



Jefferson County  
Public Utility District

# A PRIVILEGE TO SERVE

By Kenneth Collins, Dist 2 Commissioner

With much thoughtful consideration, I have decided not to pursue re-election for District 2 this year.

I made this decision based on the recognition that nearly 80 years have taken its toll on my body and mind. I've given a lot of thought to what I would say here and decided that I don't want this column to be a list of my accomplishments, since everything achieved during my tenure was a collaborative effort. I do want to say that serving as PUD Commissioner has been an incredible honor and I continue to have great admiration for the dedication of PUD staff and also my fellow Commissioners, past and present.

Back in 2014, I made the decision to run for District 2 Commissioner out of frustration with the quality of internet service on Marrowstone Island. For several years previous, I had been placing calls to the corporation providing service to the island over an antiquated system, using an outdated technology for an oversubscribed customer base, with no results. Ultimately, I reached an executive who informed me that upgrading broadband service for a sparsely populated region "did not fit their business model". It seemed to me then that becoming a PUD Commissioner might provide some leverage to address the inadequate internet service for Marrowstone and maybe the rest of the county.

Today, I can look back at the efforts of many individuals who have been responsible for making high-speed broadband attainable in many previously



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unserved and underserved parts of our service territory. It is still a work-in-progress, but the fact that the PUD has secured more than \$60,000,000 to provide fiber connections for thousands of households and businesses gives me great hope. This would not have happened, had it not been for the COVID epidemic which dramatically demonstrated the qualitative difference between internet service for urban versus rural America and motivated the Federal government to make billions of dollars of grant money available. It would not have happened here, had it not been for the foresight of the Board and senior management to independently seek grant funding and promote a business model of mixed wholesale and retail service.

What makes the role of PUD Commissioner such an honor is that it affords the opportunity to affect the lives of multiple thousands of people in providing life-sustaining services, electricity, water, sewer and now broadband. When I began my first term in 2015, it was not clear whether JPUD would fulfill its promise of local control and lower rates than its predecessor. Taking rate increases for 2026 into consideration, the price of electricity in Jefferson County will still be about \$45 per month cheaper for the average household than it would have been and with fewer outages of shorter duration. Come next year, I will surely miss the dedicated people I have had the privilege of working with but I will still have a nostalgic smile whenever I see a PUD vehicle.

## YOUR UTILITY. YOUR VOICE.

Jefferson PUD has partnered with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) to conduct a utility wide online survey. The goal: Identify how your utility best serves you now and how we can improve for the future.

Look for an email with link to the short survey from NRECA in late-April and thank you for your input!

(360) 385-5800 [jeffpud.org](http://jeffpud.org) 310 Four Corners Rd. Port Townsend, WA 98368



# WE REMEMBER: KEN McMILLEN

**Jefferson PUD mourns the passing of long-serving former District 2 utility commissioner.**

Commissioner McMillen served District 2 on the board from 1981 until 2002 and again from 2009 through 2014. McMillen was a 4th generation Jefferson County resident of the Port Hadlock area and a graduate of the University of Washington. He retired from the US Navy at the rank of Commander after a career as a carrier pilot and aircraft mechanic during the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

McMillen served when the utility began its first water system, Gardiner LUD #1 in 1981. He was also instrumental in the purchase and upgrade of the Tri-Area Water System spanning much of mid-county, and financing and construction efforts for the Beckett Point Sewer System (LUD#15).

When public power became the newest service offering from the PUD in the early 2000's, McMillen and fellow commissioners navigated the complex financing opportunities with the Rural Utility Service (marking the first private-to-public electric utility transfer in 65 years), negotiations with then-owner of the electric service Puget Sound Energy, and joining of Bonneville Power Administration to provide clean energy.

In 2015, McMillen was formally recognized with a PUD board resolution for his decades of leadership, mentorship, and service. Commissioner McMillen's leadership helped secure essential community-owned utility services across all of eastern Jefferson County.

Former PUD commissioner, Ken McMillen served 25 years, helping grow the utility from a rural water district to the community-owned power, sewer, water, and broadband utility it is today.

## Solar Bank Reset: March 31<sup>st</sup>

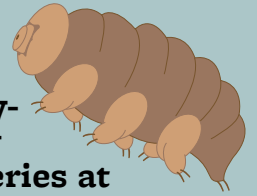
Each year, remaining solar credits from residential, commercial, and community net metered systems are reset according to state law (per RCW 80.60).

Solar credits (in kWh) are converted by the PUD to an equivalent dollar amount and given to the PUD's Rainy Day fund and distributed to partner assistance agencies like OlyCap and St. Vincent de Paul to help low-income neighbors struggling with utility bills.

There are currently 743 solar net meters in Jefferson County—this includes residential, commercial, community, and wind systems. Even JPUD's headquarters features a net metered solar kit atop the headquarters facility which generates approx. 63% of the buildings annual energy needs.

## Grossology 101: Sewer Tours!

**Ever wonder how intense UV light, water bears, and ick-loving bacteria help day-to-day life? Get all the slimy details at our weekly tour series at the Port Hadlock Wastewater Facility!**



Take the plunge (not literally!) with PUD wastewater pros and follow every drop from your home to high-tech treatment.

The event series is open to all, with each tour limited to 20 participants.

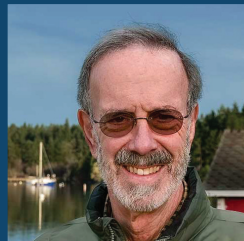
**WHEN: Each Wednesday in April @ 10am**

**WHERE: 236 Lopeman Rd. Port Hadlock**

Has your contact info changed? Updating your information is quick and easy via your SmartHub account. Keeping your contact information up to date ensures that the JPUD team can quickly touch base and provide the latest utility updates in your area.



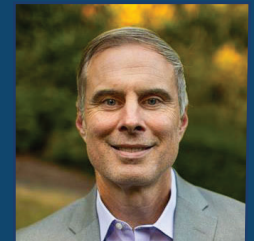
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