



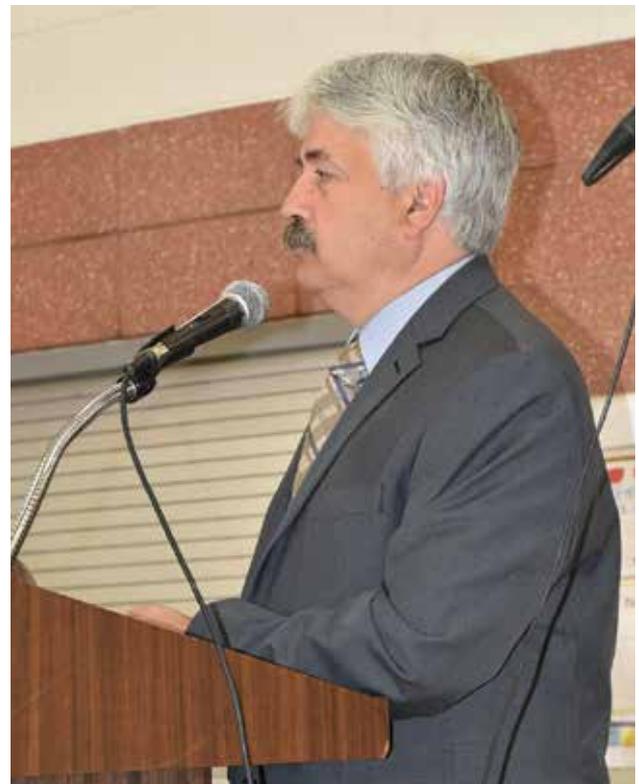
Members continue to embrace breakfast and business format

Richland Electric Cooperative's 81st annual meeting took place on April 1, 2017, at the Richland Center High School. The doors were opened at 7 a.m. Members were given a scratch-off ticket with the potential to win a door prize as well as a Topaz LED light bulb as an attendance gift. They were served a wonderful breakfast prepared by the Richland Center High School kitchen staff.

This meeting is the second year in which the annual meeting has been noticeably shorter than those of years past. The cooperative has relied heavily on print and electronic communications to inform members in lieu of verbal reports. Members are encouraged to bring their questions and comments after having reviewed the printed information sent to each member several weeks in advance of the meeting.

"Members clearly appreciate our 'breakfast and business' format. Comments are regularly made by members attending telling us to never go back to the old way," said CEO & General Manager Shannon Clark. "One of the biggest hits is the custom-made, lottery-style scratch-off tickets that members receive to determine if they've won a door prize."

Door prizes included large and small pork bundles donated by board member Jeff Monson, a variety of Meister cheese blocks, REC bill credits, smoke alarms, thermometers, shop-vac, and many other household items. Door prizes were handpicked by a few board members.



Following the casual "breakfast and business" format that was introduced with great success at last year's annual meeting, CEO & General Manager Shannon Clark addressed the crowd from the head of the cafeteria as members finished breakfast.

Attendance remained steady with an estimated 190 in attendance at the meeting. Mail balloting has increased member participation in elections to nearly 20 percent, up from the historically less than 5 percent when voting was only allowed at the annual meeting.

The business portion of the meeting began at 8 a.m., with members invited to continue with their breakfast. Judy Murphy led the invocation and members were asked to stand to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Three directors were up for re-election this year. Dan Hillberry was unopposed. Judy Murphy, incumbent, was challenged by Connie Champnoise, and Calvin Sebranek, incumbent, was challenged by Leonard Frye. All three incumbent directors were elected, with Murphy winning 73 percent of the votes and Calvin Sebranek winning 69 percent. Results of the election were presented by Kevin Hauser of Westby Co-op Credit Union. In the reorganizational meeting of the board held immediately following the annual meeting, the board left the officer positions unchanged from the previous year, with Calvin Sebranek as president; Gerald Wendorf, vice president; Judy Murphy, secretary; and Dan Hillberry, treasurer.

The cooperative presented six bylaw amendments to the membership, all of which were passed without dissent. Those amendments includes several new items including a dispute resolution provision and one relating to the disposition of non-operating margins including G&T capital credits and lender capital credits to unallocated reserves. Other amendments

focused on member voting and ensuring geographic diversity among the cooperative's nine at-large directors.

Written reports approved by the members showed the cooperative continues to achieve its financial goals with another year of sound performance. An emphasis on economic development, renewable energy integration, and continued high reliability indexes were common themes.

“Members clearly appreciate our ‘breakfast and business’ format.”

**– Shannon Clark,
CEO & General Manager**

In previous board action at the March 30 regular board meeting, the board approved Rate Bulletin 600, which is the cooperative's default rate. This rate applies to members who decline the installation of automatic metering.

The final piece of business was performed by Chief

Operations Officer Larry Hallett. Hallett presented Grant Worthington with a Certificate of Apprenticeship. Worthington has completed 8,000 hours of related instruction, including 640 hours of paid related instruction, in accordance with the Statutes of the State of Wisconsin to be recognized as a journeyman electric line worker. Congratulations to Grant Worthington.



The opportunity to vote is one of the privileges of co-op membership. Members voted on six bylaw amendments at the annual meeting, and they also cast mail ballots for director director elections.



Clockwise, starting above left: Representative Lee Nerison, pictured at right chatting with CEO & General Manager Shannon Clark, was on hand at the annual meeting.

Chief Operations Officer Larry Hallett (right) presented Grant Worthington with a certificate for fulfilling the necessary requirements to become a journeyman electric line worker.

Members enjoyed breakfast.

Apprentice Lineman Casey Bartels hands an attendance gift to a member.

The youngest members kept busy with co-op coloring books for the youngest members.





MAKING WOOD

Woodpiles are a reminder of life before central heating and oil

and gas-fired furnaces. For those growing up in the country, woodpiles elicit memories of hard work, when “making wood” was as important as making hay or threshing grain. Those who recall those days remember the many times they were warmed as they cut and split wood, and the pride felt when they had constructed a beautiful woodpile.

In my neighborhood a big woodpile made a statement to those driving by. A substantial woodpile said of the farmer, “I know how to handle winter.” Woodpiles also demonstrated neatness and attention to detail—important values for any rural person, but especially important for farmers. Pa would often say, “Just look at Miller’s nice woodpile.” A translation of nice revealed first that Miller had a big woodpile, not some little dump of wood sticks but a pile of blocks as high as the tallest man in the neighborhood and as long as the chicken house. A second meaning of nice was the way the split blocks were piled on top of each other, end to end with the split sides showing, forming a roof.

Miller’s woodpile was the kind that people noticed and talked about; it made them stand out among the neighbors and gave them a place of prominence. Miller’s woodpile also evoked envious comments from those with lesser woodpiles. “If Miller spent as much time with his cows as he did with his woodpile, maybe his cows would amount to something, too.” Or, “Miller and his wife must have cold blood. They need all that wood to keep warm? You’d think they lived in Alaska.”

Although neighbors commented about the size and beauty of woodpiles and what made a nice woodpile, nobody acknowledged that a woodpile was temporary. It was put up to

be taken down. The colder the winter the faster the woodpile disappeared.

A popular myth associated with woodpiles and burning wood is, “He who saws his own wood is twice warmed. This is a lie, a real whopper of a mistruth. First, let’s correct the language. No rural person ever talked about sawing his own wood. You “made wood.” During the process of making wood, you did some sawing, but there were many other opportunities for warming beyond sawing.

First, you hiked out to the woods, in search of trees to cut. You had warmed yourself once, even before you found a suitable tree to cut. With a tree found, you notched the tree with an ax on the side of the tree toward which you hoped it would fall. Already you are working up a sweat. You’d probably sweat more as you and your partner pulled a crosscut saw back and forth as many times as it took to fell the tree. With the tree on the ground, you trimmed off the smaller branches with your ax, and sawed the larger limbs and trunk so they could be hoisted onto a horse-drawn, steel-wheeled wagon or onto a bobsled if there was snow on the ground.

Yet remaining was the wood sawing bee, when the neighbors came to help saw the wood into blocks, and the splitting and the piling. Many times warmed.

Go to www.jerryapps.com for more information about Jerry’s writing and television work.



Shannon Clark, Manager/CEO

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