



86th Annual Meeting and Member Appreciation Day focuses on reliability and member service *by General Manager Steve Stroshane*

Thank you to all who attended our 86th Annual Meeting and Member Appreciation Day June 14. Employees and directors welcomed 735 members and guests! We enjoyed meeting you and talking about co-op performance.

Member Appreciation Day

To show appreciation for your membership, employees served pulled pork sandwiches and root beer floats. Lineworkers helped youngsters into safety gear and elevated them high above the event for bucket truck rides. Guests of all ages took pictures with our Solar Sam mascot, met board directors and saw the co-op's Ford F-150 Lightning electric truck. All members in attendance received an ice cream spade, and children received \$5 DQ cards, mini hard hats and co-op coloring books.

86th Annual Meeting

The annual meeting included updates from co-op leaders on grid reliability and investments, co-op financials, technology and innovation, member service, community involvement and 2024 board election results.

State of the Cooperative

I started my report by sharing that Polk-Burnett employs the best local people to provide members with reliable electricity and extraordinary service every day.

Fifty electric employees deliver power to just over 22,000 electric services across 3,500 miles of power line, about 1,900 miles are underground and 1,600 are overhead.

The co-op installed 359 new services and invested \$6.3 million to maintain and upgrade the electric system in 2023. An additional \$5.9 million is budgeted this year.

In 2023, co-op members experienced an average of 40 minutes without power, when you factor out major event days. When storms are included, members experienced an average of two hours without power.

When the lights go out, we work to keep members informed through an outage map on the website, outage text alerts and Facebook.

We know your number one expectation is reliable power. We're always working to reduce outages, restore power faster and communicate better.

We're proud of the level of service and satisfaction we provide. Polk-Burnett members gave the co-op a score of 86 out of 100 on the 2023 American Customer Satisfaction Index.

At the conclusion of my report, I announced that the new Georgetown Solar array outside Balsam Lake was energized in December 2023. The 2MW array generates power for about 430 homes, and provides operational and financial benefits for members by generating power locally and helping relieve high summer demand.

Polk-Burnett will purchase solar energy from the array at a fixed rate for 25 years. The co-op also purchases power from SunTuria Solar in Centuria and is planning two more solar developments, one in Polk County and one in Burnett County.

Financial report

Heather Gerber, our finance and accounting manager, reported that the co-op has \$108 million in electric assets, with electric operating revenue of \$36 million and electric operating margins of \$2.5 million.

"57% of our revenue, more than \$20 million, goes to purchase wholesale power from Dairyland Power, a La Crosse-based generation and transmission cooperative. The remaining 43% is what we have to work with to keep your lights on," she said.

Gerber reported that material prices have been challenging; they are now 40% higher than 2020.

She also explained the co-op's rate history and the difference between the daily availability charge and the kWh energy charge on member bills.

"One of the facts of rural living is a higher fixed charge because costs are shared by fewer members," she said.

Last year, members saw a rate increase of 5%. There was no increase for 2024.

Gerber reminded members about co-op programs to help with electric bills, including SmartHub, EnergySense rebates, prepay and budget billing.

Capital Credits

Board President Ed Gullickson said that one of the greatest advantages of co-op membership is Capital Credits. In fall 2023, Polk-Burnett returned \$1.58 million in Capital Credits to members.

"As a co-op, any money we collect above and beyond expenses is returned to members," he said.

Co-op Commitment to Community

Gullickson also provided the co-op's commitment to community report.

In 2023, Polk-Burnett's Operation Round Up donated \$83,425 to 73 local nonprofits, thanks to the generosity of members who round up their electric bill.

Polk-Burnett's scholarship program also made a significant impact with \$144,000 in scholarships awarded to 96 children of co-op members in the Class of 2024. Gullickson assured those in attendance that scholarships do not affect electricity rates; rather, they are funded with unclaimed Capital Credits that if not used for education would be forfeited to the state.

Gullickson also noted the co-op's EV safety training for 170 local firefighters and first responders in 2023 and '24.

"We work to improve our local quality of life not only with reliable power, but also with support for our local community," he said.

Director election returns three incumbents to board

John Behling of Weld Riley law firm and system counsel for Polk-Burnett, reported that members re-elected three incumbent directors in the 2024 board election: Jerry Okonek, Spooner, District 7; Chuck Brookshaw, Webster, District 8; and Tom Swenson, Webster, District 8.

All three ran unopposed. Voter participation was 14%, with 748 paper ballots and 199 online ballots received.

The election was conducted by an independent election contractor, with all members in districts 7, 8 and 9 receiving a ballot earlier this spring. Directors are elected for three-year terms beginning in June.

The meeting concluded with a member Q&A forum. Stroshane, Gullickson and Gerber responded to questions from members about solar, wind and nuclear energy, solar panel disposal, line-of-sight solar pollution, building in the right of way, cost of residential EV chargers, ownership of SunTuria and Georgetown solar arrays, who is responsible when a pole is damaged in an auto accident, co-op rebates, home generators and eligibility for co-op scholarships and Operation Round Up.

Annual meeting materials and prize winners are posted on polkburnett.com and available upon request at co-op offices, 800-421-0283.



Get to know Board Director Chuck Brookshaw

Chuck Brookshaw, Webster, has served on Polk-Burnett's board of directors for 20 years, from 1999-2007 and 2012 to present. When he took a few years off to focus on his construction business in 2008, he was encouraged by people in his district to come back. This spring, he was re-elected for another three-year term by co-op members in District 8.

Chuck was a charter member of Polk-Burnett's Operation Round Up board when it was established in 1998, and from there, he was appointed to fill a vacancy on the electric co-op board in 1999.

"In the early years, our work was fairly straight forward," said Chuck. "We purchased power from Dairyland Power Cooperative and maintained the distribution lines to provide our members with safe, reliable electricity. Today, our work is much more challenging. The energy industry and running a business has changed a lot since I was first elected to the board."

One significant difference he said, is the transition from coal to clean power.

Today's co-op directors need to be educated and knowledgeable to make well-informed decisions for our local members and community. Their work is increasingly complex; they are responsible for policies, rates and system investments. Chuck is certified as a Credentialed Cooperative Director by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Chuck said one constant during his time on the board is co-op people. "Polk-Burnett directors and employees are dedicated to doing what's right, and I am grateful to be a part of that."

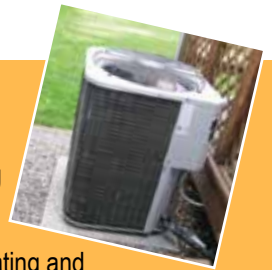
Chuck and his wife Judy have lived in the Town of Oakland for more than 30 years. They have two grown children and love spending time with their five grandchildren ages 1 to 5. Chuck is a building contractor; he has owned a home construction and remodeling business in Burnett County for more than 25 years. He also serves on the board for Devils Lake Association.

[Learn more about your co-op board of directors on polkburnett.com.](http://polkburnett.com)

Rebates for co-op members on energy efficient heat pumps

Today's electric heat pumps—air source and geothermal—provide high efficiency heating and cooling in an all-in-one system that can help lower your energy bills and improve comfort in your home.

EnergySense rebates can help co-op members make the switch to an energy efficient heat pump, just in time for the heating season! Tax credits may also be available. Give us a call to compare heating and cooling options, 800-421-0283, ext. 595.



Stay in your car if power lines are down

Following an accident or storm that drops power lines around your vehicle:

- ⚡ Stay inside car until power is shut off; the ground outside may be energized.
- ⚡ Do not drive over wires; they may be live with high-voltage electricity.
- ⚡ Call 911 and keep others away until help arrives.
- ⚡ If you must exit the vehicle, jump clear so no part of your body touches the car when you land.

Keep both feet together and shuffle or hop at least 40 feet away. Keeping feet together and on the ground minimizes the risk of electrocution. *Always assume the ground and power lines are energized and dangerous.*

I understand how shifting energy use away from peak times lowers costs, but how does it lower carbon?

Thanks to a member for asking this good question about our Summer Shift program. A few of you may wonder the same thing, so here's the answer of how you can help lower the cost of energy, as well as carbon emissions from co-op engineer Jarod Boerst.

As Powerlines readers know, the goal of Summer Shift and Beat the Peak programs is to put less pressure on the electric grid during times of high demand. It's a voluntary way for energy consumers to help lower the cost of power (energy is more expensive during peak times), and it can also help avoid the need for additional investment in transmission and generation equipment, especially peaking plants, which is where we see the greatest impact on carbon.

Regional grid operators use peaking plants when energy demand peaks. Peaking plants typically operate on natural gas and diesel generation. They are important for their ability to come online and generate power quickly. While they are most flexible, they are also expensive and carbon intensive. If we can make peaking plants run less often, we can defer the need for them, which lowers both costs and carbon.

Instead of ramping up supply, we lower (peak) demand. Building and maintaining the electric system for times of the greatest need is like building freeways and bridges for rush hour or churches for Christmas and Easter. We need the capacity, but it's more expensive and less efficient.

Another important note: The grid is less green during peak times. Summer Shift and Beat the Peak help shift electricity use to times when the grid is powered with more clean energy.

We appreciate your participation in Summer Shift and Beat the Peak! Learn more and enroll to receive Beat the Peak text alerts on polkburnett.com. Thank you!



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All members who submit a survey will be entered in a drawing for a \$50 bill credit.

Polk-Burnett is your local Touchstone Energy Cooperative. Reliable power with efficiency and extraordinary service.

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