



# HI-LINES

A NEWSLETTER FOR JO-CARROLL ENERGY MEMBERS

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Elizabeth, Illinois



800-858-5522



www.jocarroll.com



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## JCE plans brand refresh for 2024

October is Cooperative Month! As we join co-ops across the U.S. to celebrate, we're focusing on how we grow for our members.

Our co-op was formed as Jo-Carroll Electric Cooperative in 1939, a name indicative of both the core business provided and the area served. We've come a long way since then. At its September meeting, the board of directors approved a brand identity proposal for a refreshed logo and name change.

Over the next few months, you will start seeing the signs of a new look to come for JCE. We believe it is one that builds on our co-op roots and identity, that reflects our relationship with members and communities, and gives YOUR co-op a strong position for the future.

We have grown in both numbers of members and services provided since 1939. When the board of directors approved a name change and logo in the early 2000s, we became Jo-Carroll Energy to reflect more diversified services and products.

Our core businesses now number three, and we continue to experience expansion of our service territory with more members and new members in new areas benefiting from these services.



### CEO'S REPORT

by Mike Casper

An acquisition brought both more members and the addition of natural gas service in some portions of our territory. More growth — in members and service territory — came from a merger with Farmers Mutual Electric Company. In 2009, broadband internet became our third core business, and today Sand Prairie fiber is a key area of growth for the co-op.

With JCE's 85th anniversary on the horizon, we saw an opportunity to refresh our brand. A strong brand strengthens, unifies and reinforces the values of the co-op.

Over the past several months, our communications and marketing team has done research, surveyed employees and the board and held focus groups with members and employees. The outcome and comments we have received reinforce our belief that we are on the right path to creating a stronger, unified brand identity for your co-op.

In the next few months, we'll share more information through our co-op publications and communications. For now, join us in celebrating Co-op Month and all the ways co-ops grow.

## 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

www.jocarroll.com

### For emergencies and outages call:

(800) 858-5522

# Resume of Minutes

July 25, 2023

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

*Safety Moment – Chairman Senn commented on the upcoming combining season and noted that you should take extra caution while driving, to slow down and look for farm equipment on the road.*

**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** – A brand refresh marketing presentation was provided by Paula Keck, Graphic Design and Marketing Coordinator, and Derek Bradt, Broadband Marketing & Sales Administrator. In addition, Alex Peebles, Manager of Safety and Loss Control, shared with the board a copy of the Jo-Carroll Energy Emergency Action Plan.

### Governance Topics & Board Policy Review

**Governance Talk Video** – None.

**Board Policy Review** – None.

### CEO/Financial Operating Report

**CEO Report** – President and CEO Mike Casper discussed our Strategic Initiatives, and the importance of obtaining easements to continue growing our fiber communities.

**Financial Operating Report** – Chuck Woods, Chief Financial Officer, provided a summary of the financial operating report for June. Revenue year-to-date (YTD) is approximately \$33 million. Total operations and maintenance expenses are approximately \$26 million, which is approximately (\$2,952,243) under budget of \$2.8 million. Margins are approximately \$2.7 million versus a budgeted amount of approximately (\$903,199) and amounts to \$3.6 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 provided an update on the fiber broadband

construction activity, noting that we have several outside contractors assisting with the fiber build out to help meet our grant project deadlines.

**Member Services Update** – V.P. of Member Services Jennifer Meyer highlighted many of the state and federal programs that Jo-Carroll Energy (JCE) has used towards our community solar programs.

**Human Resources Update** – Merri Sevey, V.P. Of Human Resources, provided an update on new positions that will be posted. Sevey also announced that Jo-Carroll Energy was recently recognized as the American Legion's Employer of the Year. Jo-Carroll Energy was invited to Springfield, Ill., to receive the award.

**Executive Assistant Update** – Amy Johnston, Executive Assistant, had nothing to add outside of her written staff report.

**External Affairs/Legislative Update** – Terry Kurt, General Counsel, discussed highlights from the NRECA Legal Seminar that he attended.

### Board Issues and Action Items

**Select CFC Voting Delegate/Alternate** – A voting delegate and alternate voting delegate were selected for the CFC District 5 Meeting.

**Select Voting Delegate for the RESCO Annual Meeting** – A voting delegate was selected for the RESCO Annual Meeting.

**Cooperative Family Fund** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to approve \$1,000 that will be allocated towards the Cooperative Family Fund annually. This fund has been set up to help children of cooperative families under the age of 18 who have lost a parent who was employed in the electric cooperative industry.

### Executive Session

**Into Executive Session** – A motion was

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## Local agencies receive Sharing Success grants

Jo-Carroll Energy recently awarded grants totaling \$20,000 to four recipients through the CoBank Sharing Success program. The cooperative has participated in the CoBank program for several years and received more than 15 applications in 2023.

The Sharing Success program reflects two key principles that guide all co-ops, "Cooperation Among Cooperatives" and "Concern for Community." CoBank is a cooperative bank that assists rural America with financial services to agribusiness and rural electricity, water and communication providers in all 50 states. CoBank matches contributions by its cooperative members to the charitable organizations, schools and government organizations that serve a public purpose and are consistent with the program's purpose and guidelines.

Selected to receive Sharing Success grants in the JCE service territory were the following agencies and organizations. The amount noted is the total of the JCE grant plus the CoBank match.

**Elizabeth Community Ambulance Service: \$5,000**

The Elizabeth Community Ambulance Service (ECAS) is a rural, nonprofit ambulance service in the Village of Elizabeth, located in Jo Daviess County. Founded in 1979, ECAS has assisted thousands of people during some of the most frightening times of their lives, thanks to staff, both paid and volunteer, who dedicate their time, skills and compassion to aid others.

However, meeting the needs of the public is becoming more of a challenge as the demand for emergency services in rural areas continues to climb while the number of licensed volunteers is shrinking. This has required ECAS to continue to look for the most cost-effective ways to continue to fund its operations. ECAS will use the grant toward replacement of the oldest ambulance in its fleet. The old vehicle, a 2004 Ford E450, was acquired after adopting the former Hanover Ambulance Service's district in May 2018.

When the Hanover Service was forced to shut down due to a critical lack of volunteers, ECAS stepped up, expanding its coverage to include those residents who would have been left without an

ambulance service. Since adding the additional service area and ambulance, ECAS has successfully utilized all three of its ambulances during periods of heavy call volume. However, it also caused new budget strains, as there is now another ambulance to fuel, maintain and, eventually, replace.

To continue to support the community to the best of its ability, ECAS is now budgeting to replace the oldest member of the fleet with a new ambulance with updated safety and technology features.

ECAS is replacing the old ambulance with a RAM 5500 4x4 ambulance. By opting to go with the larger, gas-powered truck chassis, ECAS can increase its fuel mileage and reduce its environmental impact. In addition, the four-wheel drive capability of the new ambulance will increase ECAS's ability to assist patients in difficult-to-reach areas.

"ECAS has responded to numerous hunting and farming accidents throughout the years, and these patients are often in muddy fields, timber and other areas a typical ambulance cannot reach," the application stated. "This can lead to delayed patient care, as the fire department typically must respond to calls of this nature, straining resources and personnel and leaving patients exposed to the elements for longer periods."

The total cost of the new ambulance is approximately \$281,000, not including the \$76,000 Power Load it will need to be equipped with. The price of a new ambulance has continuously and

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substantially increased over recent years due to supply shortages across the world.

The new ambulance is expected to arrive in the summer of 2023. It will be equipped and put into service as soon as the equipment is transferred from the old ambulance.

#### Hammond Henry Hospital: \$5,000



The mission of the Hammond-Henry Hospital Foundation is to assist in meeting the healthcare needs of the community. Hammond-Henry Hospital provides medical services and facilities in a convenient and often lifesaving location to persons living in or near this rural community of Henry County.

The foundation will use the grant for a nurse call system allowing patients to call for staff assistance. The current nurse call systems in long-term care, same-day surgery and endoscopy need an upgrade to meet ever-changing technological advances, according to the application.

The new system will provide both audio and visual alerts to staff. In addition, this upgrade will include new Code Blue call stations for the operating rooms. The cost to replace the current nurse call system for these departments is just over \$114,000. The foundation's goal is to raise \$50,000 toward this project.

#### City of Mount Carroll: \$5,000



The City of Mount Carroll and The Economic Growth Corporation are working together to establish a day care center at Shimer Square. Shimer Square is a multi-phased, mixed-use development by GROWTH that encompasses a mixture of housing, business and community facilities.

"Family-friendly services such as quality childcare can contribute to an environment of work-life support and can help raise the profile and attractiveness of Mount Carroll and Shimer Square," City Clerk Lisa Dauphin wrote in the grant application. "It is well-known that existing childcare centers in the community have been operating at capacity for years with a long waiting list."

In January 2023, GROWTH sought to hire a consultant to conduct a childcare feasibility study. The City of Mount Carroll agreed to fund the required market study early in 2023, and GROWTH commissioned Triangle 2 Solutions, an experienced childcare center market analyst, to investigate the potential services and physical space that will be needed for a new childcare center and early childhood programs to serve the area.

The assessment will determine and enable GROWTH to

successfully develop new construction, a child care facility at its Shimer Square campus. GROWTH was awarded an \$800,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for its Shimer Square Job and Daycare Creation Project that will be used to help construct a new daycare facility on the campus. Total project costs exceed \$1.8 million. Pending the results of the survey, construction is anticipated to begin in 2023.

The effort is also anticipated to create 27 jobs that are accessible to residents within the region. The City of Mount Carroll intends to use the Sharing Success Grant to help fund the Shimer Square Daycare Creation Project.

#### Fulton Historical Society: \$5,000



"The Fulton Historical Society has taken over the responsibility of remodeling the former Fidelity/Drives Historical Building. Since its acquisition, the building has received a new roof, had all necessary tuck pointing completed, nonbearing walls removed, and all asbestos cleared out. (Pella Windows were installed before the building was acquired.)

This is a well-maintained, 20,000-square-foot building that will serve as a community and events and tourism facility at our Windmill and Cultural Center Complex. We need to

raise \$350,000 to make this dream a reality. Since early December, over \$150,000 has been raised. In early January we met with Mr. Casper in Fulton, and he suggested that

we apply for this grant. With Jo-Carroll Energy's help, we will reach our goal."

The application was prepared by Charles Dykstra, fund drive chairman.

## Choose autodraft, ebill and win

**Y**ou could win a \$100 bill credit just by enrolling in e-bill (paperless billing) or auto draft by the end of the year. We will have more than one winner!

Paperless billing reduces your monthly paper usage and mailbox clutter by allowing you to review and pay your monthly bills online. It's free, convenient and secure!

When you enroll in paperless billing, you receive an email each month alerting you that your bill is available for online viewing. This allows access to

your account and bill online, anytime from any internet connection.

With auto draft, members can make arrangements to have the balance due automatically deducted from their checking or savings account or billed to a credit card each month. Your JCE bill shows the date and amount of your payment.

Enrolling in e-bill or auto draft is easy! Just call one of our member care representatives at 800-858-5522 or email [info@jocarroll.com](mailto:info@jocarroll.com). If you sign

up during our special promotion in October, November or December, you'll receive a one-time bill credit of \$10 for each service you sign up for (maximum of \$20 per membership). You'll also be entered into a drawing for one of two one-time bill credits of \$100 each.

Already have e-bill or auto draft? We'll also automatically enter members using one or both services into a separate drawing for a chance to win one of two one-time bill credits of \$100 each.

### Resume of minutes continued from page 18B

made, seconded, and carried unanimously to go into Executive Session at 10:57 a.m.

**Out of Executive Session** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to come out of Executive Session at 11:26 a.m.

**Action Resulting from Executive Session** – None.

### Reports/Updates

**Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) Report** – The AIEC did not have a meeting due to the timing of the AIEC Annual Meeting.

**Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC)** – Director Mattingley provided highlights from the Dairyland Board Meeting, which included a grant totaling \$14.89 million to support broadband

deployment in rural communities. Dairyland also received a positive North American Electric Reliability (NERC) compliance Audit.

**American Public Gas Association (APGA) Report** – President and CEO Casper and Director Mattingley provided a report from the APGA Annual Meeting, noting that the APGA Annual Meeting's governance panel, of which Mattingley was a panelist, discussed the importance of good governance. Mattingley shared that Casper was selected as APGA Board Chair in 2025/2026. Casper shared the importance of APGA membership with over 700 co-ops and municipalities across the country.

**Prairie Power Incorporated (PPI) Report** – Director Kuhns had

nothing to share outside of his written report.

**Other Business** – None.

**Adjournment** – Chairman Senn adjourned the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

### Reader prize

**E**ach month we print the name of a Jo-Carroll Energy 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 Jo-Carroll Energy.

## Playing it safe online

In today's world, most of us don't leave the front door unlocked. We protect our homes, loved ones and valuables from intruders with locks, alarms and other security measures. Cybersecurity is no different. It's the practice of protecting other valuables such as your identity, banking and health records and other sensitive information from digital attacks and theft.

In addition to pumpkin-spice lattes, crisper air and Halloween festivities, October is the time of year we recognize Cybersecurity Awareness Month. While taking necessary steps to protect our personal information is a year-round practice, at Jo-Carroll Energy, we use this time to share helpful cybersecurity reminders.

Given our increased reliance on internet-connected devices and gadgets, this month, I'd like to share a few cybersecurity tips and let you know how JCE is working to boost our own cybersecurity efforts.

According to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA), an agency of the United States Department of Homeland Security that is responsible for strengthening cybersecurity and infrastructure protection, these are the four best ways to keep you and your family safe online.

- 1. Implement multi-factor authentication** (also known as two-step verification) on your accounts. The additional layer of protection makes it much harder for criminals to access your information. Even if a hacker obtains your password, they may be unable to access your accounts if multi-step verification is enabled.
- 2. Update your software.** This is one of the easiest ways to protect your personal data. When downloading a software update, make sure it's coming straight from the company that created it. Beware of fake pop-ups that request urgent downloads. Better yet, turn on automatic updates.
- 3. Think before you click.** Most successful cyberattacks start with a phishing email. Don't take the bait when cyber criminals go phishing. Avoid emails (or texts) that look too good to be true, oddly urgent, poorly crafted or include unusual requests.
- 4. Create strong passwords,** using long, unique and complex words or phrases. Consider using a password manager to save time, work across all devices, protect your identity and notify you of potential phishing websites.



### For the young people in your household

Just as you would talk with your children about safety in the physical world, discuss ways to stay safe online. Help them understand the public nature of the internet. Young people need to know early on that what is shared online stays online and that it's difficult (if not impossible) to take back. Just as you would guard your money or valuables, children need to learn to guard their personal information, especially on social networks. As a parent or guardian, help your children learn about and use the privacy and security settings on social networks and gaming sites.

Jo-Carroll has several security service offerings that can help you keep your family or business safe on the Internet. We offer an Online Backup solution to protect your PC's data from hardware failure and ransomware. We also have a DNS filtering option that adds an extra layer of security to help fight against phishing and malicious websites. For additional information please call 815-858-2207.



## JCE board plans open meeting

The Jo-Carroll Energy Board of Directors will hold an open board meeting at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 25 in the board room at the cooperative's headquarters in Elizabeth. The office is located at 793 US 20 West.

This is the regular October meeting of the board. Members may speak during the "Member Comment" period or if requested by the board chair.





## Spooky energy savings

**T**his spooky season, we're sharing a few energy-saving tricks so you can treat yourself to lower energy bills. Here are four simple ways to summon the spirit of energy efficiency.

Conjure instant savings with a smart thermostat. One of the easiest ways to save energy is through thermostat control, since home heating and cooling account for a large portion of monthly energy use. Smart thermostats can help you manage heating and cooling costs by learning your daily routine and adjusting the temperature settings accordingly. You can control a smart thermostat from anywhere (through your smartphone), which allows you to prevent unnecessary energy consumption while you're away. Sorcery!

Get rid of goosebumps by eliminating ghostly drafts. The winter chill is just around the corner, so now is the time to seal air leaks around your home. Apply caulk and weatherstripping around drafty windows and doors to make your home more comfortable and lower energy use.

Illuminate your lair with energy-efficient lighting. LED bulbs use 75% less energy and last 25 times longer than incandescent light bulbs. Make the switch to reduce energy used for lighting. Remember to use LEDs when it's time to decorate for the upcoming holiday season. LED light strings offer an average of 88% energy savings compared to traditional incandescent light strings.

Stir up savings with countertop cauldrons. Cooler weather summons our favorite soup recipes. Small countertop appliances like slow cookers use less energy than cooking meals on the stovetop. Grab your book of spells (or recipes) and start stirring up savings in the kitchen.

When we look around our homes, there are many opportunities to save energy. So, this spooky season, investigate your space and unlock a different kind of magic — the kind that brings real energy savings.



Our public natural gas utility works hard for our community — join us in celebrating our utility and its employees Oct. 1-7 during Public Natural Gas Week.



## BENEFITS OF HOME INTERNET SECURITY

Protect all the users and devices in your home

Easily protect your home from online security threats and undesirable content. Our network security is a cloud-based, AI-driven content filtering and threat protection service, that can be deployed and configured in minutes, with no software installation necessary.



### Protection against online threats

Protect your users and networks against command and control (botnet) attacks, malware, phishing, viruses, and other threats simply by applying our security policies. We partner with an exclusive provider in the industry that uses security threat analysis powered by AI and machine learning. This allows us to keep our security threat data updated and pushed down to your networks in real time, so you're always protected from zero-day attacks and new vulnerabilities.



### Web content filtering

We make it easy to deploy comprehensive and customizable URL and internet content filtering policies in mere minutes. Select the categories of websites you want to block – adult content, illegal content, streaming media, chat & instant messaging, social networking, etc. – and we'll do the rest. Our proprietary algorithms intelligently categorize sites so you don't have to constantly maintain a list of domains.

### Home Internet Security includes:

- ✓ Phishing, malware, botnet protection
- ✓ AI-driven content filtering
- ✓ No additional equipment required
- ✓ No contract or long-term commitment required

**\$6/mo.**

*Price includes all applicable taxes and installation*

**For more information, visit:**

[www.connectsp.com/internetsecurity](http://www.connectsp.com/internetsecurity)

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**Sand Prairie**

*A service of Jo-Carroll Energy*



Empowering members. Connecting communities.

# Focused on YOU.



***October is national co-op  
month, let's celebrate!***



## Jo-Carroll Energy

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 