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Elizabeth, Illinois



800-858-5522



jcecoop.com



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Don't miss out!

Improving the quality of life — 2025 and beyond

In December, the JCE Co-op Board of Directors who you elect to represent you closely reviewed and approved the proposed 2025 budget. The budget was meticulously developed to support what is necessary to safely deliver reliable services, which you expect from your local cooperative, while improving the quality of life in our area. One example is making available essential utility services like fiber broadband.

Currently more than 7,000 of JCE Co-op's approximately 20,000 members subscribe to the co-op's broadband service. Within five years, the co-op plans to add 1,500 miles of fiber to its current 1,200 miles and provide services to an additional 10,000 to 15,000 subscribers, some of whom will be new to co-op membership.

Offering high-speed internet has made northwest Illinois an even more attractive place to live. It helps retain and attract new people by knowing they can have the quality of life they want with the side benefits of helping build our area's workforce and economic prosperity.

When it comes to a better quality of life through broadband fiber, the sky is the limit. We consider fiber to be the most effective and economic broadband investment for our members to meet the growing demands of telemedicine, distance learning,



CEO'S REPORT

by Mike Casper

remote work, emergency services, networking, precision agriculture, the internet of things (IoT), virtual reality and utility smart grid systems. All of these improve the life of our members, provide efficiencies in our workplace, and overall make northwest Illinois a safer and better place to live and work.

We are working hard to bring fiber to all our members and others in our corner of Illinois because — as a member-owned co-op — our vision is to enhance the quality of life for our members.

JCE Co-op is one of more than 800 local, not-for-profit electric cooperatives across the country serving 42 million people in booming suburbs to remote rural communities across 48 states. Many may not fully understand the cooperative business model.

Co-ops look out for the best interests of their consumers, communities and employees. Cooperatives stand up for each other, collaborate, learn from each other and build upon each other's successes. We are owned by you, the members. The board of directors and JCE staff work for you and will continue to act in your best interests in 2025 and beyond.

For your information

Your Board of Directors:

David Senn
Chairman
District 7

Jerry Meyer
Vice Chairman
District 1

Robert Kuhns
Treasurer
District 10

Dan Tindell
Secretary
District 4

Joseph Mattingley
District 2

Allen Hendren
District 3

Patricia Smith
District 5

Thomas Lundy
District 6

Ted James
District 8

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

Resume of Minutes

Oct. 30, 2024

The open board meeting of Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc. (NFP) was held on Wednesday, Oct. 30, 2024.

Safety Moment — Director Senn shared safety tips on the importance of being mindful while driving during the harvesting season, noting that you should always be conscientious of slow-moving farm equipment and suggested using your hazard lights when following behind to alert other drivers.

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

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

Presentations — Brandon Sebens, JCE Director of Utility Operations, presented an overview of the storm restoration process and natural gas and electric operations, which included projects completed in 2024. In addition, Jesse Shekleton, Director and General Manager of Broadband, provided an update of fiber construction projects completed in 2024 and plans for 2025 and beyond.

Governance Topics and Board Policy Review — None.

CEO/Financial Operating Report

CEO Report — President and CEO Mike Casper reported that preliminary results of the Cost-of-Service Study will be introduced in Executive Session. During the November board meeting any proposed rate changes will be presented, and in December the proposed 2025 budget will be presented, discussed, and considered for approval.

Financial Operating Report — Chuck Woods, Chief Financial Officer, provided a summary of the September financial operating report. Revenue year-to-date (YTD) is approximately \$51.4 million. Total operations and maintenance expenses are approximately \$40.7 million, which is (\$1,474,813) under the budget of approximately \$42 million. Margins are approximately \$2.6 million. By general consent, the board moved to file the financial operating report with the auditor.

Operations and Regulatory/Legislative Update

Operations Update — Senior VP and Chief Operating Officer had nothing to report outside of his written report.

IT Technology Report — Dan Marcure, VP and Chief Technology Officer, provided information on how we protect our systems using cybersecurity programs tailored for the specific needs of the cooperative. In addition, he noted that we do have several cybersecurity services available to our members. **Dean Schmidt**

Member Services Update — Jennifer Meyer, VP of Member Services, shared the JCE Co-op Strategic Plan update, which included the strategic goals and objectives and initiatives that included: enhancing co-op value and providing member value, stabilizing rates, improving efficiencies and reducing costs.

External Affairs/Legislative Update — President and CEO Mike Casper shared legislative topics that included proposed funding for the low-income home energy assistance program, or LIHEAP, which stands at about \$4 billion for 2025. LIHEAP provides assistance to households at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. He also shared lame duck legislation priorities that are important to co-ops.

Executive Assistant Update — Amy Johnston had nothing to report outside of her written report.

Board Issues and Action Items

Capital Credits General Retirement — A motion was made by Director Hendren to approve the Capital Credits General Retirement of approximately \$1.6 million, which was seconded by Director Meyer and carried unanimously.

Review of the Energy Assistance Position Statement — The Energy Assistance Position Statement was reviewed with the board, senior staff and members. The goal of the Energy Assistance Position Statement is to provide support to our

Board nominations open in January

Nomination petitions for the 2025 JCE Co-op Board of Directors elections are now available.

Three director posts are up for election in 2025, including representatives for District 1, 2 and 4. 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, Dec. 30 and no later than Friday, March 28.

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. 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 election

materials and other cooperative communications.

JCE Co-op board directors are members just like you, who live in and are 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 support 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.

Minutes continued from page 18B

membership during times of hardship via various energy incentive and assistance programs.

Reports/Updates

Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) Report — Director Senn shared highlights from the AIEC Board Meeting.

Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC) — Director Mattingley shared news from Dairyland Power Cooperative, which included the announcement of the New Era Grant totaling \$579 million in funding to advance low-carbon goals while maintaining a reliable, affordable energy supply.

American Public Gas Association (APGA) Report — Director Carroll discussed topics affecting the Natural Gas Industry, noting that APGA recently met with the Fire Protection Agency regarding fuel gas detector use. Casper shared that APGA and its members are in support of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

(PHMSA) Reauthorization. PHMSA is under the Dept. of Transportation (DOT) and regulates ~3.3 million miles of natural gas pipelines in the U.S. PHMSA's priority is protecting infrastructure of pipelines and enhancing safety.

Prairie Power Incorporated (PPI) Report — Director Kuhns shared highlights from the PPI Board Meeting and noted that Prairie State Energy Campus facility supplies approximately 60% of PPI member's power needs.

Board Issues and Action Items

Schedule the November Board Meeting — The November Board Meeting was set for Nov. 26.

Select attendees for BLC Course 903/The Role of the Board Chair in Conducting Effective Meetings — Attendees were selected to attend BLC Course 903/The Role of the Board Chair in Conducting Effective Meetings.

Member Comments — Members of JCE Co-op had

an opportunity to address the board with comments/concerns.

Into Executive Session — A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to go into Executive Session at 11:18 a.m.

Out of Executive Session — A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to come out of Executive Session at 2 p.m.

Action Resulting from Executive Session — A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously that the Board of Directors of Jo-Carroll Energy declares 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 2:02 p.m.

The year in review . . .

2024

2024 was a year of tremendous growth and change! We have grown in both numbers of members and services provided since 1939. 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.

With our 85th anniversary in 2024, we saw an opportunity to refresh our brand. We are proud of our heritage, so it was important to us that our new name honor our heritage but also allow us the ability to streamline and grow service lines. Our new name, JCE Co-op, kept the abbreviation of the previous names, Jo-Carroll Electric Cooperative and Jo-Carroll Energy. Also important to us was putting "Co-op" back in our name, reminding all of the co-op difference and advantage.

Now serving . . .



20,231

Electric
accounts



5,764

Natural gas
accounts



7,343

Broadband
accounts

*(Includes fiber internet
and wireless members)*

Commitment to community



\$5,500

Area fire & ambulance districts



\$6,288

Area food pantries



\$12,500

Scholarships



\$8,544

Other education & community organizations

Bridging the digital divide in rural America

We celebrated another milestone by connecting our 6000th fiber internet subscriber. Construction crews continue to actively build our fiber-optic internet network throughout Jo Daviess, Carroll, Stephenson and Whiteside counties.



1,990

Total miles of fiber



88

Active fiber neighborhoods with service



766

Total members with phone service



1,800+

New fiber internet members

Value-added services

VoIP phone Services • Internet & network security • Managed IT services

Photo courtesy of our valued member, Franz Strack, Elizabeth.

JCE Co-op's Hi-Lines section getting a fresh look

Starting with the next issue of Illinois Country Living, readers will notice a fresh, new look in the Hi-Lines section. The center section, packed with the latest news, safety tips and updates from JCE Co-op, is being redesigned with a more reader-friendly layout.

While the design may be changing, the content our members love and rely on will remain the same. From co-op news to essential safety information, Hi-Lines will continue to keep you informed and connected.

And there's more exciting news: We're adding a fun new surprise just for the kids! Be sure to check out the updated Hi-Lines in the upcoming issue and see what's waiting for our youngest readers.



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.



Employee recognition

Fourteen JCE Co-op employees were recognized in 2024 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 Hunter O'Neil, Connie Carroll, Jamie Twombly and Justin Watkins, 5 years; Les Hansen, Ryan Stadel, Ryan Doty, Ryan Randecker, Michael Hoppman and Mark Wild, 10 years; Kevin Krug, Tim Knockel and Brad Travis, 15 years; and Ashley Spahn, 25 years.

Pictured from left to right:

Back: Les Hanson, Ryan Randecker, Mark Wild, Tim Knockel, Ashley Spahn, CEO Mike Casper

Front: Jamie Twombly and Connie Carroll

ATTENTION SOPHOMORES AND JUNIORS: AN UNFORGETTABLE ADVENTURE AWAITS!

ARE YOU READY FOR A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXPERIENCE THAT COMBINES LEADERSHIP, HISTORY AND UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES? THE 2025 YOUTH DAY IN SPRINGFIELD, ILL., AND YOUTH TOUR TO WASHINGTON, D.C., ARE YOUR TICKETS TO AN INCREDIBLE JOURNEY!

MARCH 5, 2025

YOUTH DAY

SPEND AN EXCITING DAY IN SPRINGFIELD, WHERE YOU'LL GET A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT HOW DEMOCRACY WORKS. TOUR THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN PRESIDENTIAL MUSEUM, VISIT THE STATE CAPITOL, AND EVEN MEET ELECTED OFFICIALS FACE-TO-FACE. PLUS, DURING THE EVENT, YOU'LL HAVE THE CHANCE TO INTERVIEW FOR THE ULTIMATE PRIZE: A SPOT ON THE YOUTH TO WASHINGTON TOUR!

JUNE 16-23, 2025

YOUTH TOUR

TWO LUCKY STUDENTS WILL REPRESENT JCE CO-OP ON AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID, WEEKLONG TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C. YOU'LL JOIN OTHER TEENS FROM ACROSS ILLINOIS TO EXPLORE SOME OF THE MOST ICONIC SITES IN THE COUNTRY.

- WALK THROUGH AWE-INSPIRING MEMORIALS.
- TOUR THE SUPREME COURT.
- DIVE INTO HISTORY AT MUST-SEE LANDMARKS.
- EXPERIENCE THE VIBRANT CULTURE OF OUR NATION'S CAPITAL.

THIS ISN'T JUST A TRIP – IT'S A CHANCE TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS, GROW YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND SEE GOVERNMENT IN ACTION UP CLOSE.

WHO CAN APPLY

IF YOU'RE A HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORE OR JUNIOR AND YOUR PARENT OR GUARDIAN IS A JCE CO-OP MEMBER, YOU'RE ELIGIBLE! JCE CO-OP COVERS ALL EXPENSES (EXCEPT SPENDING MONEY).

HOW TO APPLY

APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN NOW AT JCECOOP.COM/YOUTH-WASHINGTON! DEADLINE TO APPLY IS FEB. 14. A PANEL OF JUDGES WILL SELECT PARTICIPANTS FOR YOUTH DAY, AND IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS DURING THE EVENT WILL DETERMINE THE TWO FINALISTS AND AN ALTERNATE FOR YOUTH TOUR.

DON'T MISS OUT ON THIS AMAZING OPPORTUNITY – APPLY TODAY AND GET READY TO MAKE HISTORY YOUR CLASSROOM!

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT TAYLOR SMITH AT 815-591-0091 OR TSMITH@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 2025. 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 in 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 May 28, where selections will be made by drawing.

All JCE Co-op scholarships are funded by unclaimed and donated capital credits. The application deadline for JCE scholarships is March 1, 2025; Director's Scholarship applications are due May 1. Applications must be submitted online at jcecoop.com/scholarship-opportunities.

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

Senior Planet

JCE to launch classes on technology

JCE Co-op is launching a new program to help older adults in the co-op's service area learn new skills and make new friends.

In partnership with Senior Planet, a national nonprofit which harnesses technology to change the way older Americans age, JCE Co-op will be offering classes and workshops about technology and other topics.

Through partnering with Senior Planet, JCE Co-op will offer the program's proprietary curriculum starting in January.

To learn more about the program or learn about upcoming classes, visit jcecoop.com. You can help us plan for future sessions by completing a short survey on the Senior Planet page on our website.

Senior Planet from AARP is a community of people 60 and older who are learning to thrive in the digital world. Senior Planet programs are offered free of charge. To learn more about Senior Planet, visit www.seniorplanet.org or follow @SeniorPlanet on social media.