

Power with a purpose

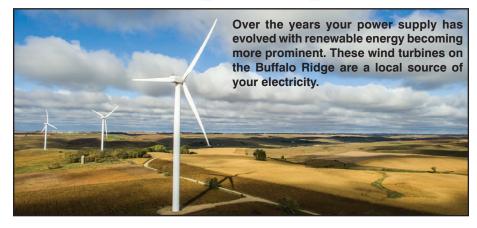
The electricity that serves your home is the same as ever, but the way it is made has changed significantly in recent years

The electric system was defined for decades by large power plants capable of supplying energy to thousands of households. Recent history has seen a remarkable rise in renewable resources, which generate emissions-free electricity across wide swaths of the landscape according to weather patterns.

"Renewable energy quickly became one of the main energy sources in our region, particularly in the Upper Midwest," said Great River Energy (GRE) Resource Planning Director Zac Ruzycki. "We design our resource portfolio to take advantage of costeffective, clean and abundant energy, while keeping power plants and other resources ready when the electric system needs additional energy."

GRE maintains a diverse portfolio of power supply resources, each essential to serving members reliably. This includes power plants the cooperative owns and operates, as well as agreements with other power providers.

"Our fleet of modern and flexible natural gas 'peaking plants' is essential to reliable electric service," Ruzycki said. "The majority of those resources



can also operate with fuel oil when natural gas supply is constrained."

As renewable energy growth has increased at a significant rate in the Upper Midwest, GRE added several wind resources in recent years. The cooperative also sold its long-running flagship coal-based power plant in North Dakota, which served Minnesota through a high-voltage, direct-current (HVDC) transmission system.

GRE will continue to receive energy and capacity from the plant through an agreement with the buyer. GRE also signed a contract for what will be the largest wind farm in its power supply portfolio, which will use the HVDC system to deliver renewable energy.

As the transition to renewable energy continues, the advancement of energy storage technology will grow. GRE is performing a large-scale test of new energy-storage technology with the Cambridge Energy Storage Project, which is currently under development by Form Energy and scheduled to begin operation in late 2024. This multi-day storage resource has the potential to turn variable sources of renewable energy into dependable, dispatchable energy resources.

By employing Form Energy's iron-air battery technology the resource will be able to store renewable energy and dispatch over several days. This is long enough to outlast periods of extreme weather that can pose challenges to the electric grid.

GRE also works with its memberowner cooperatives to develop local renewable resources, plus deploy energy efficiency and demand response programs that make electricity more sustainable, affordable and reliable.

At A Glance



Ring in New Year with a shiny new electric water heater

Procrastinate no more! Call BCREA to buy your new electric water heater. Replace your ancient water heater before it bursts or just conks out! The price is \$500. Installation of the radio contorl is included on these USA-made and insulated water heaters. The member pays for the installation costs.

Cooperative Alliance Partners Connecti Partners

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This publication focuses on cooperative savings, programs and events. As this is the official member publication, member's story ideas, letters-to-the-editor and comments are welcomed. Andrea Christoffer, CCC, Editor

"Owned by those it serves"

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Energy Wise

Raise the IQ of your home's energy efficiency with these smart devices & appliances

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All kinds of devices and appliances are getting smarter. You probably already know about TVs and thermostats (and, of course, phones). Now more devices with internet capabilities allow for easier and more automated control, like light bulbs, washers and dryers, refrigerators and security systems.

Smart home technologies use voice command or a cell phone app, your computer or tablet for remote control, giving you more freedom to customize parts of your home. Plus, you'll receive alerts and information about an action being finished (dishwasher cycle finished) or a potential issue.

Types of smart devices

• Smart speakers like the Amazon Echo and Google Home allow you to perform many tasks through voice command (check weather, turn on/off lights, etc...) and can connect to other smart home devices to give you additional control.

• Smart lighting comes in a few forms. Basic smart light bulbs, color-changing bulbs and smart light switches give you flexibility in your lighting options. Switches may require your electrician for installation. For added security many smart lights can be set up on a vacation mode to make it seem like someone's at home turning on the lights when you're out of town.

• Smart plugs connect to a traditional outlet to power a device. They then manage what's plugged in, set up a schedule or timer, or see how much energy is being used.

• Smart thermostats, like ones from Nest, Ecobee or your heating contractor, make it easier to adjust your home's temperature for different times of day or when coming home from work or vacation; snowbirds can monitor the indoor temp of the northern home too.

• Smart appliances, such as refrigerators, microwaves and ovens, often come with added functionality that allow for operation through an app or voice command.

• Smart security systems can be found with a variety of setups to meet your needs, allowing you to monitor and control your home's security from virtually anywhere using cameras and motion sensors. (See the ad on Page 7 for Heartland Security, a subsidiary or your electric co-op.) **Benefits from using smart devices**

· Convenience and comfort are the primary advantage



See the light! Upgrade your home's energy IQ! Add smart lighting that you can turn on using your smart phone even if you are gone. Otherwise, invest in a smart security system from Heartland Security, for video monitoring on your smart phone, unlock doors, turn on/off lights and open/ close garage door.

you'll gain with smart home technology. Gain a remote and sometimes hands-free way to control devices and customize a variety of actions, from scheduling to automating to occupancy sensing.

• Smart appliances offer accessibility, which is a big perk for an aging population. Having the ability to shut off lights or change the temperature via voice command can be especially helpful for those with mobility, dexterity, memory or vision issues. Some smart speakers also allow family members to check in and communicate with each other.

• Smart home technologies save energy thanks to their added control and automation. For example, avoid wasting electricity by setting up your thermostats and lights to operate only when you need them. Some thermostats even monitor the health of your heating and cooling system to alert you or your contractor before a system failure.

Visit your electric cooperative's website or call the office to request the rebate forms for Smart thermostats, Energy Star refrigerators, freezers and dehumidifiers.



Watt's New

Smart refrigerator has window into efficiency

The LG InstaView Refrigerator is rated one of the best-value smart fridges available. Its modern exterior includes flat doors, discreet pocket handles and a seamless, edge-to-edge InstaView® glass panel. Just knock twice on the panel and it illuminates the interior to show you what is inside, rather than opening the door.

Other features include:

• Smooth Touch Ice Dispenser. Dual ice makers automatically create standard ice cubes, crushed ice and slow-melting round craft ice for entertaining. Gain easy access to ice when you need it without sacrificing valuable shelf space.

• Enjoy chilled filtered water with just a touch with a PrintProof[™] finish that leaves no smudges behind.

• Capacity is 27.1 cubic feet. The refrigerator's freezer capacity is 9.6 cubic feet.

• Most LG refrigerators have a one-year warranty that covers labor and parts.

Safety

Electric space heater safety tips

Portable electric space heaters can be a convenient source of supplemental heat for your home in cold weather. Space heaters without adequate safety features can cause fire and electrical hazards when placed near combustibles or are improperly plugged into the outlet.

Safety should always be a top consideration when using space heaters. Keep these tips in mind.

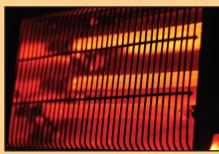
• Look for the label showing the space heater meets standards of a recognized testing laboratory.

• Before using any space heater, carefully read the manufacturer's instructions and warning labels.

• Inspect heaters for cracked or broken plugs or loose connections before each use. If frayed, worn or damaged, do not use the heater.

 Never leave a space heater unattended. Turn it off when leaving a room or going to sleep; don't let pets or children play too close to a space heater.

• Space heaters are only meant to provide supplemental heat and should never be used to warm bedding, cook



• Optional extended warranty exists.

• If you're someone who enjoys the latest technology and smart home devices, this refrigerator has a connected app that allows you to monitor and operate your fridge from anywhere. You can use the app to adjust the temperature controls, activate the odor filter and even make a batch of ice for your dinner party. The app can also alert you when the fridge door is left open. You can connect your WiFi-enabled LG refrigerator to smart home speakers too, so you can use voice commands for the fridge.

The LG InstaView suggested retail price lists around \$3,000. Be sure to take advantage of the cooperative's Energy Star rebate too. (1)

The LG InstaView refrigerator has a special window in the door to enable you to see inside without opening the refrigerator and wasting energy. Knock twice on the window, and the interior lights up to illuminate items.

food, dry clothing or thaw pipes.

• Install smoke alarms on every floor of your home and outside all sleeping areas and test them once a month.

• Proper placement of space heaters is critical. Heaters must be kept at least three feet away from anything that can burn, including papers, clothing and rugs.

3

 Locate space heaters out of high traffic areas and doorways where they may pose a tripping hazard.

• Plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet. Do not use an extension cord or power strip, which could overheat and result in a fire. Do not plug any other electrical devices into the same outlet as the heater.

• Place space heaters on level, flat surfaces. Never place heaters on cabinets, tables, furniture or carpet, which can overheat and start a fire.

• Always unplug and safely store the heater when it is not in use.

See Page 7 for the cost of running a space heater. — Information courtesy of esfi.org

Brown County Briefs

Member Advisory Council

The final meeting of the current Member Advisory Council will be held January 16, beginning with a light meal at 6 p.m. The meeting will begin at 6:30. Nominating committee members from District 2, 3 & 8 are asked to come for a short meeting at 5:45.

Operation Round Up



The first quarterly Brown County Rural Electric Trust Board meeting for 2023

is scheduled for February 21. Organizations wishing to be considered for funding can submit the application, found on the REA website www.browncountyrea. coop, before that date.

Heading for warmer weather?

Snowbirds are reminded to please call the office to update your mailing address, if you are heading south for a few months this winter. Also, members are reminded to check the phone number on your bill. If it is not correct, or you'd like to add a cell phone number, please contact the office or update by logging in online from our website.

2023 calendars available

Stop by the office to pick up a 2023 large, farm pocket calendar while supplies last. Limit one per member please.

Recycle holiday lights



Need to dispose of old holiday lights? BCREA is again working the

Sleepy Eye YES! Team to collect strands of lights to be recycled. You may drop off old lights in the box outside the office entry doors through January 20. Do not bring in cord adapters, battery packs, plastic rope lights or CFL bulbs.

BCREA awards for service to the cooperative

Brown County REA employees are recognized for each five years of service to the cooperative.

Recipients of 2022 service awards are:

• Journeyman Lineman Tyler Jensen: 5 years

Director Joel Christensen: 10 years
Journeyman Lineman Nick Horman:

10 years

• CEO Mike Heidemann: 15 years

• Director Tom Hayes: 25 years on the board

Congratulations and thank you for your years of service!







Mike Heidemann Nick Horman

Joel Christensen

Tom Hayes

Operation Round Up offering six \$250 scholarships

Brown County REA, through its Operation Round Up program, is offering scholarships to high school seniors planning to attend college after graduation and to non-traditional students.

Six \$250 scholarships will be awarded to graduating seniors, whose parents/ guardians are members and live in Brown County REA's service area, or adult REA members pursuing a degree.

Funds for the scholarships come from members who choose to round up their electric bill to the nearest dollar each month. The difference is placed in a trust which is administered by a nine-member board, which meets four times each year to distribute funds to charitable causes, individuals and families in crisis and scholarships.

Scholarship guidelines and applications are available from area high school counselors. The application materials can also be found on the REA website at www.browncountyrea.coop. The deadline for submission is April 10, 2023. Winners will be announced at the Brown County REA Annual Meeting April 13. A copy of the student's high school transcript and one letter of recommendation are required. Non-traditional students will need to provide a transcript and recommendation letter. Scholarship funds will be awarded after successful completion of the first semester of college.

High school students: win a trip to D.C.!



What do 1,500 high school students, our nation's capital and electric cooperatives have in common? The Rural Electric Youth Tour, of course!

Brown County REA is looking for one exceptional student to represent the cooperative on an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. June 13-18, 2023. Youth Tour is much more than a sightseeing trip.

The application and selection procedures are available from high school counselors and social studies teachers, plus on the REA website at www.browncountyrea.coop. Apply by March 3, 2023.

Candidates sought for District 2, 3 & 8

The blue areas show the districts up for 2023 director elections.

Interested or know of someone who may be interested in running for a position as director for your electric cooperative? Nominations are being sought for candidates to run for election in BCREA's districts 2, 3 and 8.

District 2 consists of Mulligan and Albin townships in Brown County and part of

Nelson Township in Watonwan County. District 3 is made up of Lake Hanska and Linden townships and the City of Hanska in Brown County, plus parts of Riverdale and Madelia townships in Watonwan County. District 8 includes Ridgley, West Newton, North and South Lafayette townships, portions of Cairo and Severance, plus part of Courtland townships in Nicollet County.

Nominating committees for 2023 are:

- District 2: Phyllis Augustin, Jeff Windschitl, Kenny Goblirsch
- District 3: Patrick Mohr, Erik Byro, Baylee Nelson
- District 8: Trey & Allison Strei, Sue Harder, Andy Berdan

Per the cooperative's by-laws, the Nominating Committee shall at least 30 days before the Annual Meeting, diligently and in good faith attempt to nominate at least two individuals to run for a scheduled election. In addition, a minimum of 10 members may nominate through petition for a director position in their district. Nominations from the floor and write-in candidacy are not permitted at the Annual Meeting.

Members who reside in District 2, 3 or 8 and interested in being a director candidate, please complete and return the Director Candidate Application.

Directors will be elected at the 86th Annual Meeting set for the evening of April 13, 2023 at the Sleepy Eye Event Center.

Annual line patrol is underway



Brown County REA crews are starting line patrol and will be coming onto yards and property throughout the service area. Line patrol began at the far southwest portion of the service territory and will continue to work to the east and north.

The co-op patrols its lines each year in the winter, checking the overhead

and underground lines and equipment. Linemen will be looking for maintenance issues that need attention, such as loose or missing guy wires and guards, damaged wires and proper line clearance. They will perform maintenance on OCRs and overhead and underground lines.

Line patrol is just one way your co-op strives to meet its mission to deliver safe and reliable electric service to its members.

Director candidate application

By signing this application, I certify that I am a member of Brown County Rural Electrical Association (REA) and I hereby apply as a nominee for director in District _____ and request my name be considered by the Nominating Committee to be placed on the ballot for election at the April 13, 2023 Annual Meeting. I certify that the following statements are true and accurate as to my qualification to be a candidate for director.

• I am a member in good standing of the cooperative, receiving service at my primary residence, which is in the district where I am seeking election.

• Within the last five (5) years I have not been adjudged to be guilty of a felony.

• Within the last three (3) years I was not an employee of the cooperative or a subsidiary.

• Within the last five (5) years I have not been party in a mediation, arbitration lawsuit or other legal action against or by the cooperative.

• During the last five (5) years I have not been employed by a labor union, which represents or has represented, or has endeavored to represent, any employees of the cooperative.

• I am not a spouse, co-habitant, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, whether by blood or in-law, of an employee or director of the cooperative.

• I am not in any way employed by or substantially financially interested in an enterprise competing with the cooperative or any cooperative-affiliated business.

• I am not a full-time employee or agent of, nor am I the full-time employer or principal of, another director.

• I have earned a high school diploma or equivalent and I will achieve cooperative director certification or similar certification through NRECA within six years of becoming a director.

• I will notify the appropriate authority of the cooperative in the event that any of the foregoing certification should change prior to the upcoming election or, should I be elected a director, should any of the foregoing certifications not continue to apply to me as serving director of the cooperative. Signature_____

Date

January 2023 • Connections-

Minnesota's goal: 100% carbon-free electricity by 2040; Electric co-ops want reliability & affordability priority too

This year's Minnesota legislative session will impact your future electricity.

With one party controlling the house, senate and governor's office carbon-free electricity is now on an even faster track.

In 2021 renewables generated 30 percent of Minnesota electricity (wind, solar, biomass and hydropower). The state lawmakers want 100 percent of Minnesota's electricity coming from carbon-free sources by 2040.

Presently, Xcel Energy and Minnesota Power already set 2050 as goals for carbon-free electricity.

"Electric cooperatives are not opposed to renewables, but are concerned that 100 percent clean energy will hurt cooperative members," stated Darrick Moe, Minnesota Rural Electric Association's president and CEO. "We would like to see all 'All Tech on Deck.' This means not simply focusing on wind, solar and batteries. Let's also include nuclear, large hydropower, carbon-capture/sequestration (putting carbon back into the ground) and hydrogen as clean energy resources."



Electric cooperatives do not need mandates that force non-profits to choose between compliance and serving our member-owners, Moe said. Set the goal and let each co-op find its way to getting there so we can balance reliability and affordability.

Presently, the transmission system is not built for local renewables. More transmission lines need to be built and that takes time and money. Supply chain and labor shortages are issues too.

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), which

oversees reliability nationally and in the Midwest, has warned of power generation shortfalls and the potential of rolling blackouts in the coming years.

Due to inflation, energy prices are already increasing for natural gas, electricity and the materials to build distribution and transmission lines.

In addition, the cost of the energy relative to income is 40 percent higher in rural Minnesota than the Twin Cities Metro area.

"Electric cooperatives want to be a part of the Minnesota policy direction," stated Brown County REA's CEO Mike Heidemann. "We will work with our legislators to voice these concerns and hope they will meet us halfway."

"It would be a terrible outcome if the Minnesota legislation passes without incorporating our advice," added Federated Rural Electric's General Manager Scott Reimer. "We hate to see Minnesota face rolling blackouts and sky-rocketing electric rates in the coming years. The utility industry would lose our credibility." (1)

Co-ops partner with Voices for Cooperative Power to speak up on legislative policies impacting rural energy consumers

Help us work to keep energy reliable and affordable in Minnesota

As a local energy cooperative, we work daily to provide reliable, affordable power to the communities and member-owners we serve.

Co-ops have a history of coming together to turn on the lights for rural energy consumers. Over the years co-ops adapted to continue providing reliable, affordable energy even though the industry changes at a rapid pace. However, this year, we need your help!

We are one of 50 Minnesota electric co-op's that serves rural energy consumers. Through our statewide organization, Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA), and our national organization, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), we

6

are working to have a voice at the table for this upcoming legislative session and make our cooperative voices heard for Minnesota's energy policy.

Help us advocate for reliable, affordable energy for all of Minnesota's energy consumers; sign up for Voices for Cooperative Power (VCP), a network of electric cooperative member-owners who are working together to ensure the needs of rural America are reflected in state and national policy decisions.

You can learn more and sign up at https://voicesforcooperativepower. com/minnesota.

Through VCP, you will have access to resources designed to help you learn more about your local and national legislators and about issues impacting rural energy cooperatives both in Minnesota and across the nation. VCP also provides the tools and information you need to communicate easily and effectively with our state legislators regarding Minnesota's energy policies and legislation.

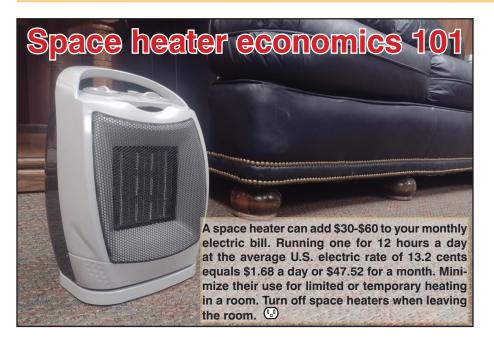
Let's elevate our rural voices across the state to help keep electricity reliable and affordable for all. Thank you!

VCP is a free service for electric coops through NRECA. VCP exposes you to policy issues impacting energy co-ops. NRECA maintains the service and sets the national priorities.

Joining VCP is optional. You are not enrolled automatically, nor will you be required to contact your legislators by signing up. You can withdraw your registration at any time.

Pretty please! Share with me your yummy cheesecake recipes!

Cheesecake reigns! Share your cheesecake recipes, whether it's cupcake size, pie, dessert or the official cheesecake. Mail your favorite cheesecake recipes to Editor, Federated Rural Electric, PO Box 69, Jackson MN 56143-0069 or e-mail to christoffer@federatedrea.coop by January 27. Add your name and phone number. Thanks for sharing with us!





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Call Gopher State One Call before doing any digging more than 12" deep — 48 hours before digging for foundations, trees and tiling. You can also register at www.gopherstateonecall.org or call 811. Call a licensed electrician to locate the underground lines on your side of the meter.



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German Apple Pancake

by Sue Pohlman, Lakefield 4 T. butter, melted & divided 1 large green apple, peeled & thinly sliced

- 4 T. sugar, divided ³/₄ tsp. cinnamon, divided
- 2/3 c. milk 3 eggs
- ¹/₂ c. flour pinch of salt

Melt butter. Brush 2 T. over the bottom 10" cast iron skillet. Add apple slices. Sprinkle 3 T. sugar and 1/2 tsp. cinnamon over apples. Cook over medium heat until apples are tender: stir occasionally (about six minutes).

While apples are cooking, place eggs, milk, flour, 2 T. melted butter, 1 T. sugar, ¹/₄ tsp. cinnamon and salt into a blender for 20 seconds to combine. Pour batter over apples. Place skillet into pre-heated 450° oven and bake until puffed and brown (about 10-15 minutes). Remove from oven. Cut around edge with a knife and then invert onto serving plate. Sift powdered sugar on top and serve.

Recipe revival! Share yours!

Help us out with recipes for the 2023 Connections newsletters! Submit recipes now for printing in the upcoming issues.



January — cheesecake February — freezer meals March — raisins April — tortillas May — spinach June — ice cream July - hot dogs, brats & toppings

August — carrots September — sauerkraut October — ham November — pecans December — oysters

Thanks for sharing. Use the e-mail or mailing address above. 🖽

Staff Notes



Mike Heidemann Chief Executive Officer

8

Returning any extra back to you – it's the cooperative way!

With favorable year-end reports Brown County REA members are receiving gifts after the holidays in the form of relief on your electric bills. At the December Board meeting Brown County REA directors approved passing through \$400,000 in bill credits to you, the members.

Our wholesale power supplier Great River Energy (GRE) realized more than sufficient margins to meet its financial requirements and is refunding a portion to its 28-member cooperatives. Brown County REA's portion of

approximately \$200,000 will be returned to the cooperative as a credit on the December power bill. The credit will be passed along to you, the member-owners through a reduction in Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) on members' January electric bills for December usage.

Brown County REA is returning an additional \$200,000 of expected 2022 cooperative margins to members as a negative PCA on December 2022 power bills.

Former Alliant Energy customers, now BCREA members, are also seeing relief in power cost adjustment on the most recent bill. Brown County REA's portion of a refund from Alliant Energy is just over \$18,000. This will be allotted to members as a negative PCA.

These credits illustrate why it pays to be a cooperative member. Rather than having to return any excess amounts to investors, you, the members of the cooperative, receive the benefits.



Join us at the Sleepy Eye Event Center, 110 12th Ave. NE, Sleepy Eye. Registration begins at 4:30 p.m. Meal at 5:30 p.m., immediately followed by the business meeting. Election of Directors occurs in Districts 2, 3 and 8.



Brown County Rural Electrical Assn. 24386 State Hwy 4, PO Box 529 Sleepy Eye MN 56085

E-mail address: bcrea@bcrea.coop Website: www.browncountyrea.coop Phone: 507-794-3331 or 800-658-2368 Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday

Mike Heidemann, Chief Executive Officer

Board of Directors

Thomas Hayes, President — 228-8954 William Berg, Vice President — 766-1497 James D. Hanson, Sec.-Treasurer – 829-6756 Brad Sprenger — 317-5576 David Wendinger — 276-3166 Greg Mages — 794-3540 Joel Christensen — 828-4550 James Mickelson — 794-6298 Landon Sletta — 439-6559 The Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of each month.

Board meeting highlights

The Brown County REA Board of Directors held its monthly board meeting on December 28, 2022. Discussion and/or action were taken on the following agenda items:

• Reviewed and approved November 2022 payroll and financial statement.

• Cooperative Finance Corporation's (CFC) Regional Vice President Amanda Seger virtually presented the cooperative's 2021 Key Ratio Trend Analysis (KRTA).

• Approved appointments to the Nominating Committees for the 2023 director elections: District 2 Phyllis Augustin, Jeff Windschitl, Kenny Goblirsch; District 3 Patrick Mohr, Erik Byro, Baylee Nelson; District 8 Trey & Allison Strei, Sue Harder, Andy Berdan.

• Reviewed and approved the 2022 Safety, Reliability and Service Quality Report.

• Discussed and approved the return of \$200,000 in refunded margins from Great River Energy and \$200,000 from expected 2022 Brown County REA margins to members as a reduction in the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) on the December electric bills, payable in January.

The next meeting is set for January 19, 2023, at the Brown County REA office in Sleepy Eye.