

Making Connections

Annual Meeting builds a stronger co-op.

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Annual Meeting Highlights

CEC trustees report on a successful year.

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Electric Bus Arrives

Nashoba's total electric school bus is taking off.

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For members of **Choctaw Electric Cooperative**

NOVEMBER 2023

CEC *inside your* co-op

Spotlight

New Policy For Generating At Home

CEC's policy on distributed generation ensures fairness and reliability for all.

After a year of careful deliberation, the Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC) board of trustees announced the co-op's new policy on distributed generation (dGen) at the recent CEC Annual Meeting. Changes will affect members who install home generation systems from the effective date of September 26, 2023. Those who invested in home systems prior to that date may continue under the previous policy for 10 years.

Distributed generation (dGen) is a term used when electricity is generated on-site, such as at home, rather than being transmitted over power lines from a power plant. dGen members typically use solar panels or small wind turbines to provide part of their electrical needs. During times when their home generation system is not supplying energy, they rely on the grid to provide the rest.

Kooney Duncan, CEO of the co-op, said the new policy aims to ensure fairness and reliability for all members—those with home generation systems and those without.

"Whether CEC sells a kilowatt-hour or not, there is a level of revenue needed to cover our overhead and the expense of maintaining our system," Duncan said.

After paying Western Farmers Electric Cooperative (WFEC) for wholesale power, CEC is left with \$15.5 million—or roughly \$60 per meter per month—to cover fixed costs such as right of way maintenance, salaries, line construction and repair, and office expenses.



"If we had several hundred meters that we could no longer collect the minimum amount on, then our remaining members are left to pay the balance. We don't see that as being fair because even those who generate at home rely on CEC's electric system an average of 70 percent of the day," Duncan explained.

Under the new policy, any excess power generated by a dGen member will be purchased at WFEC's avoided cost rate, instead of CEC's full residential rate credit.

"Before, we paid dGen members the full retail value for their excess power when it would cost us a lot less to purchase it from WFEC," he added.

Policy revisions such as CEC's help ensure that members who can't afford a solar setup, or who otherwise prefer to rely solely on the grid, are not shouldering more than their share of the co-op's fixed costs.

"We just want to make sure our cost burden is shared fairly among our members," Duncan said.

Duncan encouraged members considering a dGen system to contact the co-op before making their investment.

"We can provide you with detailed information on your energy use, so you can make a more informed decision," he added.

dGen members must complete an application prior to installing their system. For this and other details, please refer to CEC's Distributed Generation Procedures and Guidelines Manual, available online at www.choctawelectric.net.

CEC representatives are happy to help you with dGen and other energy-related questions. Please call CEC 800-780-6486 or send an email to customerservice@choctawelectric.coop.

MANAGER'S REPORT



Making Connections

CEC Annual Meeting builds a stronger co-op.

BY KOONEY DUNCAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Growing up in southeast Oklahoma, I spent a lot of time going to local sports events and the county fair. As a kid, it was fun to watch local players or see a classmate show their lamb at the livestock show. Mostly, it was a good opportunity to hang out with friends and neighbors.

Now that I'm grown with a family of my own, I realize there's something else at work here. By coming together to support local events, we strengthen our connection to one another and our community. I think the same magic takes place at our Choctaw Electric Annual Meeting.

Our meeting this year took place on September 23 in Hugo. With 356 registered members and plenty of extra guests and family members, I'd guess there were more than 600 people in the crowd. Before the official business meeting kicked off, most folks were strolling through the local vendor booths or snacking on hot dogs and visiting. Performers from the local circus/Ark troupe brought some great carnival games. We are grateful to them for lending their festive spirit to our meeting. This kept the kids entertained and happy for hours.

The two hours before the official business begins is my favorite part of the annual meeting. While the business reports and speeches convey important details on your co-op's financial health and outlook for the future, the period between 8 am and 10 am serves an equally important purpose. In that window of time, Choctaw Electric board members and co-op employees mingle with the crowd, chat with members,

and make those all-important face-to-face connections that help strengthen your co-op.

I'm a believer in making our team available to members as often as possible. It's why we encourage our employees to participate and help out in their community. It's why we get involved in local boards and organizations. It's why my office door is always open, and when a member calls and wants to speak with me, I pick up the phone.

When you put a face to a name, shake someone's hand, or share a story, you are more apt to reach out when you have problem that person can address. You're more likely to speak up when something concerns you, or when you need information about services that can help you.

All of the big and small ways we come together help keep the lines of communication open. When that happens,

Choctaw Electric has a better understanding of what our members need and how the co-op can help southeast Oklahoma grow and prosper.

To those of you who took the time to attend our meeting, thank you! We also appreciate those who voted—in person or by mail-in ballot. If you couldn't be there, we understand that, too. Life gets busy and time is short. Just remember that you, and every other member, own your electric co-op. Please stay in touch. Your voice matters and we are always ready to listen. 🙋

“When you put a face to a name, shake someone's hand, or share a story, you are more apt to reach out when you have problem that person can address.”

Choctaw Electric Cooperative

Serving members in Choctaw, Pushmataha, Atoka, McCurtain, Bryan and Leflore counties.

Monday-Friday • 8 am - 5 pm

HUGO OFFICE

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On the Web:

www.choctawelectric.net



24 Hour Outage Hotline

800-780-6486

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Brent Franks, *President*

Jarred Campbell, *Vice President*

Perry Thompson, Jr., *Secretary Treasurer*

| | |
|---------------|------------------|
| Bill Woolsey | Debbie Cody |
| Jana Burris | Ken Autry |
| Stacy Nichols | Jackson Ferguson |

MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

Kooney Duncan, *Chief Executive Officer*

Jennifer Boling, *Executive Assistant*

Jia Johnson, *Director of Public Relations*

Annual Meeting Highlights



Election Results

CEC incumbent trustees Brent Franks, District G; Stacey Nichols, District C; and Jana Burris, District B, ran unopposed in the recent trustee election. The trustees will continue to serve for three years.

Co-op Trustees Report On A Successful Year

Members attending the Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC) Annual Meeting carried home valuable prizes, plus a wealth of information on the co-op's financial condition, ongoing system maintenance, construction projects, and other details.

CEC Treasurer Perry Thompson, Jr. presented the financial report. In 2022, CEC assets grew by \$1.2 million, while long term debt decreased by \$3.2 million, Thompson said.

CEC President Brent Franks pointed out that CEC's equity ratio ranks second among Oklahoma's electric co-ops, mainly due to decreasing its debt load and avoiding major weather disasters. Since 2014, the co-op reduced debt by \$30 million to its current debt level of roughly \$42 million.

"I don't anticipate our debt level to increase, but I do expect to maintain it," said Franks. "We will take on new debt to the amount we are paying off each year, which is roughly \$3.5 million."

Cooperative CEO Kooney Duncan highlighted CEC's consistent capital credit returns. In the past five years, CEC retired \$5 million in capital credits to members, including \$1.6 million in 2022.

"This amounted to an average of \$140 per member," Duncan said.

ANNUAL MEETING PRIZE WINNERS

Gary and Debbie Taylor, Idabel — \$1,000
 Gloria Cooper, Broken Bow — \$500
 Nicole Robertson, Hugo — \$500
 Gerald McLaughlin, Soper — \$500

The co-op continues to grow at a phenomenal rate, adding 900 new accounts in 2022. Efforts to ensure reliability and safety for the growing system are ongoing. The recently completed Chahta substation will provide more service capacity for McCurtain County, where much of the growth is concentrated.

CEC continues to focus on safety with outstanding results. Since 2019, the co-op has experienced no lost time accidents.

Duncan also recognized CEC Youth Tour winner Kate Clifton of Soper. Clifton was chosen to participate in the Cooperative Ambassador program where she will compete for scholarships.

In closing, Duncan reminded members that CEC's successful track record is a team effort. "None of this could have been accomplished without a strong board of trustees and an amazing group of employees," he said. ☺



HOLIDAY HOURS

Choctaw Electric will close on the following days in observance of the holidays:

Veteran's Day
November 10

Thanksgiving
November 23-24

To report a service problem, please use Smarthub or call us at 800-780-6486.

Win a
\$100 Bill Credit!



Enroll in CEC's paperless billing.

When you enroll, your name will be entered in our monthly drawing for new paperless accounts. Enroll using Smarthub's payment options or contact your co-op at 800-780-6486 for assistance.

Deadline to enter is December 31.



CHOCTAW ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
2023 Board Meetings

The Choctaw Electric Cooperative (CEC) board of trustees meets at 9 am on the last Tuesday of every month at co-op headquarters in Hugo. Meetings are open to the public. Meeting minutes are available at www.choctawelectric.net or at any CEC location. To read the minutes on your smartphone or tablet, please scan the bar code to the right.

- November 28
- December 21





PHOTO/NASHOBA SCHOOLS.

Electric School Bus Takes Off

When the trailer arrived with their new electric school bus, seventh and eighth graders at Nashoba School commemorated the moment with a photo. Nashoba is one of 18 schools in Oklahoma selected to receive an EV through the EPA's Clean School Bus Program. Superintendent Chuck Caughern said drivers quickly learned to lighten the pressure on the floor pedal to account for the EV's rapid acceleration ability. "Now if we can just get used to the quiet," Caughern said.

Warming Hearts

CEC's Warming Tree Helps Needy Families Stay Warm

Choctaw Electric members can help others stay comfortable this winter with a donation to CEC's Warming Tree. Brad Kendrick, CEC member services representative, said donations of winter clothing and other items will be distributed to needy families and individuals in December.

Suggested donations include warm gloves, winter hats, scarves, blankets, non-slip socks, slippers, robes, wraps, sweatshirts, and other warm clothing. Items of any size, children through adult, are needed. Cash donations are also welcomed.

Members may drop off donations at their local CEC office during regular office hours, Monday - Friday, 8 am to 4:30 pm. Donations will be accepted November 1 -December 9.



Thank you for giving!

No Surprises.

Sign up for average monthly payments with CEC, and avoid the jolt of seasonal high bills.

High winter heating and summer cooling bills can wreak havoc on your household budget. CEC's Average Monthly Payment Plan (AMP) is designed to level out the peaks and valleys in your usage, so your monthly electric costs remain more consistent.

Call CEC today to learn more about the AMP advantage—or find information about AMP and other payment options. Members who enroll now can avoid the higher bills that typically accompany winter.

800-780-6486

www.choctawelectric.net

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