

utility consultants, Booth & Associates, to redesign the system to use peak shaving rather than generating power to support the town's electric load. Another key decision, she emphasized, was hiring electric utility director Tim Lawrence in 2010.

"Tim's experience and professional dedication took the electric utility to another level," stated Allen.

The adjustments worked well, and in 2012, Berlin was able to reduce residential and commercial rates by 11.5 percent. When presented to the Maryland Public Service Commission, which approves rates in the state, "Nobody at the commission could ever remember dealing with a rate decrease," said Berlin Mayor Gee Williams.

That same year, Berlin was the first-ever recipient of the Sustainable Maryland Certification, for which the town was also honored in 2015 by the Environmental Finance Center at the University of Maryland. Allen explained some of those sustainability programs include an award-winning wastewater treatment facility, stormwater management, new sidewalks and other pedestrian friendly measures.

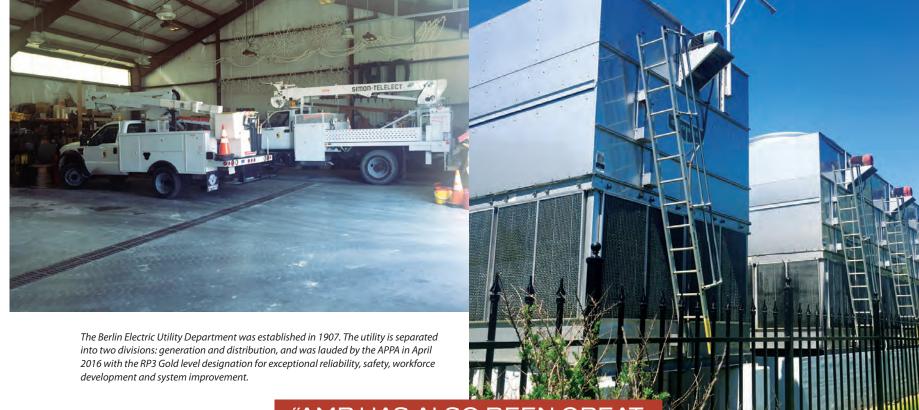
Mayor Williams noted, "The citizens of the town of Berlin recognize that in the 21st century, environmental stewardship and economic development are equally important sides of the same coin for any community that is going to develop a vibrant, diverse and sustainable quality of life for multiple generations."

Berlin's membership in AMP continues that positive direction, giving the community access to knowledgeable advice and better options for its energy purchases.

"We had spoken to city council about changing how we purchased energy, and part of why we joined AMP was to be able to purchase from a larger pool," said Allen. "AMP was essential to helping us reduce our power costs in a changing market."

With that support and access, Berlin's average residential bill dropped to the lowest rate the town had seen in over 10 years. Projections for 2019 are down even farther.





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Along with that success, Berlin's electric utility was recognized for its reliability earlier this year with the Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) designation by the American Public Power Association (APPA). RP3 recognizes public power utilities that demonstrate proficiency in four key disciplines – reliability, safety, workforce development and system improvement.

According to APPA, the designation recognizes utilities that are statistically thriving when it comes to reliability. The national average outage length for utilities in the top 25 percent is zero to 53 minutes, according to the announcement – Berlin's average outage length was just 17 minutes.

Allen said AMP's help was critical during the application process and that Berlin participated in AMP's pilot program dedicated to helping members obtain that designation.

"AMP has also been great as an overall resource, even with small things," she said. "For example, we were having trouble coming up with a good

term for a new demand side management (DSM) program we were putting in place. I asked AMP staff for some recommendations, and in less than a week I had 20-30 suggestions. It was extremely helpful."

Allen said that Berlin is excited to further its relationship with AMP, and will continue to explore ways to improve sustainability and reliability, such as the possibility of solar generation. And this summer, AMP's Board of Trustees paid America's Coolest Small Town a visit for the July Board meeting.

"To me, that's just another way that AMP helps us, in this instance with a group that stayed in our hotels and visited our restaurants – AMP is supporting our local economy," said Allen.