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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

EnerStar Electric Cooperative holds Annual Meeting of Members

The weather did not dampen the tradition as EnerStar Electric Cooperative members gathered for their 79th Annual Meeting of Members on March 24. Members enjoyed a complimentary pancake and sausage breakfast prior to the meeting. Once again, members were able to participate in the meeting through real-time voting. Each membership was given a remote device to help “voice” their answers to questions offered by President/CEO Mike Clark throughout the meeting.

In his address, Clark updated members on EnerStar Electric’s community solar initiative, rate stability and the financial condition of the co-op. “It’s a great day to be a co-op member,” said Clark. “I am very proud of where our cooperative is. Our equity levels and our system infrastructure are both in a good position, but you can count on us to always seek opportunities for improvement.”

Co-op History and the Farm Bureau

The meeting got underway with Clark’s explanation of the cooperative’s connection to two local farm bureaus. Clark explained that on a cold evening on Feb. 9,



1938, Edgar County Farm Bureau President, A.E. Staley, and a group of rural residents voted almost unanimously to form the electric cooperative. He further explained that farm bureau’s commitment and advocacy brought lights to the countryside and changed life forever. Honoring the Farm Bureau Centennial, 100 years of outstanding service to the rural community, Clark presented plaques to Joe Melisi, manager of Edgar County Farm

Bureau, and Tony Trimble, manager of Clark County Farm Bureau.

Community Solar

Clark shared the cooperative’s solar initiatives, locations and programs. “A member may want their electricity to be sourced from renewable energy, but there may be drawbacks to privately-owned solar at their home,” said Clark. “They may not have room on their property, or trees may block



the solar array. With community solar, not only are these types of things not an issue, but there are other benefits as well, like no maintenance or if they rent their home, they can still participate in Co-op Solar.”

Clark emphasized that one of the benefits of Co-op Solar is that the solar energy would be coming from arrays across the Midwest. “It may be raining here, but not at one of the other sites,” said Clark. Co-op Solar has five solar arrays in Missouri, Illinois and Indiana. Clark explained that all the arrays are owned by the cooperative’s power supplier, Wabash Valley Power. For the Paris site, EnerStar leases the ground to Wabash.

With Co-op Solar, members purchase solar shares, which average to about 43 kWh per month. There are 7,000 shares available and about 65 percent have been sold.

There are two solar programs from which the member can choose. Through the SunLite program, members can obtain shares for as little as 50 cents per month. For the average residential member, who wants to be an environmental steward and receive

100 percent solar energy, the cost would be about \$11 per month.

The SunShare program allows members to purchase solar shares at a current price of \$835 per share. This program is a long-term commitment and has a future payback.



CO-OP SOLAR

Two solar programs to choose from

SunLite

- 50 cents per share per month
- Average residential account using 1000 kwh per month would cost approximately \$12 per month for nearly 100% solar energy
- 1 year obligation
- Promotes the expansion of solar generation

SunShare

- \$835 per share (prorated by the purchase date.)
- Commitment ends December 31, 2037
- Payback about 14 yrs, sooner if electric rates increase over the next 20 yrs
- Shares are transferable
 - Transfer shares to your new home on EnerStar lines
 - Sell shares with the sale of your home
 - Sell shares to another EnerStar member
 - Donate shares to not-for-profit organization served by EnerStar

Solar Share is on average 43 kwh per month

Automatic Generators

Clark told the membership that the co-op is considering an automatic generator program. Members would receive special member pricing and the generators would be installed by local contractors.

EnerStar believes these units would benefit many members. “Maybe you want service availability during a power outage or maybe you depend on electricity due to a medical situation,” said Clark. “Generators can give many members peace of mind. He added that while it is not necessary, an automatic generator makes it easy to participate in a new program, PowerShift WholeHouse.

PowerShift

Clark explained to the audience that the cooperative is doing what it can to keep the cost of the member’s monthly bill as low as possible. He encouraged members to sign up for one of the PowerShift® programs.

Participating in PowerShift WholeHouse has the largest impact for the co-op and the highest reward for members. Members can earn a \$150 bill credit on their October statement for allowing EnerStar to shut off power to the home during peak-demand times, when electricity prices are at some of its highest price points for the co-op. You do not need a generator to participate in the program.

PowerShift® is also available to control electric water heaters, central AC and fixed pool pumps each which also qualify for an October bill credit.

Electric Vehicles

Clark spent a considerable amount of time discussing the increase in hybrid and electric cars. “Like electricity in the late-1930s which brought electricity to the rural countryside, we believe that



Member Services reps Kelly McCrocklin and Susan Watson, along with temporary worker Kayla McElheny, greet members registering for the meeting.

this is part of our core business, that for those members who want such a vehicle, they should have the same availability as those living in the city,” said Clark. He added that many car manufacturers are committed to electric vehicles and the price is at a point where it is competitive with gasoline vehicles. In addition, electric cars may qualify for a tax credit of up to \$7,500. As for operating the vehicle, depending on gas prices,

electric costs per mile will be 1/3 to 1/2 of gasoline costs. He anticipates off-peak charging electric rates will offer additional savings.

Financial Update

Financially, the cooperative’s rates have been steady since 2013 and a rate increase is not anticipated this year. Clark explained that the co-op’s equity continues to grow and EnerStar is excelling at



Incumbent directors John Fell, Kevin Julian, and Jeremy Williams were elected for a 3-year term.

returning member equity in the form of capital credits.

To date, the co-op has returned a grand total of \$6,234,701 to members. As a percentage of assets, EnerStar has returned more capital credits than the average for Illinois electric cooperatives and significantly more when compared to other Wabash cooperatives.

Clark added that EnerStar serves just 3.5 members per mile of line, where as investor-owned utilities, average about 48.3 consumers per mile of line and collect considerably more revenue.

Capital Credit Refund in November

Clark added the co-op anticipates issuing capital credit checks

every year. The co-op will retire \$632,826 in capital credits and issue refund checks in November to members who received electric serve from 1985 to 1986. The co-operative will continue to offer special estate retirements to member's heirs, allowing them to withdraw the



equity ahead of the normal retirement schedule. Heirs will have two options from which to choose. They can choose to keep the funds in a capital credit account and receive 100 percent of the funds in future years, under the normal retirement process, or choose to withdraw the funds early and receive a lump sum at a discounted rate, based on the time value of money.

Board Elections

Before the meeting's conclusion, the director election results were provided. All three incumbents were re-elected to new three-year terms. They were Kevin Julian of Metcalf, District 2; John Fell of Kansas, District 4; and Jeremy Williams of Martinsville, District 7.

Thank You

Your support is greatly appreciated!

Enerstar would like to thank the following vendors and businesses who donated door prizes to our 79th Annual Meeting of Members

Benjamin's Office Connection
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Faulk's Garage
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State Farm - Terry Elston
T & R Electric
United Utility Supply
Vadas Car Quest
Vermeer Sales & Service

And special thanks to Lincoln Land Health Care, Paris.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

COOPERATIVE HEADQUARTERS

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OFFICE HOURS
Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Serving the Illinois counties of Edgar, Clark, Vermilion, Douglas and Coles.