



Annual meeting well received by members

The first annual meeting of Oconto Electric Cooperative was held on February 1, 1937. During that meeting members adopted bylaws, elected a board of directors, and approved final negotiations of a loan of \$290,000 from the Rural Electrification Administration. Eighty-five years later, on April 9, 2022, the 85th Annual Meeting of Oconto Electric Cooperative was held.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m. and began with an invocation by Bill Tisch, pastor of Our Saviors Christian Church in Pulaski. Reading of the 2021 Annual Meeting minutes was waived, and a synopsis of the treasurer's report was given.

Todd Duame, board chairman, gave a report on the accomplishments of the board during the past year. Some of the topics covered included the completed Machickanee Flowage draw-down, the process of applying for grant monies in hopes of offsetting some of the maintenance costs, and a trip down memory lane on how some services in the co-op have changed over the years.

CEO Byron Nolde also gave a report during which he talked about the next big change, which is battery storage, and the future of electric vehicles. Nolde recognized OEC's VP of Engineering, Kent Lyng, who is retiring in July of this year. Lyng has been with the co-op for over 30 years, and is a jack of all trades. Nolde read a letter from an OEC member who had nothing but nice things to say about Lyng helping her out in a time of need, which happened to be

Christmas Eve when our office was closed. Nolde ended with thanking Lyng for his years of service and for being an outstanding employee. There was a standing ovation for Lyng.

Attorney Howard Eslien announced that three incumbents were the sole board nominees in prior district meetings, and the membership ratified the reelections of David Hischke (District 2), Tony Wagner (District 3) and Ronnie Kruse (District 5) on voice votes with no opposition heard. A three-year term will be served by each.

A report on the Community Change program was given by Jan Stranz, member of the Community Change Board. Jan was happy to announce that the board was now accepting applications for the Change Matters Grant. Due to the generosity of the former Bay Lakes Cooperative, Community Change has additional funding available for this special grant. To be considered, an organization should show through this grant application how an innovative idea for funding could provide far-reaching enhancement for a neighborhood or community. Application deadline is May 20, 2022.

Nine of the twelve 2022 scholarship recipients attended and were presented to the membership.

After adjournment, there were prize drawings and the name drawn for the \$1,000 drawing was Brett and Debra Zahn of Gillett. They were not in attendance.



CLEARING THE WAY FOR SAFETY

OEC RIGHT-OF-WAY PROGRAM

Ensuring safety and electric reliability

Oconto Electric Cooperative owns and operate more than 1,500 miles of distribution/transmission lines, providing power to more than 10,000 members. We know that electric reliability is important to you. By keeping rights-of-way free of trees and vegetation, we help ensure the safety and reliability of our power system.

What are Rights-of-Way?

A right-of-way is a corridor or pathway of land that OEC's electric lines follow. These rights-of-way provide OEC an operational safety zone between the wire and trees, buildings, or other objects. When they are kept clear they also provide safe access for line crews to maintain, repair, or improve the lines and poles.



Why vegetation is removed

We clear vegetation to maintain reliability and shorten the length of outages, and provide for public safety and the safety of the workers who need to work on utility lines.

Who does the clearing?

OEC has a right-of-way clearing crew that works year round. This year we have contracted Zielies Tree Service Inc., to help clear some areas in Wescott, Underhill, Coleman and Lena.



How we work with you

OEC generally tries to give landowners advance notice that right-of-way maintenance is scheduled in their area. Zielies is also contacting some members.

How is the right-of-way cleared?

The right-of-way is cleared by removing trees, side trimming, mowing, and where permissible applying herbicides.

What happens to the cut wood?

Logs are the property of the landowner. Branches and small debris in wooded areas will be ground up using mechanical means (mowing) and are left to decompose. In maintained yard areas, branches and small debris are chipped and removed unless otherwise requested by the member.



Cleared lines = better service

When you see us clearing trees near power lines, know that we are doing so because:

- Tree and foliage overgrowth can interfere with power distribution.
- Power lines can give off a spark or arc that may land on a nearby branch and ignite.
- The lights in your house may flicker when tree branches brush power lines during high winds. (156903)
- Stormy weather can cause nearby limbs to break off and land on power lines.
- Unobstructed power lines make it easier and safer for line workers to maintain equipment and restore power.



Solar power buying tips

The country is running more and more on renewables – and solar energy is rising to the top. Solar electricity (also called photovoltaic or PV solar) is another form of alternative energy; it uses sunlight to generate electricity.

There are many reputable solar power installation firms and contractors. Unfortunately as solar power use increases, so do scams. As with any major home improvement project, getting the right installer/contractor is just as important as the product you are purchasing. Review these questions to ask a solar contractor before you sign a contract:

1. How long have you been in business?
2. Are you licensed to do business in my state?
3. How many PV systems have you installed? Can you provide a list of consumer references in my area? Can I talk with former customers and also see successful installations?
4. Who will do the installation at my site? Are they employees or subcontractors? If you involve subcontractors, do they also work with a number of other employers? Have the subs worked on many of your installations?
5. What training have you and your installers had, and what, if any, certifications do you and your installers hold? Do you have an installer with a Master Electrician license, and is there an installer on your team licensed to install solar?
6. Does your company carry these types of insurance: general liability for at least \$1 million, professional liability, workers compensation, other types?
7. Have you ever been involved in a legal dispute involving a solar installation?

For more solar buying tips and to find an experienced solar contractor, visit focusonenergy.com.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Even in summer months, adding insulation to your attic can keep your home more comfortable and save energy used by your cooling system. If your attic insulation is level with or below your floor joists (meaning you can easily see your joists), you should add more. If you can't see any of the floor joists because the insulation is well above them, you likely have enough insulation.

Attic insulation should be evenly distributed with no low spots. (645603) Make sure the areas along the eaves are adequately covered.

Source:

energystar.gov





Member Photo Contest

Oconto Electric Cooperative is holding a member photo contest. Winning photos will appear in OEC's 2023 calendar. Photos may also be used in future newsletters or cooperative publications.

Contest will run through August 26, 2022; however, submitted photos can be taken outside of this date range. Photos must be taken within OEC's service area.

For photo contest criteria, photo contest rules and details and entry form go to ocontoelectric.com/photo-contest/.



The annual Wisconsin Energy Cooperative Association (WECA) Youth Leadership Congress (YLC) is a dynamic three-day event for youth leaders from across Wisconsin to develop their leadership skills while learning about the purpose, operation, and scope of cooperative businesses. YLC has been held each summer since 1963.

Who is eligible to attend?

- Oconto Electric Cooperative (OEC) will sponsor students to attend the 2022 YLC at UW-Stout, July 12-14, 2022.
- Student must be a son or daughter (or under legal guardianship) residing in the same household of an active OEC member.
- Student must be entering his/her sophomore, junior, or senior year in the fall of 2022.

What does it cost?

All costs are covered by OEC, including transportation to and from UW-Stout.

Interested? Here's how to apply...

Space is limited. Deadline to sign up is May 25, 2022. For details contact Katie Jagiello at OEC by calling 800-472-8410 or email kjagiello@ocontoelectric.com.

HIDDEN ACCOUNT NUMBERS

Oconto Electric Cooperative hides two account numbers in the local pages of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News* each month. If you spot your account number, call our office before you receive the next issue, and OEC will give you a \$15 credit on your electric bill or a \$25 credit if you have a load management receiver. The April account numbers belonged to Bruce Holsten, Manawa and Richard Hanson, Shawano.

Byron C. Nolde, CEO

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