



**WCLN Community Update**  
**Fayetteville Public Works Commission**  
**October 12, 2023**

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN) (00:00:01)** - The daily grind. Rewind. Well, once again, one of my favorite times, we get to sit down with Lexy Hassabis from Fayetteville's Public Works Commission. And, you know, just before we started this conversation, we had another conversation where I admitted once again that every time we come together, I learned something that changes a habit at home. So thank you for always bringing the good stuff.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:00:22)** - You're welcome. I learn every day at work.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN) (00:00:24)** - Yeah, and there are so many things that we do habitually in our homes that are really kind of detrimental to those resources that we count on. And that's what we talk about here as we're talking about PwC. We talk about energy and our water system and our wastewater system and all of those things, because that's where you guys come in. And there is something about you being a private facility. Why did I say that? Right.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:00:49)** - Yeah. Uh, public power.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN) (00:00:52)** - There's something about you being a public owned facility. You're not a you. There may be money that changes hands, but it's not a for profit organization.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN) (00:01:02)** - Right?

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:01:03)** - Absolutely. We are city owned, so we're owned by the city of Fayetteville. And the reason we talk about all these conservation pieces and why we want our customers to save money, some people think, well, of course you want us to use more water or use more power or use more sewer services, but we really don't. We don't make money because we don't have any shareholders. We're owned by the city of Fayetteville. And what that means is we're the community's utility. And so, you know, of course, we want to be a robust company, but we're not here to make profit. And so a lot of that is about, you know, investing our our ratepayer funds into infrastructure. It's a lot about education, just like shows like this, because what we want is people to take care of your hometown utility system. And so when we talk about no pipes and pipes, we don't want to spend more money putting more sewer lines or you spending money with plumbers because your sewer line is backed up.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:01:53)** - We want you to have the best experience as possible with our power, water and wastewater services. And, you know, being a public power provider, I didn't know anything about it, to be honest with you, before I started working at PwC. So I'm very passionate to tell people that we're very lucky to have a public power provider because you're not controlled by someone in Wisconsin or somewhere. You're literally controlled by four commissioners that are elected by your city council. They're all live and work in Fayetteville or Cumberland County, and they are all PwC customers. So whatever decision they make impacts them. And so to me, that really gives me a lot of, you know,



admiration for somebody to make a big decision, you know, on 300,000 customers. And they're making those decisions in the best, um, light for the community, which is a lot different than many companies.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN) (00:02:43)** - In the area where I live, we are still part of an electric co-op. You know, I mean, we don't have a choice of where we get our electricity unless we put solar on our property and we have enough solar, we can make a difference.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN) (00:02:55)** - So what's the difference between a public utility and even a co-op? Yeah.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:02:59)** - Great question. So there's three types of electricity companies in North Carolina. The first is like a Duke Energy. It is a stockholder owned. They obviously want to make profits. So they go into places where it's high density. They can make a lot of money for their shareholders. It makes complete sense. Then there's rural areas and they're usually co-op areas because there's not a lot of money to be made. If one person is ten miles away from the next person and you have to put electricity out there. So that's how co-ops happen. And then there's municipal owned like PwC. That's where a municipality like the city of Fayetteville said, we want to, you know, give our our residents their own utility company. We want to make sure that every, you know, the rates are as low as possible, and we want to help economic development and grow our city. And so those are the three basic, you know, kinds of utilities.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:03:47)** - And then you have to look at it as co-ops and municipals are very similar, but we're city owned to where as co-ops are customer owned.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN) (00:03:56)** - You know, I drove through my neighborhood the other day and I came in and there was a new sign erected, and this goes all the way back to the big annexation that happened several years ago. So what is still happening as far as annexation and PwC provided utilities.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:04:11)** - So in 2005, the city Council voted to expand the city's footprint, predominantly in the west part of Fayetteville. And at that time, I don't know if it was the charter or the general statute. You cannot you couldn't expand without expanding services. In that case, it was mostly water and sewer services in Fayetteville. Actually, we're very lucky. We have multiple electric companies. And so out there in the West, some some are PwC electric customers and some are not. Some are aqua water companies and some are not. Um, and so we have to go out there and expand sewer service services predominantly out there in order to complete the annexation, if you will.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:04:54)** - So since 2007, PwC has taken on the construction part of annexation, and I think we've done. 24 out of 30 projects. So we're almost we're getting there. We're getting there. Um, and it's it's a long process. People ask all the time, why aren't you done yet? Um, well, you have to really consider what you're doing. You're literally going into established neighborhoods. Sewer lines run in the road or behind properties. So you have to usually rip up the road, put huge pipes in there. Um, once the construction is done, then customers can connect. And then once they connect, you get assessed by the city of Fayetteville, a 5000, usually \$5,000 fee in order to connect or actually just for the construction. Everybody pays the assessment, but you have an option to connect or not. And about 50% of customers that we extend services to connect out there in West Fayetteville. So it is a very long



process, but it is very important because a lot of people on septic systems, they're either starting to fail or to replace a whole septic system is very costly as well.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC)** (00:05:54) - And a lot of especially because we're in a military town. VA loans when you buy a home, if there are sewer services around you, usually you have to connect in order to sell your home if there's a VA loan being used. So it's a long process. But we love our annexation customers, and we know it can be frustrating because, you know, you have to think about all the disruption in your neighborhood, from school stops to we might be blocking your driveway to we might mess up your pretty, you know, lawn where you had a really nice flower bed, you know, so there's a lot going on there. But we appreciate everyone's patience. And actually, right now we're out near Buttermere Drive and we're actually having some traffic issues because people are not paying attention to work zone safety. And we have some contractors out there that, um, are in an unsafe situation. So we're working with the city of Fayetteville and some other traffic control companies to make sure that they can get this very complicated project done.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC)** (00:06:47) - And so our contractors can be safe and our customers can be safe for good.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN)** (00:06:52) - So, you know, where I am, which is in, uh, close to the area you're describing. You know, we have three different utility providers, you know, not that that's a problem. Um, when we moved in, uh, PwC sewer was already available. What is the the major benefit to to to newly to newly connected customers?

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC)** (00:07:11) - Well, the a what's funny is we have a lot of people that say, well, I have a septic system, I don't use PwC at all. However, your septic company that pumps out your septic tank comes and drops it off at our reclamation plants. So that's something I never really connected until one time we went out to one of our reclamation plants and a big septic company was out there dumping all their stuff, and I was like, oh, so even septic customers use PwC. Um, and one of the benefits of it is you could have a combined bill if you have water and sewer together.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC)** (00:07:39) - Um, and also, again, when you sell your property or your property value in general, that's why the city of Fayetteville was thinking you're bringing value to your home because you're already connected to services like that.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN)** (00:07:52) - Well, you know, we are really close to the beginning of November, and November brings with it some some big dates. I mean, we see a change in the time of use rate. Um, we see all sorts of things happen at the first of the month. Tell us about some of those.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC)** (00:08:05) - Absolutely. I know it's a beautiful October right now. Um, and we're still in summer hours, which is, um, 3:00 to 7 p.m., but November 1st, we change to 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. for time of use peak hours, which means your electricity costs just a little more for hours of the day. So it's about 35% less the other 20 hours of the day. And it's off peak. So it's 35% less on weekends. And any PwC observed holiday, which is great.



**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:08:34)** - Um, and so we really try to put out a lot of information to help people shift their usage. Meaning, you know, right now, if I do laundry, it's after 7:00 because your dryer uses a lot of energy and why not get a deal? That's what I would like. So, you know, right now I could also do it in the morning. But come November 1st, I'm not using my dryer from 6 to 10 a.m. because think about it. Everybody's turning on their lights. Everybody's kicking up their heat a little bit. Everybody's getting ready to go to school and work. So everybody's on the grid using electricity. So, you know, we would say after 10:00 that's when you would do your laundry. You know, don't cook that, you know, oven stuff in the morning, do it at lunch or for dinner after November 1st. So, you know, it's really about, you know, before we had time of use, you got charged the same amount 24 hours a day.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:09:18)** - Now you're getting 35% off 20 hours of the day, which is really cool.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN) (00:09:22)** - So if we have breakfast pizza, it's best to cook it in the evening and then microwave.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:09:26)** - That's right. Absolutely.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN) (00:09:27)** - Use your toaster oven. Not that I'm suggesting breakfast pizza.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:09:33)** - But I don't know. That sounds kind of good.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN) (00:09:34)** - It actually is good.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN) (00:09:36)** - Anyway, now there are some events coming up at the beginning of November. I know that, um, your offices are closed for Veterans Day on Veterans Day. Yes. Um, is that a normal business day? I mean, do you normally have office hours on Saturdays?

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:09:49)** - Um, no, but we actually, um, just started observing, uh, Veterans Day with our previous CEO. She made that one of our observed holidays, which is great. And we do a lot for in-house, all of our. We have a big breakfast for them. And it's really it's a really nice event. And then we're starting to do more things for veterans. You would think in a military town we would have already been on that train.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:10:10)** - But we have so many other things we celebrate. I guess it didn't occur to us. So we're really excited about this new holiday that we have. And of course it's off peak hours.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN) (00:10:17)** - Well, there you go. And, um, I know that the city of Fayetteville is actually doing their Veterans Day parade on the fourth rather than the 11th. Are you guys part of that?

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC) (00:10:27)** - Yes, very much so. We will support that. We've probably sponsored it. Um, and, you know, in this kind of a town, I don't even know what our percentage of veterans are at PwC, but it's that's a pretty big breakfast that we have. So we'll, you know, we appreciate everyone's military service.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN) (00:10:41)** - Well, here we are. We're at the tail end of the hurricane season. Did we come through well in the area.



**Lexi Hasapis (PWC)** (00:10:47) - So far everything has just been testing us and our plans. So that will end November 1st as well. And hopefully knock on wood somewhere that we have no, you know, hurricanes or big storms coming our way.

**Dan DeBruler (WCLN)** (00:11:01) - Well as always, thank you. I learned things and I know more about the benefits of public utilities and learn a little bit more every single time we sit down. So thank you very much.

**Lexi Hasapis (PWC)** (00:11:10) - Thank you for having us.