

January 2013

The Hartselle

Connection

Serving Hartselle's People, Building for Hartselle's Future

Hartselle Native Bob Sittason New General Manager

Bob Sittason, named General Manager by the Hartselle Utilities board in a unanimous vote in August, has had a relatively smooth start taking over the utility from retired General Manager Ferrell Vest.

"Things are going extremely well," Sittason, who joined Hartselle Utilities in November 2004 as Accounting and Finance Manager, says of his first few months in his new position. "We feel we have a reliable system, and we want to maintain that reliability and continue good service to our customers."

"People don't always realize that Hartselle Utilities is not the same as the City," Sittason continues. "The City Council appoints our Board, but we are a separate entity."

"When Ferrell Vest became General Manager in 2004, his goal was to improve the working relationship between Hartselle Utilities, the city and the schools, which he did," Sittason explains. "That is something we'll continue. I've known the new Mayor, Don Hall, and most of the councilmen for many years, and believe that's the way we need to operate. We will maintain open lines of communication. We do a lot of in-kind services, and I'll go to the City staff meeting each week. We'll do everything legally possible to support the city and our schools," he explains.



Bob Sittason became Hartselle Utilities General Manager on October 1, following Ferrell Vest's retirement on September 30. Sittason has served as HU's Accounting and Finance Manager since November 2004.

Other than his time at the University of Alabama and two years immediately after that in Birmingham, the 51-year-old has lived in Hartselle his entire life.

After Sittason graduated from college in 1983, he worked in public accounting and private industry. Interestingly, in 1985, the first utility that he worked with was Hartselle Electric, before the electric system merged with Hartselle Water, Sewer & Gas in 1989 to become Hartselle Utilities. He went on to work with several other systems in the Tennessee Valley, and that experience helped him when he was hired as Accounting and Finance Manager at Hartselle Utilities. And now that he has come full circle, Sittason says, he intends to stay at Hartselle Utilities until he retires. "This is my last stop," he emphasizes.

Sittason's family has long been active in the Hartselle community. "My dad was a dentist, my mom was in real estate, and they have a history of service to this community," he says. Sittason himself has been the radio voice for Hartselle Tigers football games for over 20 years.

"I felt like I could bring continuity and longevity of service to this job – this is a way of providing service to the community as well. I feel very blessed and fortunate in this opportunity, and for the confidence that the board has shown in me."

Sittason and his wife, Daphne, have two daughters, Raley, a nursing student at the University of Alabama, and Madeline, a junior at Hartselle High School.

Please Watch What You Flush: Toilets Are Not Trash Cans

Flushable wet wipes: what a great idea, right? Wrong, says Hartselle Utilities Engineering Services Manager Glen Partlow. There are many products on the market now that are advertised as "flushable," which means the product will go through the pipes of your toilet into the wastewater system. Flushable, however, does not mean dissolvable. And, in fact, most products other than toilet paper advertised as flushable do not dissolve in the waste water stream.

Unlike toilet paper, so-called flushable wipes, baby wipes, and feminine hygiene products contain plastic and other nonsolubles that render them "nondispersible," the wastewater industry's term for material that doesn't dissolve quickly in water. Instead, these products settle in gravity sewer mains, lift pump stations or get tangled in pump mechanisms. They can also accumulate in your home sewer lines and cause a blockage, resulting in sewage backing up into your home – and an expensive repair bill.

"Several times recently our lift stations have needed mainte-

nance, due to baby wipe-type material clogging the system," Partlow explains. "And generally, these blockages occur after hours, requiring overtime work for crews."

When pump stations are clogged, they stop working and require cleaning and repair or even replacement in order to get the sewage moving again.

Fortunately, Partlow says, in areas where they've been able to identify the area of the source, letters have been sent to customers, and the problems have minimized. "We really appreciate that cooperation," he explains.

So, please remember: your toilet is not a trash can. Avoid a nasty cleanup in your home and help protect Hartselle's sewer system by never flushing any consumer item that is not toilet paper into the sewer system, regardless of what the packaging promises. If it's not toilet paper, and if you didn't eat it or drink it first, it shouldn't go in the toilet.

Mitchell New Accounting & Finance Manager



Tim Mitchell

Tim Mitchell has been hired as HU's new Accounting and Finance Manager, replacing Bob Sittason, who was named General Manager in August (see front page).

Mitchell graduated in 1978 from the University of North Alabama. He has worked in public accounting, private industry, and retail, all of which he believes have prepared him for his new role.

"Hartselle Utilities has a good reputation in the community," Mitchell explains. "The closeness of the town keeps the utility close to the people, and focused on meeting their needs. I recognize that I'm not selling anything, or digging

holes and laying pipes; my job is to provide a service for the other employees as well as the customers."

Mitchell has found, he says, that the staff and crews at HU are helpful and "always willing to go the extra mile. That has made this an easy transition."

The challenges that Mitchell looks forward to in the job include developing a good familiarity with utility needs, and learning the natural gas market. "You have to look ahead, and often purchase natural gas in advance for the best results for HU customers," he says. "You don't do that in an ordinary accounting position. And that is something that I am working closely with Bob Sittason to focus on, so that we can do what we can to stabilize rates for our customers and cover our costs – even though those lines don't always run in the same direction."

A lifelong resident of Decatur, Mitchell lives there with his wife, Vicky. They have four children and three grandchildren. His favorite pastimes are spending time with his family and disc golf.

Operation Warm

Winter months can be hard on those with fixed incomes, and people in need can face hard choices between paying utility bills and other needs, such as food or medicine.

"Hartselle Utilities participates in several energy programs that provide assistance to households who qualify," HU Customer Service Manager Terri Harris says. "One program that all of our customers can help with is Operation Warm."

Operation Warm provides one-time assistance to the elderly, people with disabilities and families with a health crisis. The Community Action Partnership of North Alabama provides resources to families and individuals in these situations and administers the Operation Warm Program. Customers must meet Community Action eligibility criteria to receive assistance.

If you or someone you know needs emergency assistance with a utility bill, you can apply for help from Community Action by calling 211 from a landline phone; or calling 355-7843 from any phone and selecting option two for Utility & Housing Assistance, followed by option one for Utility Assistance, then Morgan County from the options list. The phone lines open at 8 am and are only open for a limited time, so you will need to call as early as possible in the day.

HU accepts donations and forwards them to Community Action. Customers can make a one-time donation to Operation Warm, or choose to add a specific amount to their utility bill each month. To do so, complete the form below and return it to Hartselle Utilities. For more information, call 773-3340 or email Terri Harris at tharris@hartselleutilities.org.

To support Operation Warm, complete this form and return to Hartselle Utilities

Please add \$_____ to my monthly Hartselle Utilities (HU) bill. I understand that I have the right to stop this contribution at any time by giving HU written notice, and that the amount I have indicated will be added to my monthly bill until such notice is received.

I'm already an Operation Warm partner. Please increase my monthly donation to \$_____.

Please add a ONE-TIME donation of \$_____ to my bill. I understand that the amount I have indicated will be added to one of my monthly bills.

Name _____ Account Number _____

Address _____ Phone Number _____

Customer Signature _____

Operation Warm is administered by Community Action Partnership of North Alabama, Inc.
All monies donated go directly to those in need.

Bethel Road Construction Update

In early fall, HU crews completed Phase 2 of planned sewer repairs in the Bethel Road area in preparation for the new high school, says HU Engineering Services Manager Glen Partlow. Next, utility crews will relocate water, gas and electric service so that Bethel Road can be widened.

Work to relocate water mains began in December, and is expected to last about 11 weeks, Partlow says. One road closure was expected, and was planned during the winter break to minimize impact on school traffic at F.E. Burleson Elementary School.

Moving the natural gas mains, which will begin in January, will be done by directional boring, where possible, to minimize digging, Partlow reports. "We might go as much as 500 feet with pipe, without disturbing the ground."

All of HU's relocations are scheduled to be completed before April, when the City will open the widening and repaving portion of the project up for bids.

Electric Crews Replacing Poles

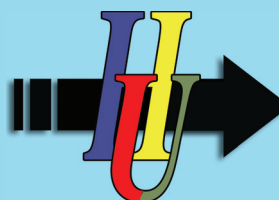
Electric crews inspected all poles in the Northeast section of Hartselle, east of Hwy. 31 and north of Main Street, in November, says Electric Superintendent Jonathan Hampton. Poles with problems that were not treatable will be replaced in the coming months.

In addition, Hampton says, line clearing crews have been working in the Northwest quadrant of the city, west of Hwy. 31 and north of Nance Ford Road. HU crews remove brush and trim trees along power lines in order to minimize power outages caused by trees and limbs falling across the lines.

This work will soon be completed for fiscal year 2013, Hampton says.

We Need Your Phone Number

There are times when HU needs to contact customers, either to inform them of scheduled service interruptions or with questions regarding an account. For this reason, it is imperative that we have an up-to-date telephone number for you or someone who can contact you in an emergency. If your number has changed within the last four years, please call 773-3340, or send your new number, along with your address and account number, to Terri Harris at tharris@hartselleutilities.org.



Hartselle Utilities

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