fire hydrants as a college summer job at the Cedar Falls Utilities (CFU). He returned to CFU and over eight years served in various positions as staff engineer, general counsel, and employee services director.

As **IAMU** looks to the future, its staff and members remain committed to being leaders in utility training and safety. **IAMU** is in the final stages of becoming an Accredited Assessment Center for the National Center for Construction Education and Research. **IAMU** will be one of only 13 assessment center sites in the United States for Mobile Crane Certification.



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- 1947** – T.G. Fultz, Pella  
**1948** – T.G. Fultz, Pella  
**1949** – T.G. Fultz, Pella  
**1950** – Merlin Wait, Coon Rapids  
**1951** – C.C. Ecklund, Brooklyn  
**1952** – Clarence “C.G.” Hilleary, Villisca  
**1953** – Glen V. Yarger, Waverly  
**1954** – Frank Riggle, Montezuma  
**1955** – J.W. Anderson, Muscatine  
**1956** – Ray Adkins, Onawa  
**1957** – A.L. “Art” Bender, Lamoni  
**1958** – George Anderson, Hartley  
**1959** – George Haygarth, Spencer  
**1960** – Walter Schlagel, Ames  
**1961** – John Pace, Cedar Falls  
**1962** – Dave Fangmeier, Osage  
**1963** – T. James Palmer, Algona  
**1964** – Ray Trygg, Ogden  
**1965** – Leo “Barney” Miller, Lenox  
**1966** – N.R. “Nick” Scholer, Rock Rapids  
**1967** – James W. Cravens, Sanborn  
**1968** – James W. Cravens, Sanborn  
**1969** – W.C. Rush, Hawarden  
**1970** – D.H. “Det” Moore, Greenfield  
**1971** – James P. Fuller, Muscatine  
**1972** – Andrew McDivitt, Cedar Falls  
**1973** – Herb Thayer, Waverly  
**1974** – Allen Roos, Orange City  
**1975** – Richard Stevens, Atlantic  
**1976** – Daymon Abbott, Denison  
**1977** – Harold Schiebout, Sioux Center  
**1978** – Richard A. Johnson, Cedar Falls  
**1979** – Weston Birdsall, Osage  
**1980** – William Tobin, Rock Rapids  
**1981** – Eugene Smith, Coon Rapids  
**1982** – Dean Johnson, Des Moines  
**1983** – John W. Miller, Eldridge  
**1984** – Robert Colyer, Lamoni  
**1985** – George Williams, Cedar Falls  
**1986** – Don Fahlenkamp, Montezuma  
**1987** – Clyde Bowen, Muscatine  
**1988** – Neal Drefke, Spencer  
**1989** – Gene Twedt, Story City  
**1990** – Merlin Hove, Ames  
**1991** – Brad Roos, Denison  
**1992** – Dave Ferris, Lenox  
**1993** – Reed Craft, Waterloo  
**1994** – Kent Holst, Traer  
**1995** – Larry Koshire, Muscatine  
**1996** – Leon Rodas, Spencer  
**1997** – Bob Borchers, Hawarden  
**1998** – Lori Glansman, Mt. Pleasant  
**1999** – Allen Bonderman, Sanborn  
**2000** – Dean Davis, Corning  
**2001** – Jay Logel, Muscatine  
**2002** – L.D. McMullen, Des Moines  
**2003** – Brad Honold, Coon Rapids  
**2004** – Sheila Bishop, Waverly  
**2005** – Mark Ramthun, Indianola  
**2006** – John Bilsten, Algona  
**2007** – Jim Hoye, Rock Rapids  
**2008** – Brian Geschke, New Hampton  
**2009** – Bob Sewell, Milford  
**2010** – Jim Krieg, Cedar Falls  
**2011** – Darrel Wenzel, Independence  
**2012** – Pat Stief, Traer  
**2013** – Sal LoBianco, Muscatine  
**2014** – Murray Hulstein, Sioux Center  
**2015** – Steve Tjepkes, Atlantic  
**2016** – Steve Pick, Spencer  
**2017** – Jack Hedgecock, Mt. Pleasant

