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Member Questions & Answers

By Board President D. Jay Frye and General Manager Alisha Anker

Members who attended our annual meeting in June heard several questions asked by the membership. As an electric co-op you are our owners and your questions are important to us. Board President D. Jay Frye and General Manager Alisha Anker take a moment here to provide information to all members from each of the questions asked at the Q&A session of the Annual Meeting. They encourage you to be an active participant in Menard Electric Co-op and to contact the office with your questions or concerns.

Q: How are the minutes of your meetings transcribed?

A: The attorney for the co-op, in correlation with the Board Secretary, writes the minutes of the Annual Meeting and our monthly Board meetings. The Annual Meeting is also audio-recorded. Annual Meeting minutes are printed in the next year's official notice and approved by the membership at that meeting. Monthly Board Meeting minutes are included to be read and approved at the next regularly-scheduled meeting. Any necessary revisions are discussed by the Board prior to incorporation and approval. Highlights are printed in this newsletter and a complete version is available at www.menard.com under the Your Co-op > Board of Directors menu.

Q: How many power providers does the co-op have?

A: Menard Electric Co-op receives electric power, capacity and transmission

service from one provider, Prairie Power, Inc. (PPI), a generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative that provides wholesale electric power to its 10 member distribution co-ops across central Illinois. The PPI members own electric generation fueled by coal, natural gas, oil, wind and solar sources. PPI also owns electric transmission lines and substations. You can learn more about them at www.ppi.coop.

Menard Electric Co-op has delivery point substations connected to the PPI transmission system and the Ameren Illinois wholesale distribution system; however, we do not purchase power from Ameren. (They no longer own electric generation assets nor engage in the sale of wholesale electricity.)

For this reason, an outage can occur for our members when Ameren Illinois experiences outages on their transmission or wholesale distribution system. We have worked to reduce the duration of these outages for our members by installing "tie points" along our distribution lines between substations. Put simply, these ties allow us to provide power from another substation if one is affected by a transmission line outage.

Q: Illinois is a top producer of coal; under the Trump administration can we, as consumers, look forward to reductions in energy costs because of a decrease in regulations?

A: There has indeed been an apparent war on coal, however that war is largely an economic factor based on the price

of plentiful natural gas found in the shale play discoveries of the northeast and south-central states. EPA regulators have announced a relaxation for coal-fired generation of late.

We do not know if such a reduction will mean a return to service for any of the shuttered coal plants in Illinois, and thus lower costs. Our power provider, Prairie Power, Inc., does not have an ownership interest in those coal plants.

However, PPI is an owner-participant in a very modern electric generation site in southern Illinois which burns Illinois coal. You can learn more about this plant at www.ppi.coop/about/assets. What we do know is that this plant would be one of the last ones standing if tighter regulations were to return.

Q: The Dawson area is underserved for broadband internet service. Is the co-op looking into providing this service?

A: The Board has discussed this issue at length many times. We understand it is an important issue, comparable to the 1930s when some areas had electricity and others did not. We realize it is important for our members and for good employment and education opportunities in our area.

The complexity in providing broadband service is not related to a lack of interest or need. Our primary focus is on providing reliable and affordable electric service. We are careful not to take on other services that have the potential to not be cost-effective. In addition,

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“Questions & Answers” continued from 18a

technology for Internet services moves so fast that companies providing the service have invested in building a distribution system backbone that is out of date in a very short amount of time.

These issues could cause a hardship on the electric side of our co-op that the Board has sought to avoid; and it is a situation that we have seen occur at other electric co-ops offering broadband.

Q: Why can members only connect 10 kW of renewable resources? Is it the co-op’s intent to increase renewable resources in its membership?

A: Current policy does not limit the amount of renewable resources which members may connect. That said, to provide safe and reliable service to all members, parallel operation of an eligible member-owned renewable resource of any size must be assessed for interconnection capability. If approved, and such resource has the capacity to generate equal to or lesser than 10 kW, the member is net metered during each billing period for their net electricity usage.

This net metering calculation may result in a reduction of kilowatt-hours billed to the member or even a credit if the generation produced is over and above the member’s electricity usage for the period. Members who install renewable resources with the capacity to generate more than 10 kW, but less than 2 MW, are provided a credit at the co-op’s avoided cost for generation production received by the co-op. Such member is then billed at retail rates for the electricity usage recorded at their billing meter.

Members who are approved to install renewable resources with the capacity to generate 2 MW or more will be reimbursed pursuant to the policies of Prairie Power, Inc.

The Board’s Policy/Bylaw Committee is currently working to update our policies to align with state regulations and the federal “PURPA” regulations for qualified resources.

As an aside, the co-op has increased the amount of renewable energy in its supply portfolio from Prairie Power, Inc. The G&T provides the co-op from both solar and wind generation. Using

the solar generation, Menard offers the Bright Options Solar program to members who wish to buy solar power with an increased charge on their bill and without installing solar equipment on their homes. More information about that program is available on our website or by calling the office.

The Board and management both understand that as technologies develop, renewable energy will continue to become a larger piece of the energy landscape and we certainly support that position.

Call JULIE before you dig

It’s time to complete some fall home improvement projects, and you’ve most likely heard to always contact JULIE before you do any home project that involves digging. But did you know that locating underground utilities is not an exact science? The marks are approximate and it is recommended you observe at least 1.5 feet on either side of them.

You can learn about the tolerance zone and all about JULIE markings at their website www.illinois1call.com. Always visit the website or call JULIE at 8-1-1 before you begin a digging project.

This information was brought to our attention by a member who had a close call when digging too close to the marked lines; she asked that we share this information and we are happy to do so.



SAFETY

Clean gutters

- Don’t use water or a blower extension if near lines
- Carry ladders horizontally
- Stay 10 feet from overhead lines

EFFICIENCY

Laundry

- Use cold water
- Wash full loads
- Clean dryer traps & vents



Stay alert to power lines this harvest

Don't take shortcuts with safety as the rush to harvest begins

- Stay alert to power line locations around fields and storage facilities.
- Keep equipment at least 10 feet from power lines — at all times, in all directions.
- Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine clearance.
- Always remember to lower extensions when moving loads.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
- Use a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines.
- Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- If a power line is sagging or low, call us immediately.

What to do if you make contact with a line:

- Stay on the equipment.
- Warn others to stay away and call 9-1-1.
- Do not leave until the utility crew tells you it is safe to do so.
- The *only* reason to leave the equipment is if it is on fire. When that is the case, jump off the equipment with feet together. Do not touch the ground and the equipment at the same time. Keeping feet together, hop/shuffle to safety.

We wish our members a safe and abundant harvest season



14300 State Hwy 97
P.O. Box 200, Petersburg, IL 62675

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Board highlights

For full minutes visit www.menard.com or contact the office.

June 27, 2017

- Present: Directors Jay Frye, Warren Goetsch, Gary Martin, Donald McMillan, Michael Patrick, Dennis Ryan, Roy Seaney, Jodine Tate, Steven Worner, Manager Alisha Anker & Attorney Charles Smith.
- Director of Member Services Trish Michels: 80th Annual Mtg review; attendance up & many members came for the first time.
- Anker: Reviewed balance sheet, budget, outage summary, safety report, irrigation report & security report.
- Anker: Gave May financial report. Year to date margins \$1,593,386 compared to \$1,640,622 last year. End of May equity 39.88%. Served 10,870 member accounts. Net utility plant \$46,632,106 compared to \$44,293,409 last year. Co-op meets requirements of RUS, FFB, NRUCFC & CoBank.
- Goetsch named Voting Delegate & Worner Alternate Delegate to NRECA Director Election.
- Anker named Voting Delegate to United Utility Supply.
- Goetsch: AIEC report.
- Martin: Prairie Power, Inc. report.
- Anker: Discussed Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA), otherwise known as Exelon Bailout.
- 2017/18 Board Meeting dates set.
- June 14, 2018 set for Annual Meeting.
- 2017/18 Board Committee & Delegate appointments set.
- Board entered into executive session; reconvened.



Electronics Recycling Event

Saturday, September 16, 2017
8 a.m. – Noon
at our office

Equipment to be recycled by
BLH Computers, Inc.

To find out what items are
accepted please visit
www.blhcomputers.com/recycling-list
or call
217-585-1580.

*Fees to recycle televisions apply;
recyclers will receive a voucher
in fee amount to use to purchase
equipment from BLH Computers.*

Share this with a college student you know

Dorm electrical safety tips

- Extension cords are for temporary use only.
- Do not overload outlets or power strips.
- Keep rugs and furniture off cords.
- Use light bulbs with the correct wattage for fixtures.
- Keep appliances away from bedding.
- Don't tack or nail cords to surfaces.
- Stop using an item if it causes a breaker to trip or outlets to feel hot.
- Check smoke detectors.
- Know locations of fire extinguishers and emergency exits.





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