


HI-LINES

A newsletter for members of JCE Co-op

FEBRUARY 2026

 Elizabeth, IL

 800-858-5522

 jcecoop.com



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES ARE STILL AVAILABLE!

FEBRUARY 16

Youth Day/Youth Tour—scholarship deadline

MARCH 1

(6) High school seniors—
(4) Two-year/tech school—
(2) Linemen—
(4) Adult/nontraditional—
scholarship deadlines

MAY 1

(10) Director's scholarships—
deadline

Don't miss these opportunities to spark your student's future! Contact:

TAYLOR SMITH
815-591-0091
tsmith@jcecoop.com

SPECIAL FEATURE

18B

The rising cost of utility materials



CEO'S REPORT *by Mike Casper*

Understanding the factors that impact your energy bills

As we start the year, I want to share what drives your energy bill—and how we're working to control costs. If you've looked at your bill and wondered what's behind it, you're not alone. Utility costs are shaped by wholesale energy prices, the cost of maintaining the delivery system, and the investments needed to keep service safe and reliable.

At JCE Co-op, our goal is to keep rates as low as possible by operating efficiently, controlling what we can, and planning ahead.

Power supply costs

JCE purchases wholesale electricity from Dairyland Power and Prairie Power, Inc., then delivers it to you through our distribution system.

Wholesale costs are tied to generating and transmitting power. While prices can swing based on supply and demand, we work closely with our providers to plan ahead to help stabilize electricity costs for members. Especially since energy costs represent about 45% of our 2026 budget.

Delivery system costs

Electricity still has to reach you through substations, poles, wire, transformers, meters and underground cable—assets we own and maintain. Material and equipment costs for items like transformers, wire, meters and underground cable have increased considerably in recent years, refer to the diagram on 18B. Those higher prices affect our cost for storm restoration, repairs and replacements. Continued investment is required to maintain reliability and resilience of our systems.

Natural gas costs

For natural gas members, the cost of the gas itself can shift with global market uncertainty. To reduce volatility, we pre-purchase much of our gas during market dips and use storage so we're not exposed to winter price swings. Pipeline transmission costs to deliver gas to our region are also rising. JCE maintains more than 300 miles of pipeline serving about 5,700 accounts. We must also comply with safety regulations, which exist to protect our communities, and adds additional cost.

Cost management

Running the co-op efficiently is our first responsibility. Labor and employee benefits are 19% of the 2026 budget. We've offered voluntary early retirement, paused hiring, reduced nonessential training and travel, and adjusted other benefits—while protecting the reliable service you expect.

2026 investments

Cost control is only half the job; the other half is investing smartly. In 2026, our board-approved plan includes broadband expansion (with grant funding covering about 70% of projects), connecting 3,000 more homes and reaching 12,500 total subscribers by year-end; grid improvements to electric systems, substations and meters; and technology updates that help us operate more efficiently and maintain dependable service.

Commitment

We can't control every market force, but we can control how we plan, spend and communicate. We'll keep focusing on reliability, responsible cost management, and long-term investments to provide you strong value and consistent quality service.

THE RISING COST OF UTILITY MATERIALS

Over the past five years, JCE Co-op has seen significant increases in the cost of materials needed to deliver electricity. The graphic below shows essential components of co-op operations and how their prices have climbed since 2020. Our commitment remains the same: providing reliable power while maximizing the value of your energy dollar.

As discussed in our January Hi-Lines, inflation has influenced many decisions at JCE Co-op. This graphic shows how rising material costs affect essential components of our electric system.

January 2020–December 2025

Crossarms
110.22%

Primary wire
43.33%

Insulators
22.19%

Cutouts
37.49%

Surge arrestors
43.89%

Transformers
84.57%

Secondary wire
29.32%

Ground wire
83.91%

Guy wire
64.10%

Residential meters
40.96%

Secondary service boxes
57.19%

Single-phase residential transformers
82.23%

Secondary underground cable
57.19%

PVC pipe
27.34%

Red roll tape
7.3%

Primary underground cable
53.53%

2026 incentive program launches

Get benefits with energy efficient purchases

Members wanting to save energy and money in the new year should review JCE Co-op's 2026 energy efficiency incentive forms. If it is time to upgrade your old appliances or change out your heating, cooling and/or water heating system, we have savings for you!

JCE offers energy efficiency incentives for our electric members in collaboration with Dairyland Power Cooperative, one of our wholesale power suppliers, to help members use energy wisely. We also offer an array of incentives for our natural gas members.

Eligibility criteria for each category is listed on the forms found at jcecoop.com/incentives. To receive an incentive, the member must purchase a qualifying item, fill out the incentive form and return the form with documentation to the cooperative within three months of purchase or installation (instructions on the form). Equipment must be installed within the cooperative's service territory and, in most cases, be ENERGY STAR® rated.



Incentive summary for electric members

HVAC—Geothermal Heat Pump HVAC

Upgrade existing ground source heat pump

• Interior equipment.....\$400/ton

New installations

• Ground source heat pump\$600/ton

Air Source Systems

• Air Source Heat Pump & Mini-split SEER2 14.3+, HSPF2 7.5+, SEER 15.0+, HSPF 8.8+\$175/ton

• New furnace w/ECM motor \$35

• Smart thermostat (Honeywell or Emerson brand) \$25

Electric appliances

• Inductive range..... \$25

Energy Star electric appliances

• All-in-one washer/dryer combo (heat pump drying)..... \$50

• Clothes dryer or washer \$25

• Dehumidifier..... \$25

• Dishwasher..... \$25

• Refrigerator (>10 cubic ft) \$25

• Freezer (>10 cubic ft) \$25

• Recycling of freezer, refrigerator or window air conditioner..... \$25

Lighting

• Occupancy sensor.....\$5/sensor

• LED lamp/fixture.....\$1.00/1600 lumens

• LED exit sign.....\$5/sign

Electric water heaters

• Heat pump water heater (UEF≥3.50) \$500

The following water heater incentives require load control

• Residential high efficiency water heater 75-99 gallons (UEF≥0.88) \$250

• Residential high efficiency water heater≥100 gallons (UEF≥0.88)..... \$500

ElectricSense NEW Home Program

• New home must meet specific program/code requirements. \$500

Incentive summary for natural gas members



Natural gas appliances

• Water heater (UEF≥67%)..... \$50

• Stove \$50

• Clothes dryer \$50

• Fireplace insert \$50

• Other \$50

• Generator..... \$50

Natural gas outdoor appliances

• Pool heater 10% of equipment & material cost up to \$150

• Hot tub 10% of equipment & material cost up to \$150

• Deck heater..... 10% of equipment & material cost up to \$100

• Outdoor fire pit. 10% of equipment & material cost up to \$100

• Grill..... 10% of equipment & material cost up to \$100

Natural gas heating

• Natural gas furnace/boiler AFUE ≥ 95%.....\$125

Fuel switching incentives also available. Check out agricultural, commercial and industrial incentives online.

Douglas Grobe

Questions about the program or energy efficiency questions can be directed to our energy advisor John Scott (Inspector Watts) at jscott@jcecoop.com or 815-858-2207, ext. 1339.

Heat escaping out of your roof?

No one enjoys being cold and uncomfortable within their home. Homes lose a significant amount of heat due to improper insulation and air-sealing. Heat loss creates additional issues such as higher utility bills and ice damming including icicles.

Turning up the temperature on your thermostat is a costly method and leads to wasting more energy and spending more money to be comfortable within your home.

Identifying signs of winter roof heat loss is necessary for creating a comfortable, energy efficient home. Although you feel a draft of cold air passing over a window, most home heat loss occurs in less visible areas.

One of the most identifiable signs of heat loss through your attic and roof is ice damming and icicles forming at the roof's edge on all sides of the home (not just the sunny side). Icicles create unsafe conditions and when ice damming occurs it can potentially damage your roof.

Another sign is uneven melting of frost or snow on the roof. Does part of your roof melt first, can you identify the rafters by looking at the snow melt, or is the snow around your roof-vents melting even with freezing temperatures outside?

Some choose to install heat tapes on their roofs to address the issues, but this just increases your energy usage and costs.



A significantly better option is to eliminate the cause of the heat loss.

Air-sealing and insulating your attic spaces will increase your homes energy efficiency by decreasing energy consumption and costs for maintaining your comfort. Identifying and correcting causes of heat escaping through the roof can save significant dollars, making it a wise financial decision for every homeowner.

If you're unsure about how to proceed, consider contacting Inspector Watts, John Scott, at JCE Co-op. John can complete an in-depth inspection to identify air leakage and insulation issues. He will be able to recommend the best insulation materials to reduce roof heat loss and qualify you for a \$500 incentive available from JCE Co-op for completing an insulation and/or air-sealing project.



A Valentine for those who keep us connected

When winter weather hits, comfort and convenience often depend on the people willing to work outside in the cold, wind and snow to keep essential services running.

At JCE Co-op, our line crews, natural gas technicians and fiber technicians are out in the elements year-round, responding to outages, maintaining infrastructure and making sure our members receive the reliable service they expect from their cooperative. While many of us stay warm indoors, these crews are climbing poles, repairing lines and restoring service when it matters most.

This Valentine's Day, we're inviting our members to help us say thank you.

Send a Valentine to Our Crews

Members of all ages are encouraged to

create Valentine's cards, notes or drawings to show appreciation for the hardworking men and women who keep our electric, natural gas and fiber services operating safely and reliably.

Valentines can be:

- Emailed to communications@jcecoop.com
- Mailed or dropped off at any JCE Co-op office location

Whether it's a simple note, a heartfelt message or a child's drawing, every Valentine helps remind our crews how much their dedication and hard work are appreciated.

From all of us at JCE Co-op and on behalf of our members, thank you to our outside crews for braving winter conditions to serve our communities every day.



SPARK
your
future!



Application deadline: March 1
Director's Scholarship deadline: May 1

All JCE Scholarships are funded by unclaimed and donated capital credits. For more info go to jcecoop.com

2026 JCE CO-OP SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

JCE Co-op will award up to \$25,000 to students from its service territory through its scholarship program in 2026.

6

JCE Scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 to high school seniors who will enroll in a college or university.

4

Two-Year/Tech School Scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 to high school seniors who will attend a 2-year/tech school.

2

Lineworker scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 each to students who plan to attend lineworker school.

4

Adult or non-traditional student scholarships in the amount of \$1,500.

10

Director's Scholarships of \$500 each to be awarded to current high school seniors.

9000

THANK YOU!

FIBER INTERNET MEMBERS

JCE Co-op connects our 9000th fiber internet member!

We're thrilled to announce that we've reached a major milestone as our 9,000th fiber internet member is officially connected! Kim Lamz, Childcare Resource Director at Honey Bee Child Development Center at Shimer Square, a program of 4-C: Community Coordinated Child Care, has been connected to our high-speed fiber internet service!

This milestone wouldn't be possible without the incredible teamwork behind the scenes. THANK YOU to our construction crews, line crews, engineers, installers, broadband technicians, operations, marketing, and sales teams who continue to expand and support our fiber network.

Want to be our 10,000th fiber internet member?



Pictured from left to right: Kim Lamz, Childcare Resource Director at Honey Bee Child Development Center, Cameron Hicks, Broadband Technician, Katie Herring, Manager of Broadband Sales, and Derek Bradt, Broadband Marketing Strategist

**Sign up now to receive
FREE installation!**

Check availability, submit
your interest, or sign-up at
jcecoop.com/fiber

**Do not miss out on this
opportunity to have the
\$129.95 installation
fee waived!**

 **JCE CO-OP**
Electric • Gas • Fiber

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Jerry Meyer
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District 9

Office Hours:
Monday-Friday

Elizabeth
793 U.S. Route 20 West
7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Savanna
103 Chicago Ave.
7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
1:30 to 4 p.m.

Geneseo
1004 S. Chicago St.
7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
1:30 to 4 p.m.

**Services and
billing questions:**
(800) 858-5522
jcecoop.com

**For emergencies
and outages call:**
(800) 858-5522

Resume of Minutes

November 25, 2025

Board Meeting Minutes Summary

The regular board meeting of Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc. (NFP) was held on Tuesday, November 25, 2025.

Safety Moment – Director Senn provided a safety moment on the importance of wearing orange during hunting season and highly visible clothes while walking, noting that high-visibility colors make it easier for hunters and drivers to clearly see individuals from a distance. Wearing orange helps prevent accidents in low-light conditions, blends less with natural surroundings, and ensures that movement isn't mistaken for wildlife.

Approval of Agenda – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to approve the meeting agenda.

Consent Agenda – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to approve the consent agenda.

Presentation – Finance team member Kurt Krohmer delivered a presentation on the results of the Cost-of-Service Study and provided detail on proposed rates for 2026.

Governance Topics and Board Policy Review

Board Policy 105 A| Director

Compensation and Benefits – A motion was made by the Governance Committee to approve no change to compensation and benefits, which was seconded and carried unanimously.

Board Policy 120| Harassment – A motion was made by the Governance Committee to approve no change to Board Policy 120, which was seconded, and carried unanimously.

Board Policy 127.1| Sale of Real Property

– A motion was made by the Governance Committee to approve no change to Board Policy 127, which was seconded and carried unanimously.

Board Policy 137.1| Identity Theft

Prevention – A motion was made by the Governance Committee to approve no change to Board Policy 137.1, which was seconded and carried unanimously.

Other Business – Director Expense Reports were discussed and will be brought

back to the Governance Committee for further discussion.

CEO| Financial Operating Report

CEO Report – President and CEO Casper highlighted internal methods JCE communicates information to employees. Especially considering the number of ongoing initiatives (e.g., fiber growth, NISC transition). He also shared key opportunities and areas of focus.

Financial Operating Report – Emily Doland, Chief Financial Officer, noted that October Revenue is approximately \$62 million. Total operations and maintenance expenses are \$49 million, which is approximately \$1.3 million over the budget of \$47,903,595 million. This correlates with an increase in the cost of purchased power. Margins are approximately \$1,953,575. By general consent, the board moved to file the financial operating report with the auditor.

Operations and Regulatory/ Legislative Update

Operations Update – Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Kyle Buross provided an update on broadband fiber installations and noted that crews are continuing to add mainline fiber thanks to the extended warmer weather and will continue to splice and install fiber throughout winter.

Cooperative Services Update – Vice President of Cooperative Services, Jennifer Meyer, provided an update on the transition to the new NISC software. She highlighted several new features designed to improve our members' experience and noted the expanded data metrics now available to our members, as well as employees. Meyer also shared positive statistics on the number of members enrolled in autopay and e-billing.

Human Resources Update| Marketing

– Executive Vice President of Human Resources, Merri Sevey, provided an update on future opportunities for JCE to communicate Co-op news and important information, noting that text messaging will

Resume of minutes *(Continued)*

now be available as a method for delivering important updates to our members.

IT Technology Report – Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, Dan Marcure, provided an update on ADTRAN, the telecommunications equipment company specializing in fiber networking and telecom infrastructure that JCE utilizes. ADTRAN provides advanced fiber-access equipment and technologies for delivering high-speed broadband and supports JCE's ongoing network upgrades. ADTRAN's platforms also allow JCE to scale service capacity as demand grows and simplify network management through improved automation and diagnostics.

External Affairs/Legislative Update – General Counsel, Terry Kurt, provided a report on state matters, and commented on a recent meeting he attended that was hosted by the Illinois Farm Bureau informing members about the broadband easement legislation.

Board Issues and Action Items – None.

Reports/Updates

2026 Proposed Rates – A motion was made, seconded and carried but not unanimously to approve the 2026 Proposed Rates.

Postponement of 2025 Capital Credits – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to postpone the 2025 Capital Credits, which was seconded by Director James and carried unanimously. A temporary pause in retirements was necessary to strengthen equity.

Resolution to Approve Emily Doland as Certifier on behalf of the Corporation for RUS Grant Documents – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to approve Emily Doland as the Certifier on behalf of the Corporation for RUS Documents.

Select Attendees for NRECA CCD 2640| Financial Decision Making – Attendees were selected to attend the NRECA Class.

Select Upcoming Conference to Attend – Directors had the choice to attend one of four utility conferences in 2026.

Approve Proposed 2026 Board Meeting Dates – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to approve the proposed 2026 board meeting dates.

Executive Session

Into Executive Session – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to go into Executive Session at 12:03 PM., which was seconded by Director Lundy and carried unanimously.

Out of Executive Session – A recess was taken at 12:58 for approximately 45 minutes for lunch and a motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to come out of Executive Session at 2:20 PM.

Action Resulting from Executive Session – A motion was made by Director James, which was seconded by Director Meyer to approve a distribution Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) to meet lending covenants by end of year, the motion passed unanimously. A motion was also made to extend President and CEO's contract for 2026, the motion passed unanimously. The Board also discussed finalizing a plan within the first quarter of 2026 for the current director vacancy in District 5.

Other Business – None.

Adjournment – Chairman Senn adjourned the meeting at 2:30 PM.



Reader prize!

Each month we print the name of a JCE Co-op member who is eligible to win a monthly \$25 readership prize. If your name is printed in this month's edition, and not a part of any article, contact JCE Co-op.

Power your 2026 SMARTER!



INSPECTOR
WATTS

*Call our energy advisor John Scott,
Inspector Watts, 815-858-2207, ext. 1339*