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Elizabeth, Illinois



800-858-5522



jcecoop.com



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Board nominations open

Four director posts are up for election



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2024 Youth Day and Tour

Deadline to apply is Feb. 16



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Scholarships

JCE Co-op to award up to \$25,000 to students

Co-ops promote growth

JCE Co-op, similar to other cooperatives in our area, is member-owned. Because we are locally owned, we are always striving to do what is in the best interest of our members and the communities that we serve.

The directors who you have elected provided JCE Co-op three directives: Growth, Enhancing Cooperative Value, and Operational Excellence. From those directives JCE Co-op developed initiatives with end goals to meet what you expect from us: safe, reliable and affordable services.

Growth can be met through improved or added services that help attract new manufacturing facilities or businesses to our area. In our region, we continue to work with electric transmission providers to improve electric reliability and available capacity that will allow our existing manufacturing businesses to grow or new to build. Growth provides JCE Co-op additional revenue, which helps stabilize rates. Growth also adds jobs and money to our local economy.

Added services are another example of growth. Since 2016, JCE Co-op has been improving and growing our broadband internet service (formally, Sand Prairie) by adding lightning-fast fiber. Nearly 5,000 subscribers — and growing — enjoy the benefits of high-speed fiber internet service. Our five-year plan is to expand to 20,000 subscribers.



CEO'S REPORT
by Mike Casper

Building a new fiber network in rural America, while keeping prices competitive, is not easy. We appreciate your patience as we continue to obtain the needed federal and state funding to bring fiber to our most rural areas. We have nearly 2,500 miles of electric distribution lines and expect to have at least that many miles of mainline fiber throughout northwest Illinois.

Thousands of easements are needed to expand much needed fiber to our rural areas. We ask for your support in obtaining the necessary easements to meet our shared goal of expanding fiber to the entire Northwest Illinois region. As I shared with you in my September column, easements are a necessary component of bringing fiber to your neighborhood. For additional information on easements, please refer to the frequently asked questions document on our website at jcecoop.com. If you have any questions regarding easements that are requested of you, please do not hesitate to contact us at 815-858-2207 and ask for our survey team.

Becky Gustafson
JCE Co-op's roots began with the Farm Bureaus of Jo Daviess and Carroll counties banding farmers together to bring electricity to our

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For your information

Your Board of Directors:

David Senn

Chairman

District 7

Russell Holesinger

Vice Chairman

District 8

Robert Kuhns

Treasurer

District 10

Dan Tindell

Secretary

District 4

Jerry Meyer

District 1

Joseph Mattingley

District 2

Allen Hendren

District 3

Patricia Smith

District 5

Thomas Lundy

District 6

Larry Carroll

District 9

Office Hours:

Monday-Friday

Elizabeth

793 U.S. Route 20 West

7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Savanna

103 Chicago Ave.

7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

1:30 to 4 p.m.

Geneseo

1004 S. Chicago St.

7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

1:30 to 4 p.m.

Services and Billing Questions:

(800) 858-5522

jcecoop.com

For emergencies and outages call:

(800) 858-5522

Board Meeting Minutes Summary

Oct. 25, 2023

The regular board meeting of Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc. (NFP) was held on Wednesday, Oct. 25, 2023.

Safety Moment – A safety moment was provided by Director Russ Holesinger. Holesinger shared the five (5) E's of safety: education, encouragement, engineering, enforcement, and evaluation (for improvement).

Approval of Agenda – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously approve the meeting agenda.

Consent Agenda – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to approve the consent agenda.

Presentation – Brandon Sebena, JCE Director of Utility Operations, presented an overview of the Electric and Natural Gas Operations business units. Sebena highlighted projects that were completed throughout the year. In addition, Jesse Shekleton, Manager of Broadband Operations, provided an overview of fiber projects completed to date and commented on the future growth of JCE's fiber expansion efforts.

Governance Topics and Board Policy Review

Governance Talk Video – A Governance Talk Video on Cybersecurity was shared with the attendees. Patrick Mangan, National Rural Electric Cooperative (NRECA) Senior Director of Governance Education, discussed his role at the NRECA. Mangan shared that the Governance Topic Videos are important for Directors' continued education and noted that he was pleased to see the incorporation of videos into our monthly board meetings.

Board Policy Review – None.

CEO/Financial Operating Report

CEO Report – President and CEO Mike Casper shared that a Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) Credit continues to be applied to members' bills, which is evaluated each month. In addition, Casper shared that JCE has an independent third party perform a rate analysis each year in conjunction with a cost-of-service study,

the results of which will be reported to the board at the December board/budget meeting.

Financial Operating Report – Chuck Woods, Chief Financial Officer, provided a summary of the September financial operating report. Revenue year-to-date (YTD) is approximately \$49.2 million. Total operations and maintenance expenses are approximately \$39.2 million, which is (\$4,062,240) under budget of \$43.2 million. Margins are approximately \$3.5 million versus a budgeted amount of \$847,380 and amount to \$2.5 million over budget. By general consent, the board moved to file the financial operating report with the auditor.

Operations and Regulatory/Legislative Update

Operations Update – Senior V.P. and Chief Operating Officer Kyle Buros shared that our former Manager of Broadband Operations, Todd Tunks, has retired from his position at JCE. Ryan Randecker was promoted to the position. Buros noted that it will be a seamless transition, as Ryan is well equipped for the role and has been working with Tunks the past five (5) years as part of a succession plan.

Member Services Update – V.P. of Member Services Jennifer Meyer provided an overview of the Strategic Plan. In addition, Meyer shared member engagement opportunities that JCE recently participated in, which included Member Appreciation Days and the Galena Halloween Parade. Meyer also noted that the member satisfaction survey was open online, and the second phase of that campaign (phone calls) will be upcoming.

Human Resources Update – President and CEO Casper shared new employee statistics, noting we continue to grow as we expand our broadband services.

Executive Assistant Update – None.

External Affairs/Legislative Update – General Counsel Terry Kurt shared

Continued on page 18D ►

New look.

One name.



Jo-Carroll Energy



Sand Prairie

A service of Jo-Carroll Energy



Photo courtesy of our valued member, David Foote, Galena



Honoring our past, looking to our future, celebrating 85 years—JCE and SP are now one brand to best serve our members. Learn more at jcecoop.com.

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Board nominations open in January

Nomination petitions for the 2024 JCE Co-op Board of Directors elections are now available.

Four director posts are up for election in 2024, including representatives for Districts 5, 7, 8 and 10. Any JCE member whose primary residence is in a district that is up for election — including the incumbent — may petition for nomination.

Petition forms can be downloaded from the cooperative's website or can be picked up at any of the JCE Co-op offices.

Petitions must be signed by at least 25 JCE members residing in the district for which

the director is to be elected. Petitions must be filed at the cooperative headquarters in Elizabeth no earlier than Monday, Jan. 22 and no later than Friday, April 19.

In order to qualify to have their name placed on the ballot, all nominees must participate in an orientation provided by the cooperative president and CEO and/or the cooperative attorney. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to, time demands, education expectations and fiduciary duties.

All eligible candidates will be listed on the cooperative's website, with elections

materials and other cooperative communications.

JCE Co-op board directors are members just like you, who live in and are a part of the communities we serve. Running for the board of directors and voting in the elections are benefits of being a co-op member and supports the cooperative principle of Democratic Member Control.

Complete details on director qualifications and the nomination procedure can be found in the JCE Co-op bylaws posted at jcecoop.com. Anyone without internet access may request a copy by calling 800-858-5522.

Board minutes continued from page 18B

highlights from the Regulatory Policy Conference he attended. Kurt also noted that a House Bill was being introduced that would remove the ban on building new nuclear facilities in Illinois.

Board Issues and Action Items

A Position Statement on Broadband Fiber was reviewed.

Member Comments – Chairman Senn opened the floor for member comments.

Reports/Updates

Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) Report

– Chairman Senn discussed highlights from the AIEC board meeting.

Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC)

– Director Mattingley shared that DPC margins are positive and provided a future perspective, noting that they are focusing more on strategy-based performance metrics (i.e., key performance indicators) to measure their progress and success. Mattingley commented that DPC's goal is to be in the top quartile from a competitive

rate standpoint. Being part of the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) helps stabilize the cost of wholesale power.

American Public Gas Association (APGA) Report

– Director Carroll discussed various new and proposed regulations affecting the natural gas (NG) industry, noting that federal agency actions and state regulatory policy are proposing a ban in Maryland, potentially costing Maryland households upwards of \$26,000 each. President and CEO Casper noted that the APGA has developed a message to the Maryland Climate Pathway Report urging the state to continue the use of the gas infrastructure and the skilled workforce that operates it.

Prairie Power Incorporated (PPI) Report

– Director Kuhns shared the PPI Board highlights and the most recent generation numbers, noting near perfect operation for unit 2.

Member Appreciation Days

Roundtable Discussion – The board discussed Member Appreciation Days, where a record

number of members attended and learned more about the value-added services that we provide.

Executive Session

Into Executive Session – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to go into Executive Session at 12:30 p.m.

Out of Executive Session – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to come out of Executive Session at 1:30 p.m.

Action Resulting from Executive Session

– A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously that the Board of Directors of Jo-Carroll Energy declare they have reviewed the President & CEO's performance and found that it exceeds expectations. With that finding, and pursuant to the terms of the President & CEO's employment contract, the board authorizes the execution of certain obligations therein.

Other Business – None.

Adjournment – Chairman Senn adjourned the meeting at 1:35 p.m.

Dairyland Power, JCE support Great River Outreach

Dairyland Power Cooperative, in collaboration with JCE Co-op, has reinforced its commitment to community through a donation to Great River Outreach in Savanna. The \$1,000 donation, facilitated as part of Dairyland's Cooperative Contribution Program, aims to strengthen the local community initiatives supporting individuals and families in need within the Savanna area.

"We are honored to support the work of Great River Outreach and to stand alongside JCE Co-op in their dedication to making a meaningful impact in the lives of local residents," said Dairyland Power Cooperative President and CEO Brent Ridge.

Great River Outreach's mission aligns with the cooperatives' commitment to supporting initiatives that foster community well-being and enhance educational



opportunities. The donation will aid in efforts to replace a damaged roof at one of their facilities, ensuring they can continue to safely provide their many services to those in need.

"Caring for our members and communities is integral to our culture as a co-op," said Mike Casper, JCE Co-op President and CEO. "One way

we do that is by supporting community projects, like those undertaken by Great River Outreach, that strengthen our communities and improves life for our members."

Through initiatives like the Cooperative Contribution Program, Dairyland and JCE Co-op continue to demonstrate their dedication to being active and engaged corporate citizens, prioritizing projects that create sustainable and meaningful impacts for local communities.

CEO's report continued from page 18A

rural areas when no one else would. Eighty-five years ago, we sought the funding and support to make rural electricity a reality. We are doing the same today. It took decades to build out an electric transmission and distribution system to bring a service that we all take for granted today as we flip a switch or push a button on our smart phones to light our homes.

Today we are bringing a new necessary service, high-speed internet, to our rural communities, which will make our area more accessible and connected to the world, attractive to live in, helping to build our workforce, and active by creating new jobs.

We live in one of the most beautiful areas in the world. With the addition of high-speed internet service, we can connect to the world and friends and family across the globe, gain access to the best doctors in the world through telemedicine, and work from home with a beautiful view. By banding together as our founders did 85 years ago, we can make northwest Illinois even more prosperous.



Reader prize

Each month we print the name of a JCE Co-op member who is eligible to win a monthly \$25 readership prize. If your name is printed in this month's edition, and not a part of any article, contact JCE Co-op.



YOUTH DAY

20 24

ILLINOIS

Springfield, Ill., March 20, 2024

YOUTH TOUR

20 24

ILLINOIS

Washington, D.C., June 14-21, 2024

The 2024 Youth Day to Springfield, Ill., and Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., dates are set. Youth Day will be March 20, 2024. Selected students will spend the day in Springfield. This day gives students a first-hand look at democracy in action. Students will have the opportunity to meet with elected representatives during the day at the State Capitol and tour the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum.

During the event, interviews will be held to select two students to represent JCE Co-op on the Youth to Washington tour. They will join delegates from other Illinois electric and telephone cooperatives for the trip to Washington, D.C., June 14-21.

JCE Co-op plans to send two high school students on the all-expense-paid, week-long educational trip where they will learn how the government and electric cooperatives operate.

Youth Tour gives students the chance to spend a week in the nation's capital visiting historic sites, touring some of the country's most moving memorials and browsing the campus of our nation's capital. Plans are also to visit the Supreme Court.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

JCE Co-op accepts applications for Youth Day and Youth Tour from current high school sophomores and juniors whose parents or guardians are JCE Co-op members. JCE will pay the expenses involved with Youth Day and Youth Tour except for spending money. Information and online application forms can be found at jcecoop.com. Submissions will be judged by a committee chosen by JCE. Students selected for Youth Day will be interviewed in person during Youth Day with two finalists and one alternate selected for Youth Tour.



DEADLINE TO APPLY IS FEB. 16.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Lechowicz at 800-858-5522 ext. 1208 or slechowicz@jcecoop.com.

JCE Co-op scholarship applications open

JCE Co-op will award up to \$25,000 to students from its service territory through its scholarship program in 2024. Scholarships available include:

- Six JCE Co-op Scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 to current high school seniors whose parents or guardians are members of JCE Co-op. Two scholarships will be awarded in both Jo Daviess and Carroll counties and one each in Whiteside and Henry counties.
- Four \$1,000 scholarships for students who will attend two-year, technical or trade schools. One awarded in each of the four counties of the cooperative's service territory.
- Two lineworker scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 each.
- Four \$1,500 scholarships for adult or "nontraditional" students. These scholarships will go to cooperative members who are returning to school or will attend a post-secondary or accredited training program. One awarded in each of the four counties of the cooperative's service territory. (This scholarship is not intended for students who have graduated from high school within the past four years.)
- 10 "Director's Scholarships" of \$500 each to be awarded to a student from each of the cooperative's 10 director districts. Current high school seniors, whose parents are members of JCE Co-op, are eligible for these scholarships. Applicants and at least one of their parents must attend the Annual Meeting of Members on June 5, where selections will be made by drawings.

All JCE Co-op scholarships are funded by unclaimed and donated capital credits. Application deadline for JCE scholarships is March 1, 2024; Director's Scholarship application deadline is May 1. Applications must be submitted online at jcecoop.com.

For more information regarding any of the JCE scholarships, contact Peggy Francomb, JCE Co-op director of marketing and communications, at pfrancomb@jcecoop.com.

Thirteen JCE Co-op employees were recognized in 2023 for their years of service to the cooperative and its members. Service awards were donated to local charities on behalf of the employees.

Recognized were Tonya Ertmer and David Niccum, 5 years; Jake Weede, 10 years; Peggy Francomb, Pat Anderson, Mike Kusssmaul, Cindy Meader, Holly Woodhurst, Robyn Jackson, Wendy Meyer and Beth Heim, 15 years; Kyle Buros, 20 years; and Tony Schefsky, 25 years.

Director Larry Carroll was acknowledged for 12 years on the JCE Co-op board and Director Dan Tindell was acknowledged for 6 years.



(From left to right: Wendy Meyer, Peggy Francomb, Cindy Meader, Tonya Ertmer, Director Dan Tindell, Director Larry Carroll, Robyn Jackson, Kyle Buros and Mike Casper. Not pictured: David Niccum, Jake Weede, Pat Anderson, Mike Kusssmaul, Holly Woodhurst, Beth Heim and Tony Schefsky)



2023

A look back

Bridging the digital divide in rural America

We celebrated another milestone by connecting our 4000th fiber internet subscriber. Construction crews continue to actively build our fiber-optic internet network throughout Jo Daviess, Carroll and Whiteside counties.

The entire city limits of Galena and Mount Carroll fiber buildout are now complete, creating our fifth and sixth communities where fiber internet is readily in-service.

Value-added services



VoIP phone services



Internet & network security
Managed IT services



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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



1,026

Miles of mainline and drop fiber



76

Fiber neighborhoods with service now available



478

Total phone service subscribers



1,200+

New fiber subscribers



5,600+

Total broadband subscribers