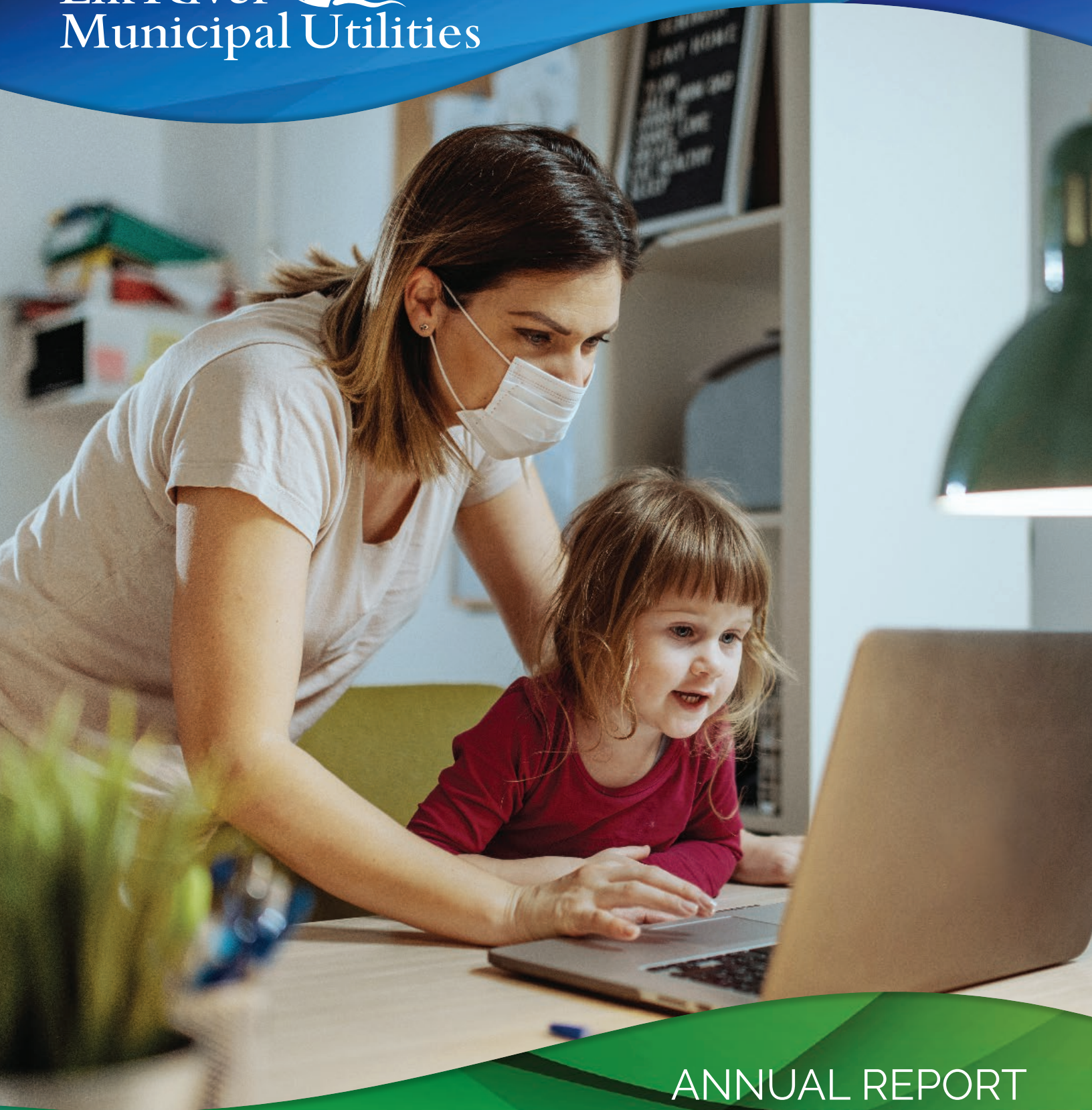




Elk River  
Municipal Utilities



ANNUAL REPORT  
2020



# FACING CHALLENGES, FINDING SOLUTIONS

## A LETTER FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

2020 was quite a year. As COVID-19 pandemic realities unfolded, and life as we knew it changed multiple times, the mission of ERMU never wavered: To provide our customers with safe, reliable, cost-effective, and quality long-term electric and water utility services. During these unusual pandemic times, to have the lights on and the water flowing were critical, and ERMU employees stepped up to do the job.

While our offices were closed to the public, necessary face-to-face interaction was available by appointment. We offered our customers resources such as online services for viewing bills and making payments. Field crews staggered shifts so they could still do the necessary work and keep themselves and their coworkers healthy. Office staff developed a system of working remotely and staggering shifts so they could still provide customer service while keeping others safe. Many of our staff juggled schooling their children at home, caring for family members, and supporting their work team members, all the while working to make sure the services of electricity and water were available to all our customers. Looking ahead, we worked hard to limit projected expenditures for 2021 to provide a zero percent rate increase and ease the financial concerns of those hardest hit by the pandemic.

These have definitely been challenging times, but they have also been times that pushed us to do better, serve better, to adapt, and find the solutions to make life a bit better knowing your utilities are here for you.

- Theresa Slominski,  
General Manager



## KEEPING YOU SAFE, HEALTHY, AND CONNECTED

The COVID-19 pandemic created unexpected challenges across all facets of life. As we adhered to statewide executive orders to stay home and mitigate the spread of the virus, ERMU played a significant role in keeping our community safe, healthy, and connected. The reliability and quality of electric service became even more important when schools transitioned to distance learning and many employees shifted to working remotely. Emphasis was placed on good hygiene and handwashing, which highlighted the need for clean, safe water. In 2020, ERMU found ways to continue to bring you the high level of consistent service you've come to expect, and that will continue now and in the future.





# WORKING TOGETHER



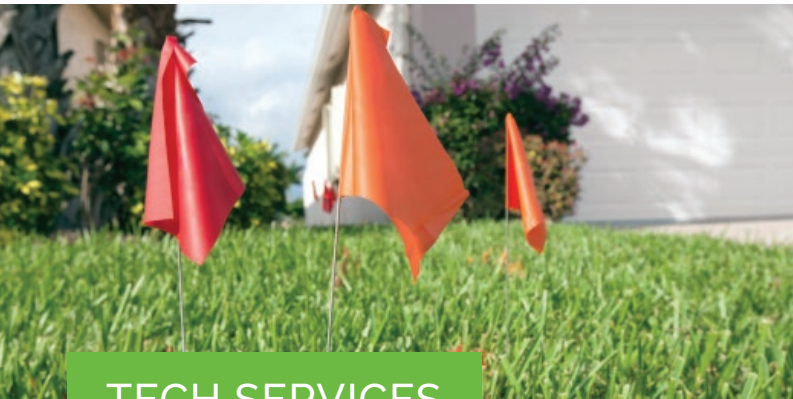
## ELECTRIC

ERMU's electric department worked hard to deliver reliable service to medical facilities, emergency response organizations, and other frontline services. In addition, we made sure to meet customers' essential needs, such as access to developing information, safe food storage and preparation, and connection to resources for distance learners and customers working remotely. In March, small crews that did not rotate as they typically do began to stagger shifts and lunches to reduce contact, and facilities were cleaned more regularly.



## WATER

Practicing good hygiene has always been important, and with the pandemic, the need for clean running water became even more significant. The combination of clean water and thorough handwashing is a critical tool for reducing the spread of COVID-19. In addition, clean drinking water is crucial for safe food preparation and staying healthy. During a year of change and challenge, ERMU's water department continued to maintain our community's water system so that we could work together to protect ourselves and others.



## TECH SERVICES

ERMU's two locators are responsible for finding and marking underground electric and water utilities so customers can dig safely, without damaging equipment, for projects ranging from residential landscaping to major construction. When the pandemic and governor's orders closed down a significant amount of commerce, homeowners worked on more yard projects, such as tree planting, fencing, and landscaping. The tech services department also saw an increase in CATV/fiber installs for high-speed internet access to accommodate distance learning and working from home.



## CUSTOMER SERVICE

Although our offices were closed to the public, we remained available with a scheduling rotation of in-office and remote employees. We invested in remote equipment, provided additional support with our after-hours call center, and encouraged contactless payments. Ongoing innovations allow us to provide efficient, seamless customer service. In October, we found safe, creative ways to deliver 2,248 free LED light bulbs to customers who receive *The Connector* newsletter, which helps readers improve conservation efforts.





## KEEPING YOU INFORMED

Throughout the initial days of the pandemic's uncertainty and beyond, clear – and frequent – communication was more important to our customers than ever before. As situations changed, we were quickly able to post updates on our website and social media platforms. We continued to distribute important information through newsletters and billing inserts.

In addition, in fall of 2020, we introduced a brand-new, fully responsive website, combining a fresh, modern look with concise, easy-to-find content. The new website offers a streamlined user experience with clean, simple navigation. We invite you to explore the new website, where we frequently post updates and alerts as well as other useful information regarding rebates, billing, services, and much more.

## KEEPING YOU OUR TOP PRIORITY

As we established procedures in accordance with our COVID-19 Response Plan, we never lost sight of our mission: To provide our customers with safe, reliable, cost-effective, and quality long-term electric and water utility services. ERMU employees made a commitment to the safety and well-being of our customers and their coworkers, worked to minimize risk, and persevered through a challenging time. Many things changed at ERMU in 2020, but new practices and adapted processes helped ensure that the most important things did not change.



*ERMU's Customer Service Department*