

HI-LINES

A newsletter for members of JCE Co-op

APRIL 2026

Elizabeth, IL

800-858-5522

jcecoop.com



CEO'S REPORT
by Mike Casper

Powering more than your lights

When you flip a switch, you expect the lights to come on. At JCE Co-op, we take that responsibility personally because we live here too.

It can be easy to think of a cooperative simply as a utility. But JCE Co-op is more than a service provider. As a member-owned cooperative, we exist to serve the people who own the cooperative — our members — not shareholders somewhere else. We're also not a faceless company. We're your neighbors, the people you see at the grocery store, school events and in the stands at a ballgame.

Essential services

Today, we deliver more than one essential service. JCE Co-op provides electric, natural gas and fiber broadband, all with the same goal: keeping life running, businesses operating and our communities connected across Jo Daviess, Carroll, Whiteside and Henry counties.

Being local is more than a slogan. It's reflected in how we operate. Whenever possible, we work to keep our investments close to home by purchasing materials, equipment and services locally and partnering with businesses throughout our service territory. Supporting local businesses helps strengthen the same communities we all call home.

Reliable service also takes planning and hard work. Our crews maintain lines and pipelines, upgrade equipment, respond to outages and handle the behind-the-scenes work most people never see. If we're doing our job right, you shouldn't have to think about us much — until you need us. And when you do, you can count on a real person to answer and help.

Supporting our first responders

Because we're part of these communities, our role doesn't stop at the meter. One of the most practical ways we support our neighbors is through coordination with local EMS and fire departments.

When emergencies happen — whether it's a storm, accident, fire or gas odor call — first responders are often the first on scene. We work with them to ensure they understand potential electrical and natural gas hazards, including situations involving downed lines, damaged equipment or solar systems that may still be producing power. Preparing together before emergencies occur helps keep first responders, homeowners and our crews safe.

Supporting our communities

You'll also see JCE Co-op supporting schools, food pantries, scholarships, local events, youth programs and community organizations. Just as important, you'll see our employees volunteering and showing up because this is home. As a cooperative, we don't just serve communities — we're built from them.

We're also involved in bringing new industry to our region. When new businesses choose our area, it brings paychecks, career opportunities and tax dollars that help strengthen towns, infrastructure and schools. That's not a side benefit — it's part of why a co-op exists: to improve quality of life and keep communities moving forward.

I'm grateful for the trust you place in us. We'll keep investing wisely, working safely and showing up when it counts because we're your neighbors, too.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SENIOR PLANET IS STARTING BACK UP!

APRIL TOPIC— SENIOR PLANET

Learn about MyChart

APRIL 9

Senior Planet—Mount Carroll District Library 1:00–2:00 p.m.

APRIL 28

Senior Planet—JCE Co-op Elizabeth West Campus 10:00–11:00 a.m.

HAVE A GROUP OF 5 OR MORE? REQUEST A SENIOR PLANET CLASS.

Want to learn about new tech topics? Call Taylor Smith at 815-591-0091 to set up additional classes.

APRIL 16.

Mt. Carroll Expo Davis Center 4:00-6:00 p.m. in Mt. Carroll
Come for the fun, stay for the community — FREE EVENT!



JCE CO-OP
Electric • Gas • Fiber

The teams that help keep you connected

JCE Co-op employees work every day to provide safe, reliable service to our members. As our cooperative grows, we're partnering with contractors to help support important projects, including right-of-way maintenance, pole testing, line construction and broadband expansion.

Several contractor crews are working throughout our service territory, bringing additional skilled workers into the region. Their efforts help keep projects moving efficiently so we can continue delivering the electric, natural gas and fiber services our members depend on.

These crews also contribute to the communities we serve. Their presence supports local businesses and

helps strengthen the regional economy while important infrastructure work gets done.

When you see contractor crews, along with our own lineworkers and technicians, working along roadsides, please slow down and drive with caution. Their work plays an important role in keeping your services safe and reliable.

Along with the contractors featured here, JCE Co-op also partners with many local service providers and businesses to help serve our members and communities.



JCE Co-op contractors



Osmose Utility Services, Inc.

Provide pole inspection and treatment. Five to 15 employees will be doing work for JCE in the fall.



Vanguard Utility Partners, Inc.

Co-op's JULIE locating partner, providing service systemwide, except in the Geneseo area. Five to 15 employees may do work for JCE throughout the year.



Karcz Utility Services, LLC

Perform underground facility inspections, maintenance and painting. Two to 10 employees will be working in the JCE territory during the spring.



J&R Underground

Provide natural gas, electric and fiber underground installation. Employees work throughout the service territory, except in the Geneseo area.



Zielies Tree Service, Inc.

Assist with the co-op's tree trimming. Multiple employees provide tree trimming and removal services year-round.



Stichter Construction

Right-of-way clearing in JCE's natural gas service territory.



Wolf Line Construction

Assist with overhead fiber construction and overhead/underground drop construction. Work system-wide in fiber buildout areas.



Vantage Point Solutions

Field engineering, inspection, installers and project management in fiber buildout areas system wide.



Michels Underground Cable, Inc.

Underground mainline and drop fiber construction. Work system-wide in fiber buildout areas.



USDI-Utility Safety & Design, Inc.

Assist the natural gas team with compliance tasks, audits and large construction projects.



Vertical Peak Technologies

Contract tower climbers.

JJ Vondrum & Sons, BKW Services, ALB and Always Underground, Inc., GNR Services

Boring, trenching and plowing. Work throughout the JCE service territory in fiber buildout areas.

Fiber Ops

Perform fiber splicing for JCE Co-op. Employees do work in the fiber buildout areas.



HIGH VOLTAGE HEROES

National Lineman Appreciation Day | April 18

Every time you flip a switch, charge your phone, or start the coffee maker, chances are a lineworker helped make that moment possible. During Lineworker Appreciation Day in April, we recognize the dedicated men and women who keep the power flowing for our communities.

Lineworkers perform one of the most physically demanding and hazardous jobs in the country. They work high above the ground in all kinds of conditions to build, maintain, and repair the electric system that powers our homes and businesses.

From climbing poles in the middle of winter to restoring service after storms, their work often happens behind the scenes and under challenging conditions.

For JCE Co-op apprentice lineworker Corwin, the job carries special meaning because of the community he serves.

That connection to community is part of what makes cooperative linework unique. The people restoring power are often helping neighbors, friends, and family members.



Probably one of the big parts is that it is close to home — I know a lot of people in the area, so you are working around people you know all the time — your home community.

JCE Co-op apprentice lineworker Corwin Moser.

Here are a few facts about lineworkers:



They climb high. Poles can reach 40–60 feet tall, and transmission structures can soar well over 100 feet.



Safety comes first. Lineworkers wear specialized rubber gloves and sleeves that can withstand thousands of volts of electricity.



Training is intense. Becoming a lineworker requires intense training, apprenticeships and ongoing safety education.



Storm duty is real. Line crews may work 16-hour shifts for several days straight to restore power quickly and safely.



It's a brotherhood/sisterhood. Lineworkers depend heavily on teamwork and trust. Crews have to look out for one another.



Can you dig it?

April is Safe Digging Month

Before you break ground, make the call that saves it all—Julie 811.

Here's how it works:

- Call 811 at least three business days before you dig
- Wait for utility lines to be marked
- Dig safely and confidently
- Its a FREE service



Key statistics about not calling 811

- An underground utility line is damaged every **6 minutes** in the U.S.
- **385,381** underground utility damages were reported nationwide.
- Nearly **31.8%** of those damages happen because 811 was never contacted.
- Most incidents occur when **no locate request** was made.
- Surveys show **56%** of homeowners plan to dig without contacting 811 first.
- In Illinois, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) can issue fines up to **\$5,000** per violation for failing to notify the service.




Why people don't call


- A survey found that **66%** of homeowners believed they would not hit a line, and many mistakenly believe they do not need to call for shallow projects.

Why it matters


Failing to call 811 before digging can lead to:




Power or internet outages




Gas leaks and explosions



Expensive repair bills and fines



Serious injuries or fatalities



Flooding from damaged water lines

Can you dig it? Yes you can—just call first!



SPARK your future!



**There's still time!
Deadline: May 1**

2026 JCE CO-OP SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

JCE Co-op has \$5,000 to award to students from its service territory through its scholarship program in 2026.



Ten Director's Scholarships in the amount of \$500 to be awarded by drawings and presented at a Board of Directors Meeting. One scholarship is awarded in each of the counties. Students who receive another scholarship from JCE Co-op are not eligible to receive a Director's Scholarship.

Joseph Invergo

Hit us with your BEST shot!

JCE Co-op members are invited to submit their best photos for our 2026 photo contest. Entries must be submitted by June 30. Entrants must be JCE Co-op members; spouses and children of members may submit photos also. All photos must be the work of the entrant and be taken within the JCE Co-op service area. We will choose 12 photos to appear on the pages of our 2026 photo calendar pages. Several other photos may be selected as honorable mention. Some of these may also be used on our website or ads. For complete rules and entry information, please visit jcecoop.com/member-involvement.

We LOVE seeing our communities through your lens so before you hit submit, here are a few simple tips to help your photo stand out:



- Go high resolution**—Submit the original photo file whenever possible. Avoid screenshots or images downloaded from social media—they lose quality.
- We love local charm**—Rural landscapes, farms, small-town moments, changing seasons and everyday life in our co-op territory.
- Keep it steady**—Blurry photos can ruin a great moment. Hold your camera steady, brace your arms against something solid or use a tripod if you have one.
- Shoot more than one photo**—Professional photographers take many shots to get the perfect one. Take several and choose your best.
- Have fun and be creative!**—Some of the best photos come from unique perspectives, interesting angles or unexpected moments.

FIBER: THE NEED FOR *SPEED*

1



54%

Adults who used telehealth in 2025¹.

2



34%

Fiber carbon savings over DSL².

3



36.2M

People who work from home³.

4



Top 3

Broadband as a homebuyer attribute⁴.

5



4.7X

Faster upload speed of fiber internet vs. DSL².

6



78%

Consumers who rank broadband as very important⁴.

7



205M

Americans who play video games⁵.

8



59%

Daily computer use by teens for homework⁶.

9



47%

Rural moves based on broadband availability⁷.

10



\$500B

Potential farming connectivity impact⁸.

11



54%

Low income households who use broadband⁹.

12



95%

Americans who use the internet as a job resource⁹.

13



14%

Home value increase with fiber internet¹⁰.

14



45%

Faster download speed of fiber internet vs. DSL¹¹.

15



5 Mbps

Additional speed needed per device¹².

16



\$78M

Potential home-based business revenue¹³.

17



>56%

People who work out at home¹³.

18



GIG

Symmetrical speed only fiber can offer.

19



1 GIG

Powers 20 to 40 devices¹⁴.

20



FIBER

The most weather proof technology available.

¹ Telehealth Statistics in 2025: Usage, Growth, and Patient Satisfaction, Secure Video. ² The Status of U.S. Broadband and The Impact of Fiber Broadband, Fiber Broadband Association. ³ Remote Work Statistics: Key Trends & Facts You Should Know in 2026. ⁴ Consumer Reports survey of American consumers on cost and accessibility of broadband internet services. ⁵ 9 surprising facts about American video game habits: USA Today. ⁶ Common Sense Media - The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens. ⁷ Fiber Broadband Association consumer survey reported by Fierce Telecom / Fierce Network. ⁸ Pew Research Center, 2025 survey. ⁹ Searching for Work in the Digital Era: Pew Research Center. ¹⁰ FBA/The Brattle Group. ¹¹ The Status of U.S. Broadband and The Impact of Fiber Broadband, Fiber Broadband Association. ¹² What internet speed do I need? Here's how many Mbps is enough, tomguide.com. ¹³ Goodfirms.co/resources/at-home-fitness-regime-top-fitness-trend. ¹⁴ Is 1000 Mbps Fast? [Most Practical Insights], approvedmodems.org.



YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jerry Meyer
Vice Chairman
District 1

Dan Tindell
Secretary
District 2

Joseph W. Mattingley
District 3

Allen Hendren
District 4

Thomas Lundy
District 5

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Robert Kuhns
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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

February 3, 2026

Board Meeting Minutes Summary

The regular board meeting of Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc. (NFP) was held on Tuesday, February 3, 2026

Safety Moment – Director Carroll shared a safety moment on gas pump safety. When fueling vehicles, static electricity can pose a fire risk if proper precautions are not followed. Gasoline vapors are highly flammable, and a small static spark — often caused by re-entering your vehicle during fueling — can ignite those vapors. To reduce risk, remain outside your vehicle while pumping gas. If you must re-enter, discharge static by touching a metal part of the vehicle away from the fuel nozzle before handling it again. Additionally, always place portable fuel containers on the ground while filling. Simple awareness and preventative steps can significantly reduce the chance of a fueling-related fire.

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 to approve the Consent Agenda, which included the February 3rd Minutes/Summary, Board Expense Summary, and written reports from staff and the CEO.

Governance Talk Video – A Governance Talk Video was shared on “The Role of the Board Secretary and Treasurer”.

Presentation – None.

CEO | CFO Report

President & CEO Report – President and CEO Mike Casper provided an overview of expectations for the 2026 financial forecast, outlining key considerations and planning priorities for the upcoming year. In addition, he highlighted a recent award received by our local 4-H chapter for a “hotline demonstration” safety presentation delivered by our linemen, which

highlighted the hazards of high-voltage electricity and stressed the importance of maintaining a safe distance from power lines. This recognition reflects JCE’s strong commitment to safety and exemplifies our dedication to community engagement through our “Care for Community” initiative, a value we are proud to uphold.

Financial Operating Report – Emily Doland, Chief Financial Officer, noted that December Revenue is approximately \$76 million. Total operations and maintenance expenses are \$56,462,071 million, which is \$2,087,259 over the budget of \$57,374,812. Margins are approximately \$3,607,024. By general consent, the board moved to file the financial operating report with the auditor.

Operations and Regulatory | Legislative Update

Operations Update – Kyle Buros, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, provided an update on current fiber installations and outlined the projections and infrastructure goals needed to meet 2026 targets.

Cooperative Services Update – Jennifer Meyer, Vice President of Cooperative Services, delivered a strategic progress update highlighting 2026 priorities in the areas of safety, technology, talent and organizational effectiveness, enterprise risk management, and business unit growth.

Human Resources Update | Marketing – Merri Sevey, EVP of Human Resources, shared updates on the progress and developments within the communication and marketing team, including broadband sales, while emphasizing new initiatives and continued growth efforts.

Resume of minutes *(Continued)*

IT Technology Report – Dan Marcure, Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, provided an update outlining plans to strengthen and expand the fiber network infrastructure. He also shared details on the upcoming provisioning and implementation of the NISC platform to further enhance system capabilities and operational efficiencies.

External Affairs | Legislative Update – Terry Kurt, General Counsel, provided an update on the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act (CRGA) that takes effect and the new requirements for a distribution electric cooperative like JCE.

Board Issues and Action Items

Board Redistrict Discussion – A motion was made by Director Hendren to approve the board redistrict proposal, as amended, which was seconded by director James and carried unanimously.

Selection of Voting Delegate | Alternate Voting Delegate for the NRECA Power Exchange Annual Meeting – The voting delegate and alternate voting delegates were selected to vote during the NRECA Power Exchange Annual Meeting.

Attendees were selected to represent the organization at several upcoming industry and advocacy events, including the Northwest Illinois Economic Development Annual Meeting, the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperative Lobby Day, and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Legislative Day.

Reports | Updates

Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) Report – Chairman Senn had nothing to share outside of the written report.

Director's Conference Report – Director Hendren provided a summary of the recent conference, highlighting several key insights. The political landscape of nuclear power in the U.S. is challenging. He noted that gains are being made by extending permits and recommissioning existing plants. Small modular reactors (SMRs) are on the horizon but not imminent, emphasizing the need for nuclear power to meet growing grid demands. Hendren also participated in discussions on adapting boards to change, investing in broadband, and emerging technologies such as AI.

APGA Report – Director Carroll shared information on the efficiency rates of natural gas compared to other energy sources. In addition, he provided highlights and supporting data from the American

Public Gas Association. Casper highlighted key points that he and other APGA representatives discussed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Commissioners. They specifically stressed the importance of expanding natural gas pipeline capacity to meet increasing demand and mitigate price volatility, particularly during extreme weather events like the recent storm Fern.

Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC Report) – Director Tindell shared highlights from the Dairyland Board Meeting and commented on the Power Cost Adjustment.

Prairie Power (PPI) Report – Director Kuhns provided insights from PPI's January committee and board meetings. In addition, Casper shared highlights from his recent testimony at the Illinois EPA hearing regarding PPI generating assets.

Executive Session

Into Executive Session – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to go into Executive Session at 11:40 AM.

Out of Executive Session – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to come out of Executive Session at 12:04 PM.

Action Resulting from Executive Session – None

Other Business – None.

Adjournment – Chairman Senn adjourned the meeting at 12:06PM.



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.

Strong family connections.

More than internet—a complete connected home.

Along with speed-of-light fiber internet, we also offer:



VoIP phone service



Internet security



Expanded whole-home wi-fi



Security cameras

\$129.95
Value

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Free basic installation (\$129.95 value) covers on-premise wiring in one facility completed during one installation trip.