

Crisson praised for solid guidance at Paducah Power

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Mark Crisson, who will wrap up a four-month stint as interim general manager for Paducah Power Systems this week, is credited

with helping stabilize the situation at the utility in the wake of community outrage over steep electric rates.

The costly rates, believed to be the highest in Kentucky, are mainly the result of past poor performance of the Prairie State

Energy Campus, the utility's chief supplier of electricity, and PPS's large debt as an owner/investor in Prairie State.

Gary Zheng, former CEO of a Lubbock, Texas, utility, starts today as Paducah Power's new general manager.

Outrage over the high rates last fall led to the resignations of former GM David Clark and former board chairman Ray McLennan.

Hardy Roberts succeeded McLennan as board chairman.

"He (Crisson) helped calm the waves," Roberts said. "We needed a lot of that. He worked hard for us, and we wish we could

have kept him."

Roberts said Crisson has been a good mentor to him.

"He's just helped everybody, he's helped our board," Roberts said. "He didn't criticize us at all. He just gave us a course

of action" on how to stabilize PPS finances and put together a rate relief plan.

Paducah Mayor Gayle Kaler said Crisson was "the right person at the right time," to help.

"I think the board made an excellent choice (for the interim)," Kaler said. "He had the experience that was needed to guide

them through that rough period."

Kaler said Crisson's calm demeanor helped instill confidence, and he was a good communicator.

"He was always willing to answer any questions you had, and never made you feel like you asked a stupid question," she said.

"He just had a good way about him."

While he didn't realize it at the time, Crisson helped set up a program several years ago that led to his job with Paducah

Power.

When he was president and CEO of the American Public Power Association, Crisson worked with the

recruiting firm of MyCoff

& Associates to develop a program to temporarily assist utilities searching for new leadership.

"We recognized there was a sort of accelerated 'brain drain' as the baby boom ages and reaches retirement age, and that people

with knowledge and experience were retiring at an accelerated rate in the entire industry, not just public power," Crisson

said.

To help utilities search for, and compete for, management talent, the joint venture was designed to "provide qualified people

to come on a temporary basis and kind of hold the fort down during the transition process," Crisson said.

When PPS began the task of replacing Clark, who resigned as GM last September after 14 years, the board contracted with MyCoff

& Associates for transitional help.

"When they called me, I was perfectly enjoying my retirement," Crisson said. "I felt compelled to help out, because it was

partly my idea to set this thing up in the first place."

Crisson has over 35 years experience in public power. In addition to his role at the American Public Power Association, he

spent almost 30 years at Tacoma, Washington, Public Utilities, serving as its CEO for 15 years.

He received his undergraduate degree in applied science from the United States Naval Academy and a master's of business administration

from Pacific Lutheran University. He resigned his Navy commission in 1975 to begin his public power career.

His Navy background also may have prepared him for the challenge he faced at Paducah Power.

"I happened to be trained on a nuclear submarine for five years," Crisson said. "When you have to do a few patrols underwater,

it does a good job of preparing you for future pressure-filled situations."

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