

IMPA Wire



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President's Message

2020: A Year in Review

—by Raj G. Rao

No one could have predicted what 2020 would bring to us all, but IMPA persevered through the uncertain year and continued providing its essential service to all 61 of our member communities. IMPA is glad to have served as a connection point for its cities and towns in Indiana and Ohio to join and discuss their struggles and triumphs through the pandemic. We are truly stronger together, and the commitment that staff and members have shown to protecting the health of our communities is exemplary.

Even through managing the effects of a global pandemic, IMPA and several of our member communities saw many successes in the last 12 months. We proudly achieved the commissioning of 7 more solar parks, crossed the \$2 billion threshold in total assets, launched an Advanced Metering Infrastructure program to several member communities through IMPA Service Corp, installed four new electric vehicle destination chargers at our headquarters, and continued building relationships and connections

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IMPA Surpasses 100 MW of Solar Power



With the recent commissioning of the Richmond 4 Solar Park in eastern Indiana, the Indiana Municipal Power Agency (IMPA) officially surpassed the 100 MW threshold in constructed solar capacity. Since 2014, IMPA has developed and built solar parks throughout the state to further its mission in supplying low-cost, reliable, and environmentally responsible power to its 61 members. Now, the 32 solar parks constructed by IMPA collectively provide 106 MW of solar capacity in Indiana.

“IMPA is proud to be a leader in solar development in the Midwest with its establishment of dozens of solar parks in the state of Indiana,” said IMPA President and CEO Raj Rao. “We are grateful to the leaders of the 22 communities that helped us build solar parks in their service territory, and we’re looking forward to working with more of our members in establishing their first solar facilities.”

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100 MW of Solar Power

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As President Rao suggests, IMPA is nowhere near slowing down in its solar endeavors. The Agency has 34 MW of solar capacity under construction, and another 39 MW officially planned for future construction. As the solar program has grown in the last six years, so too have the Agency's goals—IMPA aims to surpass 200 MW in coming years and hopes to eventually establish at least one solar park in each of the Agency's member communities. *W*



Federal Legislative Update

written by Abby McKenna, Government Relations Specialist

*F*ederal energy policy has always had a direct impact on IMPA operations, and how the incoming Administration addresses energy policy will be no different. As a result of the 2020 Presidential Election, former Vice-President Joe Biden will be the next President of the United States and Senator Kamala Harris will take on the role of Vice President when they are sworn in on January 20, 2021. The Biden-Harris Administration has already signaled the importance of pursuing energy policies that focus on climate change. However, the political reality on Capitol Hill will make it difficult to pass comprehensive energy or climate legislation. Democrats will only have a small majority in the House and the Senate will be a 50-50 split with Democrat control as Vice President Kamala Harris will be the tiebreaking vote. The Administration will face significant pressure from more progressive Democrats to implement large climate change policy; however, they will have to present policy that can gain support from moderate members of Congress, as well, to be successful.

Because passing comprehensive climate change legislation will be difficult, the majority of energy and climate policies will likely come through Administrative actions, such as Executive Orders and rulemaking within the agencies. Some of the first actions taken by the Biden Administration will be undoing actions taken by the Trump Administration. This may be

difficult because some actions, like the Affordable Clean Energy Rule (a replacement to the Obama-era Clean Power Plan), are stuck in the courts. Likewise, any actions taken by the Biden Administration have the potential to be legally challenged. In combination with administrative actions, we will see various climate change initiatives included as support of other legislative priorities. Key legislation that is expected to contain climate language relevant to public power are the transportation and infrastructure packages.

In short, the likelihood of large-scale federal climate change legislation being enacted, such as a Cap and Trade program or Carbon Tax, is slim at this point. We saw a similar situation in 2009, when senators from coal-reliant states pushed for compromises in climate legislation. To decrease carbon emissions, we should expect either watered-down legislation or Executive Orders that support the reduction of emissions and climate change initiatives as parts of larger legislative priorities. IMPA is supportive of reducing carbon emissions as long as the initiatives are economical and do not result in burdensome cost increases for ratepayers. We have been following market-based signals that allow for a reduction in carbon-emitting generation, such as our community solar parks and through purchasing renewable power. With this in mind, IMPA will continue to monitor all federal actions that could impact our mission to provide wholesale power supply that is low-cost, reliable and environmentally responsible. *W*

President's Message

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with members from afar. While we all took the public health emergency for the serious matter that it was, IMPA and its members remained on the front lines working, communicating, serving, and supporting one another.

Though COVID-19 has followed us into the new year, we finally see a light on the horizon. A return to "normal" is closer than ever as vaccines become more readily available each day. Since we are so close to the solution to this problem, it's more important than ever to remain diligent in following CDC precautions until things are safer in the near future. We've made it this far, and we want to ensure everyone remains safe and healthy as the world conquers COVID-19. I truly appreciate the commitment to safety that our member communities showed throughout 2020, and IMPA looks forward to staying committed with them in 2021. *WR*

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IMPA Research Benefits Members

One of the myriad ways that IMPA serves its communities is by experimenting with new technologies and reporting the first-hand experience of using these innovations to members. By offering its headquarters up as a test subject, the Agency provides insightful and trusted feedback to community leaders about these technologies so that the communities don't have to take the risk themselves.

In November of 2020, IMPA installed a Capstone C65 microturbine to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of gas-powered generators. The microturbine will be used to power the Agency's conference center and IMPA Service Corp office. A notable benefit of the microturbine is that it can safely serve as backup power supply should there be interruptions on the electric grid.



The IMPA microturbine is solely fueled by natural gas that is purchased from the retail market.

"The microturbine has three separate operating modes, one in which it can run without power from the grid," said IMPA President and CEO Raj Rao. "If there is a loss of power on the grid, the microturbine will shut down for approximately five seconds before it begins generating on its own. The microturbine then monitors the grid for a stable power supply, and once that is detected, it shuts down for five seconds again and safely reconnects with the grid to return to normal operation."

If the economics of this new technology prove to be cost-effective, it could be a great benefit to

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IMPA
INDIANA MUNICIPAL POWER AGENCY

11610 N. College Ave.
Carmel, Indiana 46032

The IMPA Wire is published by the
Indiana Municipal Power Agency

Phillip Goode, Chairman

Raj G. Rao, President

Send submissions and suggestions to:

Whitney Hicks · IMPA Wire
Indiana Municipal Power Agency
11610 N. College Ave.
Carmel, IN 46032
(317) 573-9955
whitneyh@impa.com

www. impa. com



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IMPA Research

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member communities. However, the Agency must give ample time to learn from this project before any conclusions are made. In the meantime, IMPA will periodically report its findings to IMPA commissioners and community leaders alike.

This isn't the first time IMPA has investigated on-site generation options as an educational opportunity for members. In March of 2010, IMPA installed a Wind Spire Vertical Axis Wind Turbine (VAWT), a solar thermal water heater system, and rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) panels to gain a better understanding of each renewable technology. Now with a decade of experience, the Agency has detailed the cost-effectiveness, efficiency, and overall value of each.

IMPA concluded that Wind Spire VAWT was uneconomic, producing far less energy than necessary to offset the costs of installation after an entire decade of generation. The thermal water heating system faced similar disadvantages—while this technology was more reliable, the savings were not large enough to counterbalance its installation costs. The rooftop

solar PV panels were efficient through the last ten years, but the costs of implementing solar panels in 2010 were much higher than they are today. Overall, the rooftop solar PV panels were uneconomical, but now that solar equipment prices have drastically decreased, IMPA has found that more recent projects with this technology prove to be cost-beneficial.

With the research and reports communicated by IMPA about these technologies, members remain educated on new innovations and can make well-informed decisions for their communities. If IMPA determines that a technology is uneconomical, it works out better for all involved than if several members attempted the technology's installation only to find the same. Similarly, when IMPA finds a technology to be cost-effective, the Agency and members can confidently determine whether the technology would be right for them. For example, as solar prices decreased in recent years, IMPA worked with several community members to develop solar parks around the state of Indiana. IMPA's dedication to research is another way that the Agency is able to support members and keep wholesale power low-cost, reliable, and environmentally-responsible. ⁷⁰