



By Steve Schneider

A look back at 2016; a view forward to the future

The year is coming to a close and it's time to look back and reflect on the past year but also time to look forward to next year.

This year at SPRWS, we have accomplished much. We replaced or rehabilitated many miles of water main and have replaced a few hundred water services. Our investment in buried infrastructure will continue as we deal with our aging system.

Lead in drinking water took the forefront and we have done an unprecedented amount of education, notification and providing our customers with tools to protect themselves by giving them filtering pitchers when their lead service is disturbed.

We continue to update and upgrade our mapping tools, databases and overall technology to provide the best information possible to our customers.

We have kicked off the upgrades to the treatment plant by beginning the overdue electrical upgrades.

We have done all of this despite the continued decline in water demand by a customer base that is more conservation-minded than ever. This mindset bodes well for the future of water as a resource but brings some challenges to system operation and upgrades by reducing the funding available.

Looking forward, we have elected a new U.S. president and Saint Paul will see a mayoral race this year. The Board of Water Commissioners has adopted an SPRWS budget that provides continued support for our investment initiatives and realizes the reduced amount of water being sold.

New ideas arrive at SPRWS along with new staff

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FSA funds for 2016 must be spent by Dec. 31

Don't lose your hard-earned money; spend your FSA funds

Don't lose your hard-earned money. Make sure you spend all of the money you put into your 2016 medical flexible spending account by the end of the year.

Anything not spent by Dec. 31, 2016, is not carried over in a flexible spending account. It is lost.

To determine your balance, go to www.wealthcare-admin.com and select the participant portal to login. If you have difficulties remembering your login or password, contact CelioStar at 612-436-2778.

If you have never logged in and need to create an account, go to <http://healthy.stpaul.gov/my-veba-health-account/> for instructions.

Remember, there will be two balances if you use both a flexible savings account and have earned health account money from the city for participating in certain health care plans and the Healthy St. Paul incentives.

The flexible spending money you set aside in 2016 must be spent in 2016 or it will be lost. The website abbreviates that balance FSA.

The website lists the health account money as HRP. This money rolls over each year and does not need to be spent each year.

If you have questions, call CelioStar at 612-436-2778.

You have until February of 2017 to get reimbursed for the FSA money you spent in 2016.

You will lose any money remaining in your 2016 FSA account that you have not claimed by Feb. 15 at 4:00 p.m.

You can find the reimbursement form at <https://csp.benefitready.com>. Select the knowledge base icon, go to forms, and select the 2016 Medical and Daycare Claim Form.

The most efficient method of submitting claims is by fax, 612-335-9217. You can also submit the form and supporting documents by email at flex@cielostar.com.

Holiday parties draw employees together to celebrate



Staff from the business and distribution divisions gather for food at a holiday luncheon on Dec. 15 in the cafeteria. All staff was invited to attend the event.



Production division staff get together as part of the holiday luncheon in the plant held on Dec. 20.



Employees were able to attend a concert of holiday music from the Capitol City Wind Ensemble held in the lobby of the administration building during the holiday party on Dec. 15. The utility's own Richelle Nicosia plays flute in the ensemble; she is the flutist on the right by the clarinet player.



The cafeteria was filled to capacity with employees from across all divisions during the holiday party on Dec. 15

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as our workforce changes in the face of employee retirements.

While we don't know exactly what the future will bring, I do know that SPRWS will continue to provide quality water and services to our customers at a reasonable cost.

I know that because we, the employees of this

organization, accept and believe in this mission. We were trained by those who came before us to carry out this mission. In turn, we train those who will continue this important work after we leave to do the same.

Thank you for another year of providing great service to our customers.