



Mayank Dhungana/Index

Students and local residents attended the forum to protest Ameren's proposed price hike.

AMEREN | Ameren UE, sole electricity provider in Kirksville, wants to raise rates by 18 percent

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additional rises on taxes and water bills, a rise of almost 30 percent in electricity rates during the course of one year is unbearable.

"Everybody wants to pay their bills, but I would like to know how other people manage," Kirksville citizen Kristal Douglas said.

Many retirees and social security recipients said they were concerned with how they will raise the additional money because they didn't receive a social security increase last year.

And many of the testifying citizens felt cheated out of the benefits of switching to more energy efficient appliances.

"We buy all those crazy light bulbs, energy efficient air conditioning units and such, and after saving a few bucks a month, UE comes along with a 18 percent increase on top of the eight percent from last year, and the gain is gone," Kirksville citizen Jim LeCompte said.

Dan Hoppe, a worker in the environmental department of a farming company, also felt cheated.

"[Ameren] only wants to compensate for the 25 percent they lost through us trying to save on electric usage [by using more energy efficient appliances]," he said. "The increase negates any effect of our decrease in usage."

Cleary said Ameren has tried saving money in addition to asking for the rate increase. "We at Ameren target to reduce our expenditures by \$150 million over the next

couple of years," Cleary said. "We delayed and canceled certain projects, laying off employees as well as having a salary freeze on management salaries."

Ameren also reduced the dividend on its stock in the last year, which was a point of concern for some pensioners at the hearing who had invested in Ameren for their retirement portfolio.

Cleary also said Ameren does not plan to exceed the minimum requirements set by the government on renewable energies.

He said renewable energy is significantly more expensive than burning coal, through which Ameren still creates more than 80 percent of its energy.

"I mean, you don't want your percentage of renewable energy to get too high," Cleary said, referring to the price concerns of Ameren customers.

Senior Josh Mantooth said he supported alternative ways of producing electricity. "Renewable energy is not only possible, it is a necessity," senior Josh Mantooth said. "Coal and oil will only remain cheap through government subsidies."

Mantooth, who lives off campus, said he would be willing to pay a bit more on his bill to ensure that his energy usage is taken from renewable sources.

"Our household of three people uses less than half of what most people here tonight said they were paying," Mantooth said.

The effect on people living on campus, if the request goes through, is unclear. Residence Life declined to comment.

"We delayed and canceled certain projects, laying off employees as well as having a salary freeze on management salaries."

Michael Cleary
Ameren UE
Communications Executive

BOND | A bond issue for \$2.27 million will be on Kirksville's April ballot to fix the sewer system to prevent future flooding

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to have flooding problems in their yards and basements, she said. The American Rediscovery and Reinvestment Act created a way to pay for storm drainage problems affecting residential properties.

Storm drainage hasn't been a major concern in the past, she said, but Kirksville has had record rainfall in the past few years.

"If it didn't pass ... we will continue to address storm drainage issues in the public right-of-way," Macomber said. "This [bond] is for storm drainage beyond the public right-of-way."

Macomber said she doesn't have a personal opinion on the bond because it's the voters' discretion, she said.

City councilman Todd Kuhns said a major problem besides flooding in citizens' homes and yards is extra storm water leaking into the sewage system, which causes the water treatment facilities to overflow.

"Storm drainage was not made a priority and now it's a real issue, and so we have to find a way to fix it," Kuhns said.

There were several options to fix the storm drainage problem through fees allowed by law, he said. One option was to add a quarter cent sales tax increase, but the city decided against that because of the unpopularity of the last sales tax increase, he said.

He said another option was to create a public storm drainage utility funded by citizens, in addition to the wastewater and water treatment utility. Columbia, Mo., has a similar set-up, charging citizens around \$1.35 per month for maintenance.

A third option was to add fees to new construction,

he said. But Kuhns said the best opportunity is through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The money was originally given to Adair County and then passed to Kirksville upon request for storm drainage solutions, he said.

"The money that came to the state, the state made available for bonds ... very low interest bonds for municipalities," Kuhns said. "Directly, actually, these are stimulus dollars, but it's a bond - it's not a grant, it's not money that is just given to us and we don't have to pay it back. The citizens will have to pay us back."

The problem might not be fixed completely, but the goal is to make the storm drainage manageable and maintainable, he said. Kuhns said he isn't sure if the bond will pass, but he thinks the city council has been upfront and honest about it.

Kuhns said it's ultimately up to the citizens to decide whether they are willing to pay an extra \$2.25 on their water and sewer bills for 20 years to pay off the storm drainage solution. Kuhns said he's only heard feedback about the bond from skeptical citizens.

Kuhns said college students should be concerned about the issue because it affects their mobility and some students' homes.

"If you're in a rental property, particularly not kept up well, it's going to be even less after all these things happen and batter it," Kuhns said.

"Back in 1974, a comprehensive plan was done to identify where we could do some storm drainage improvements. I think about \$1.7 million worth of improvements were identified at that time. Many of those projects were never completed."

A budget line for curb, gutter and storm drainage

was added to the Transportation Sales Tax Fund in the late 1990s, but only allotted \$50,000 for storm drainage improvements, he said.

Physical Plant Director Karl Schneider said the summer 2008 water damage in the Pershing Building wasn't because of direct flooding, but runoff from heavy rainfall. Flooding is caused by an overflow of water in a natural stream, he said.

"A stream overflowing has not caused [Truman] a lot of trouble other than maybe a little inconvenience over Randolph Street," Schneider said. "When we have a heavy rain, there will be water from the creek that will go over Randolph Street, and people will have to be careful about crossing it."

The Pershing renovations include a plan for preventing water damage caused by rainfall, he said.

Red Barn Park is another area where flooding occurs on campus, but the flooding doesn't affect any buildings, he said.

"Depending on what [the city does] with Bear Creek and the storm water that flows through Bear Creek, that may mean less problems at Randolph Street or in Red Barn Park," Schneider said. "I don't really know the details of what [the city is] going to do, so I can't say for sure how [the bond] will impact [Truman]."

Other storm drainage problems on campus have occurred with the steam piping system's insulation under the north end of Magruder Hall, because the tunnel has flooded, he said.

Schneider said he would be surprised if the city would add storm drains or increase storm drain size on campus because the storm sewers Truman uses aren't owned by the city.

WILLIAMS | Adair county prosecutor Mark Williams announced he will not run for a third term.

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prosecutor's office in the state that had to deal with the new castle laws that the legislator passes and what those meant and how you interpret those and how they apply to this case. We've had our fair share of high profile cases."

Kristin Coffman, assistant Adair County prosecutor, said she respects Williams and thinks he is the best prosecutor Adair County

has seen.

"[It's him] not being afraid to send people to prison, to push for prison on those cases that it's necessary and to give people a chance when they deserve one," Coffman said. "He's made the office a lot more respectable than under previous prosecutorial administration."

Coffman said she doesn't plan to run for the position.

CHILD | About 48 out of every 1,000 children in Adair County were neglected or abused in 2008, according to the Kids Court data book

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contributing factor. "For children in the state of Missouri to improve their standards, we [at] CMC want to make sure that children are the forefront of every discussion. Growing up as a child in Missouri is becoming very difficult due to the economic climate."

Gee said CMC is looking forward to the enactment of Senate Bill 1425 and Senate Bill 625 by the Missouri State Government. Bill 1425 seeks to establish the number of uninsured children in Missouri and obtain more information from parents on the status of child insurance.

Senate Bill 625 seeks to protect families from falling into hardship when they cross the bridge between state supplementary benefits and self-sustenance.

"We might see [Bill] 1425 being assigned to Senate this week," Gee said. "There is always room for people to put children first so we don't end up with a situation in which children are disadvantaged. We ask regula-

tors to put children first."

Legal roadblocks hamper prosecutions

Adair County Prosecutor Mark Williams said cases of child abuse and neglect are under-reported and a number of legal impediments stand in the way of prosecuting child abuse and neglect suspects.

"We are really at the mercy of the family members or the children themselves reporting the cases of abuse," Williams said. "There are a number of roadblocks that prevent the state from effectively prosecuting these cases, some legally created and others created by the real world."

The Supreme Court made a ruling in Crawford v. Washington that sets precedent giving defendants the right to be confronted by the witnesses against them. This means children who are victims of abuse have to take the witness box and testify against their parents or assailants for a successful prosecution to go through.

"Putting children on the witness stand

makes the prosecution very complicated," Williams said. "It makes cases tough. Some people refuse to cooperate and cite legal roadblocks like spousal privileges to avoid testifying [against their husbands or wives]."

Optimism in the figures

Although Adair County ranks at 95th on child abuse and neglect, the number of abused children has declined from 246 cases in 2004 to 226 in 2008, and the county ranks among the best with a low number of teenage births between the age of 15 and 19 and violent deaths of teens in the same age group.

Tracy Greever-Rice, associate director in the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis, is one of the brains behind the Kids Court project. She said Adair seems to have a problem but added that the county's ranking could be a result of more cases having been reported due to community awareness of children's rights.

"The rank of 95 is very low," Greever-Rice said. "That's an indicator that there

is a real problem, but Adair is relatively populated and it has been going down progressively since 2002. Everyone is improving, but Adair has had a bigger problem with the issue of child abuse. It has not been improving as fast as others."

Greever-Rice said the slow rate of prosecutions also could be explained in the context of institutional culture, because social service agencies and the Division of Social Services try to keep families together.

Authorities therefore are confronted with two challenges, either to push ahead with often damaging prosecutions or solve the root causes of abuse and neglect and provide families with resources and parenting education.

The Adair County Judicial Circuit Juvenile Division will offer parenting classes starting Feb. 17. The classes are aimed at helping parents to take better care of their children and keep them in the home. At least 12 parents already have confirmed attendance, Holt said.

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