

# No Standing News

Since we have no standing, we stand with those left standing

Volume I

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## Ten Hour Power Outage in Rolla

### WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT ALL OVER ROLLA.....

**.....you can't flush your toilet for a long,  
long time.**

**By Phil**

Sometimes the desperate effort of the RDN to play down Rolla blunders goes beyond merely silly and becomes positively dim-witted. They declared in the Tuesday, November 10, headline story that damage from the 10 hour, city wide, black-out was "minimal" and dismissed it as an "inconvenience." Just an inconvenience? Damage was minimal? Let's see, how much did that black-out cost the rest of us? Lost retail business, massive inventory spoilage, lost productivity in offices and factories, lost employee wages, lost educational time for children, lots of expensive computer damage, and the irritation of having to remember not to flush after..... Tuesday's bungling must add up to millions of dollars for city ratepayers. What would the RDN call a 10-hour blackout during freezing weather – a minor vexation?

Thank heaven the hospital isn't relying on the good ole' boys at RMU. They were prepared with a diesel generator backup system that, according to John Denbo, "can function at this capacity indefinitely" to protect their patients. They could

treat them, feed them and provide water for a flush when necessary. I was impressed with their foresight and planning in automatically canceling all elective surgeries and their other emergency measures - even down to prioritizing food service between patients and staff. To the board, management, staff, nurses and doctors at PCRMC – NICE JOB! Would you consider taking over the utility board?

It appears that we are all so conditioned to expect poor service by the increasingly frequent, short power failures in recent years that only two people were roused to write letters to the paper about it. A guy named Smith thought that we should pay more taxes to provide a backup system and Bob Doerr asked the question on all our minds. Why hasn't RMU arranged for an alternative source of power? Here's the answer for both of them.

WE DON'T HAVE AN EMERGENCY SYSTEM BECAUSE THE COUNCIL-APPOINTED UTILITYBOARD JUST HASN'T BOTHERED TO PROVIDE ONE! We don't need to pay more to get one. We're already paying far too much. RMU, you see, has other priorities. They gave away \$560,000 to the city this year and they do it every year. In fact, they bragged to the state auditor that she didn't catch all their "donations" to the city over the last five years from 1992-1997. She found only \$1.3 million. They pointed out that the "actual amount was \$4,494,112." So there Margaret! In short, providing reliable power to the city isn't a priority of the city power company.

Where does this excess profit, this \$5 million in give-away money come from? From overcharging all of us for the power they intermittently provide, of course. Don't you think that they could have provided quite an emergency system over the last six years with the \$5 million they have given away? Of course they could, but what they PREFERRED to do was give it to the city council so the city could pay city bills, pass on rebates to certain select businesses and buy buildings to give away to wealthy corporations. RMU isn't required by any law, except one dubious and self-serving city ordinance, to give the city a dime despite the excuse they and the council have cooked up about these cash gifts being some kind of "franchise payment" or "payment in lieu of property taxes" or a "gross receipts tax." A city owned utility doesn't have to pay for fullfilling the duty of providing a vital public service to the citizens who own it! Franchise fees or the so-called 'gross receipts taxes' are what private companies pay for using public land or right of ways. The public also owns the county hospital, the county courthouse, city hall and schools and none of these public entities pay a franchise fee or any other kind of payment for the land they sit on to provide us with our public services. When you think about it that would be pretty pointless wouldn't it?

If you think that correcting this problem is going to be a major topic of concern at the next RMU board meeting – don't hold your breath. We'll explain why in a follow-up NSN issue.

Meanwhile, check your stock of candles and fill some buckets with water. Two things are certain. It will get cold and there will be another "inconvenience."

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