



The Power Source

Igniting the Future of Florida



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Power Profile: Barbara Quinones,
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Your city is in the middle of significant regional growth. What role does your electric department play in encouraging new business growth and infrastructure development?

Our first goal is always to provide a safe, reliable, low cost quality product to our residents and businesses. But we also see ourselves as community partners. We work closely with new businesses and developers to upgrade the infrastructure in order to ensure that our delivery system meets the increasingly sophisticated demands of a high-tech society. We work with them to make certain that they have incorporated cost-effective energy saving features into their electrical designs and determine the best rate to fit the business. We also support renewable energy and have businesses which have installed solar systems. We are extremely responsive to the needs of our local businesses; we're their neighbors! Our Historic Downtown area is in the process of a major revitalization and our offices and folks are about a mile away. We are a door knock or a phone call away and are able to provide personalized service and support to our community partners. We're also very nimble and flexible and can offer creative solutions to problems that can be implemented quickly.

Over the years, you have played a major role in hardening the electric infrastructure facilities in the light of the increased weather activity, correct?

Yes, that's true. I was working in the electric utility industry in Miami during Hurricane Andrew and also in Palm Beach and Broward during the extremely active hurricane seasons of 2004-2005. Those experiences gave me a very healthy respect for Mother Nature and the need to prepare extensively to keep the electrical infrastructure as intact as possible during severe weather events. In my previous job, my team was responsible for developing the Storm Hardening Program at a large privately-owned electric utility. I learned so much during that time! I brought the lessons learned to Homestead and we have been actively replacing infrastructure with storm hardened facilities for over 10 years now. The impact was noticeable after Hurricane Irma. We ultimately lost power to all of our customers after the storm, but in the areas where we had upgraded the facilities, many people were able to have their power restored in the first or second day following the storm. Some lost power for only an hour or two. They were pretty happy!



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Having worked in both a privately-held electric company and now with the City of Homestead energy department, are there issues your organization experiences that might be different from those of privately held electric companies in providing electric service?

In the electric utility industry, whether a privately-held company, a municipal utility or a cooperative, we all face a number of similar challenges; keeping prices competitive, providing excellent customer support, incorporating new technology successfully and being able to use our crystal balls effectively to see the future and prepare for it. But some experiences that are unique to municipals include the sense of community we have and the shared dedication to making Homestead the best city we can. The people who work in our electric utility are members of this community and take a tremendous amount of pride in the work they do and the support they provide to their family, friends and neighbors. The teamwork is amazing, and we are all working together to build a better future for the community; it's not just a job – it's a shared mission.

From your experience, what has been the biggest challenge you have faced or lesson you have learned?

The biggest lesson learned is that every closed door is an opportunity to look for new, more exciting challenges. When someone else gets that promotion you wanted, celebrate with them and then look for where you can break down that wall to get into the room on the other side of a different door. I was faced with making a big change when I moved from the private sector to the municipal sector and it was so exciting! I was given the chance to learn all kinds of new things and broaden my horizons. While it was a little bit terrifying to leave the security of a world I had known for many years, it was invigorating to face new and different challenges and helped me to grow both professionally and personally. I now know that every challenge is a new adventure waiting to be experienced.

What advice would you give to a 2nd year college student deciding on a career path?

Find your passion and identify a career where you can fuel that passion. Then never stop learning. If you constantly fuel your passion, you will be fulfilled and may even make some money! My passion has always been solving problems and puzzles. I studied engineering because it offered me tools that would help me to solve certain problems more quickly and logically. I get a thrill when our team comes up with a new and innovative approach to a tough problem—it's very rewarding! Over the years I've also learned things that help me to solve more complex problems involving human interactions and dynamics and those have turned out to be the most interesting and satisfying problems I've ever solved. Following my problem-solving passion has helped me to be successful and fulfilled in my career and in my life.



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Serving as Chair of the Florida Municipal Power Authority Board is a significant leadership position. What are some of your goals in your term of service?

I believe the members of FMPA all share the goals I previously touched on– providing a safe, reliable, low cost quality product to our residents and businesses. My specific goals for my term of service include:

- Increasing support services to the members, using economies of scale to become more efficient.
- Making sure all voices are heard and all ideas are listened to and carefully considered
- Continuing to identify ways to drive down costs on the power generation projects
- Continuing to help members showcase the value of their utilities in their communities
- Being as accessible as possible to the members and their constituents