

# EcoRadio KC – Feb. 23, 2015

## Segment: Independence, Mo. – A Shining Example

This is a transcript of a segment from a Feb.23, 2015 radio program EcoRadio KC which aired on KKFI community radio.

*Interviewer: Earlier today I spoke with Leon Daggett and it went a little something like this. I am on the phone with Leon Daggett. He is the Power and Light Director for the City of Independence, MO. How are you today sir?*

**Daggett:** Doing fine, busy but doing good.

*Interviewer: It sounds like you guys are busy doing good out there. What's going on ...?*

**Daggett:** The big thing is our city council passed a resolution, it is resolution 5933 which asks IPL – that is Independence Power and Light - to start investigating some renewables and they have set some goals for us and some of the city building and so we are trying to be very green here. One of the first things we did was we replaced all out street lights with LED lights which is about a 68% savings in energy and the lights are good for 20 to 25 years so it saves a lot on maintenance. The other things we have been working on is wind generation. At the present time, 5% of our energy comes from a wind farm in Salina, KS called Smoky Hills II and we are trying to expand that so right we are looking at additional wind and the possibility of building a solar farm on our property that we own in Independence.

*Interviewer: That's great. So the plans with this solar farm ... is the city going to partner with someone to do this or is that still yet to be determined?*

**Daggett:** The goal is we put out a Requests for Proposals both for wind and solar and both of these projects will be built by a developer and we will purchase the energy from the farm. And hopefully if we build the solar farm, at the end of seven years then the city of Independence will own the solar farm. The wind farm we just buy energy for 20 years. If we do both of these projects, the city set a goal for us by 2018 to have 10% of our energy to come from renewables. If we do these two projects, we will be at 15% by 2016 beating the council's goal by two years.

**Interviewer:** *Really. Are things moving that quickly that you expect everything to be ...*

**Daggett:** We expect it to be up running by 2016 which is next year.

**Interviewer:** *Currently, does Independence get the bulk of its energy from burning coal?*

**Daggett:** The other issue is we have internally in our system we have five units that burn coal. Two of them we will be shutting down in January of 2016 – the two smaller ones. We call that Missouri City. Those will be shut down in 2016. The other three major units we have will be switched over to natural gas. They already have the ability to generate on natural gas all we have to do is make the switch. We received our last load of coal a couple of months ago. Once our coal is all gone we will be generating with natural gas and no coal.

**Interviewer:** *So the two old coal-powered plants that will be shut down, not converted to natural gas, what are the plans for those plants or are there any at this point?*

**Daggett:** Right now our hands are full dealing with what we are dealing with. And so what we are right now is we are going to shut it down. We have some investigations going on what will happen. We would like to find someone to buy and reuse it for another purpose, but we don't know what will happen. That will be done next after we get through the process. Our staff is extremely small and on top of the wind, the solar, the LED lights we are also building a new office building that will be LEED certified, which we hope to be LEED certified we hope to the Gold level, and so those are all the things we are working on. We are hoping to be, I think we will be the greenest utility in the region and Independence will be the greenest city in the region.

**Interviewer:** *Wow. That's fantastic*

**Daggett:** So we are working hard. We've got a lot of different things to do so ...

**Interviewer:** *It sure sounds like it. Is your job to make sure these things happen on time and all things like that?*

**Daggett:** That's my job. I'm the director, I get ... As Harry Truman says: "The buck stops here."

**Interviewer:** *Do you anticipate like ramped up costs in the near-term to help accommodate all these conversions and new ways of doing things and ultimately that will result in savings over time? Is that how you see it playing out?*

**Daggett:** What we are doing is we have four - when we look at a project we look at four avenues of responsibilities. One of those is we look at reliability. We look at safety. We look at affordability. And we look at the environment. And it is a four-leg stool and we evaluate everything by the four-way stool and we think that we are in the process of a cost of rate study and we think we are going to be able to do most of this without much rate increase or rate impact.

**Interviewer:** *Well that's great. Do you have a sense of why Independence why, what was the impetus local and the political landscape there ....*

**Daggett:** Well I kind of think we kind of started it when started on the LED street light program and we have had some incentive programs over the years for solar and some for geo-thermal and heat pumps. We have always tried to get people to control and conserve. That has always been our philosophy for at least the last 10 or maybe 20 years. The bottom line is, my feeling is you ought to use what you need, but need what you use. And in this life we all should conserve and not waste our natural resources because they all are important.

**Interviewer:** *That's right. That's right. Anything else you want let us know, our listeners to know about what good ...*

**Daggett:** That's where we are right now. And Craig Bruner ?? he will keep in contact as things go on.

**Interviewer:** *Okay. That's great. That's great. I really appreciated you checking in with us today Leon.*

**Daggett:** Alright Mike. That sounds great. If you need anything give me a call.

**Interviewer:** *I sure will do that.*

**Daggett:** Thanks. Good bye.