



## **Polk-Burnett Electric Cooperative 83rd Annual Meeting June 11, 2021**

### **Member Q&A Forum with General Manager Steve Stroshane**

#### **Why are there so many scholarships going to Osceola students?**

The scholarship award selection is an electronic, random drawing of all applicants. Five scholarship winners are selected in each of the cooperative's nine districts for a total of 45 scholarships. Then, an additional nine students are selected in an at-large drawing. If not all nine districts have at least five applicants, the remaining applicants are pooled in the at-large random drawing in order to reach 54 scholarships. Some schools are larger and have more electric member high school seniors than others, and some guidance counselors do more to promote the scholarship program.

#### **With the pandemic highlighting the critical importance of broadband access, has the co-op investigated or had discussion about expanding into the broadband market?**

The board is not discussing or considering broadband. Our local telephone companies have initiatives to bury fiber throughout our service territory.

#### **Why hold the annual meeting and member appreciation day on Fridays during times when people are working and cannot attend?**

It is difficult to pick the right day/month/time to hold events that work for everyone. We do our best to pick a day/time that can work for a majority of members and their families.

In earlier years, Polk-Burnett held annual meetings on Saturdays. As time went on, attendance continued to decline. We attempted to hold the meeting on a Friday evening to provide an opportunity for seasonal members to attend but overall attendance was poor so we combined it with a member appreciation day to increase attendance. When moving to a virtual event, the attendance increased and we reached a new audience that hadn't attended before and seemed pleased with the time and format.

#### **Why are spending \$5 million on upgrading meters? How will we ensure that the new meter system also doesn't become obsolete in 10 years? Why isn't Xcel Energy having these kinds of problems?**

Over the next two years, more than 26,000 meters across the system will be replaced with new technology. Existing meters are outdated, and our supplier has stopped making replacement parts. We see this as an opportunity to benefit the co-op and our members.

Technology evolves every day so there is no guarantee anything is going to stay the same. Other utilities are experiencing similar technology and equipment obsolescence challenges and are also upgrading metering systems.

For more details on the electric grid and meter upgrade visit our website at <https://www.polkburnett.com/electric-grid-meter-upgrade> .

### **How are the rebates for household appliances determined?**

The incentive is based on the energy and demand saving between an energy star appliance from a standard appliance. Visit our website for more information on rebates at <https://www.polkburnett.com/rebates>.

### **How come Polk-Burnett doesn't allow seasonal members to be on the board?**

Just like a local school board or town board, you must have permanent residency in the district to be a member of the board of directors. Seasonal members still can vote in the director elections and member meetings, but they cannot be on the board. Polk-Burnett's board of directors has reviewed this question multiple times over the past five years and just recently reviewed it again as part of an overall examination of its governance practices.

As a cooperative, Polk-Burnett is governed by a board of directors elected by the members. We have nine directors, representing nine districts. Directors serve three-year terms and attend monthly meetings. Board responsibilities include:

- Setting the co-op's mission, vision and values
- Developing policies
- Maintaining legal, regulatory and internal compliance
- Setting electric rates
- Approving the annual budget and system improvements
- Hiring the general manager and evaluating performance

Directors represent the best interests of all members when making decisions for the co-op, and our leaders respond to local issues—such as economic development and renewable energy—with hometown values. When decision makers are local and elected by members, you can be certain our local community is represented. Co-op directors live in the communities we serve and want to see our local communities thrive.

### **What is the process of identifying my underground power?**

You need to contact Diggers Hotline – 811. They will give you a ticket and send your request to the utilities or their contractors to identify where underground lines are buried on your property.

Keep in mind that Diggers Hotline will NOT locate private facilities. Examples of private facilities include an electric line to your detached garage, shed or yard light, an underground sprinkler system, security system, private sewer or water system and walkway lights connected by underground cables. These are facilities that are owned by you. To have private facilities to mark, please contact a locating service provider. A list of Wisconsin locators can be found on the Diggers Hotline website.

### **How do I get Polk-Burnett to look at burying the remaining overhead power line on our private road?**

Please contact the operations department at 800-421-0283, ext. 308 or 365. A staking engineer will determine the best route for an underground power line on your property and will quote your cost for conversation. When we consider rebuilding a line, we look at many factors to determine the justification and whether it will be overhead or underground.

**With the recent ransomware attacks on some critical infrastructure in the US, what does Polk-Burnett have in place to avoid such a thing happening on a local level?**

We have a layered security approach with multiple levels of hardware and software installed to prevent and defend the network against attacks monitored by an in-house IT team. However, within that last six months, there has been an increase in large scale, cyber vulnerabilities exposed from major vendors such as SolarWinds and Microsoft attributed to state sponsored groups. We are diligent in monitoring our systems to safeguard cooperative equipment and data, but the challenge seems to increase each day as you read about another company being exposed to a ransomware attack. This is an area where we continue to follow industry best practices and make technology investments.

**Thank You Members**

Polk-Burnett's board, management team, and all the employees would like to thank our members for your support. We have worked hard to not have a rate increase over the past 10 years while improving reliability by 55% and increasing levels of customer service. We hope to build upon these improvements as we try to automate our substations to reduce outage time and give our members more convenient ways to interact with us. Once again, thank you for your support.