

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Local art teacher's mural
commemorates dedicated
Burke lineman.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

Rural Murals

Small Communities
Showcase History
and Culture Through
Mural Art

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Blizzard Bags

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Get Involved! Join us at the Annual Meeting.



Matt Sleep
CEO

One of my favorite events is coming up on Friday, October 25, when Butte Electric Cooperative will host our annual meeting for you, the members we proudly serve. I always look forward to this event because it is a great opportunity for me and our employees to talk with our members and hear what's on their minds.

We hope you will join us for the annual meeting, which will take place at the Belle Fourche Area Community Center. We thank you in advance for getting involved because your participation means so much to us. If you have never attended the annual meeting, I would encourage you to participate. Why? Because input from members like you matters and helps drive the direction of the co-op.

During the annual meeting, we will report on current initiatives and discuss the financial health and priorities for the coming years. But we are going to have a lot of fun too! We will have tasty food from High Plains Catering from Newell, several door prizes, registration gifts and if you have pre-registered, we are drawing for a \$100.00, \$200.00 and a \$300.00 bill credit. Make sure you pre-register!

Spending time with you and hearing your take on our community's energy future is so important to us. In fact, it is essential because everything we do is shaped by the members of our community. As I am sure you know, the energy industry is in the midst of massive change.

Consumer needs and changing technology impact nearly every aspect of how we manage and deliver energy to local homes, schools, and businesses.

As we navigate major changes in the coming years, we need to hear from you and your neighbors to inform our planning as we strive to meet the long-term needs of all Butte Electric members.

You have a say.

You may be wondering if your opinion really makes a difference, and yes, it does!

Gaining guidance and perspective from our

members and board helps set priorities for the co-op and guide future decisions. At our annual meeting, we raise issues for voting consideration by the general membership (that is everyone who pays for electric service from Butte Electric).

Annual meeting is also a time for members to vote on the co-op's board of directors.

Our board of directors is comprised of nine members who live and work right here in our local service area, so they are in the best position to know where community investments are most needed. And we hope you will consider running for the board in the future – we are always looking for folks who care about our community who would be willing to serve.

Your electric bill is an investment in our community.

This local input means those closest to the community know its needs and priorities and help direct where co-ops dollars are spent. Every year, we invest funds to make updates to our local system, which helps maintain reliability and grid resilience. Think of it this way: every time you pay your electric bill, you are actually investing in your community because all the money we take in stays here in the local community. By making these investments in our local system, we can ensure you have reliable power for everyday life.

Most consumers likely don't equate active involvement with their electric company with helping their community. But Butte Electric is not an ordinary utility company. We are a co-op, and our business model is meant to serve the members and the community in which it operates.

Our core purpose and mission are to provide safe, reliable, and affordable power. But as a co-op, we are also motivated by service to our community, rather than profits. We hope you will exercise the benefits of your co-op membership and join us for the annual meeting on Friday, October 25. We look forward to seeing you!

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

BUTTE ELECTRIC

(ISSN 1531-1031)

Board of Directors

Cris Miller, Spearfish – President
 Dan Marrs, Whitewood – Vice President
 Thomas Brunner, Nisland – Secretary
 James Mortenson, Spearfish – Asst. Secretary
 Travis Schenk, Spearfish – Treasurer
 Daniel Hefner, Whitewood
 Chandy Olson, St. Onge
 Steve Smeenk, Newell
 Paul Winkler, Newell

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Matt Sleep - Chief Executive Officer
 Kim Wince - Chief Financial Officer
 Lee Ann Gaer - Staff Accountant
 Angie Alexander - Administrative Assistant
 Heather McCann - Member Services

Operations Personnel

Brett Fosheim - Chief Operations Officer
 Bart McLellan - Member Services & Safety
 Chuck Even - Operations Manager
 Jacob Breidenbach - Work Order Clerk
 Craig Douthit - Work Order Support
 Adam Zvorak - Foreman
 Jeff Hughes - Foreman
 James Gyles - Foreman
 Linemen:
 John Branham
 Mike Davis
 Taten Fox
 Corey Hines
 Jade Lang
 Kyle Nudd
 Dave Pietz
 Elliot Rayman
 Dalton Steiger
 Ty Sweeter
 Adam Willuweit

Butte Electric Beacon Cooperative Connections is the monthly publication for the members of Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc., PO Box 137, Newell, SD 57760. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living.

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Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc. 84TH ANNUAL MEETING

5:00 PM • Friday, Oct. 25, 2024

Belle Fourche Area Community Center

Join us for the Butte Electric Annual Meeting.

Registration and Meal start at 5:00

Learn about the current happenings at Butte Electric Cooperative.

AGENDA

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| • Call to Order | • President/Manager's Report |
| • Invocation | • Keynote Speaker |
| • National Anthem | • Election |
| • Welcome | • New Business |
| • Approval of Minutes | • Door Prizes |
| • Treasurer's Report | • Adjourn |

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HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY TIPS

Rachel Dotson

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture

It's the time of year when many families will be gathering around the dining room table savoring the flavors of their favorite holiday meals. Check out how to keep your holiday meals safe this season with a few tips from Land-grant University Extension Services.

Shopping Safely

Before shopping, check the ingredients you have at home and verify their expiration date. It is helpful to prepare a shopping list before going shopping. Make sure you have sufficient room in your refrigerator for all purchased food items. Cold foods that need refrigeration or freezing should be purchased last.

Oklahoma State University Extension advises while shopping, keep raw meat, poultry and seafood away from other foods in your grocery cart. Placing raw meat, poultry and seafood in plastic bags can be a good method to separate them from other foods. Ask a cashier to place your raw meat, poultry and seafood in a separate bag.

Safe Food Handling Practices

- When it comes to preparing meats, washing poultry and meats at home is no longer necessary and is not recommended by the USDA. University of Connecticut Extension recommends thawing meat in a refrigerator or in a cold-water bath.
- Defrost meats in the refrigerator for approximately 24 hours, depending on size, or submerge meat in its original package in cold water and allow 30 minutes of thawing time for every pound.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under cool running water and use a produce brush to remove surface dirt. Even wash prepackaged greens to minimize bacterial contamination.
- While preparing food, use two cutting boards: one for preparing raw meat, poultry and fish, and the other for cutting fruits and vegetables, cooked food or preparing salads.
- Don't forget to also wash hands with soap and water before and after handling food.

Storing Leftovers

Bacteria grows when the food is left out for more than

two hours at room temperature. Divide leftovers into smaller portions and store in shallow containers in the refrigerator. University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension advises reheating cooked leftovers to 165 degrees. Use a food thermometer to measure temperature accurately. Sauces, soups and gravies should be reheated by bringing them to a boil. When microwaving leftovers, make sure there are no cold spots in food where bacteria can survive.

Multistate Approach for Food Safety

Food-borne illnesses affect 48 million Americans each year. Research and education have led to major advances in food safety; however, challenges remain. Many methods that use heat or chemicals to ensure food safety are not 100% effective and can damage food color, texture, flavor and nutrients.

Researchers at 32 Land-grant Universities are collaborating on innovative solutions for food safety and quality.

Their work is helping meet consumer demand for minimally processed, additive-free food items with longer shelf lives, higher nutrient content and less potential to cause food-borne illnesses.



Farm Safety "Always Be Alert"

Clyde Manas, Age 8

Clyde Manas warns farmers and ranchers to be careful with their equipment around power lines. Thank you for your picture, Clyde! Clyde's parents are Terry and Lacey Manas, members of Bon Homme Yankton Electric.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.



Holiday DELIGHTS

EASY CRANBERRY SALAD

Ingredients:

12 oz. fresh cranberries
20 oz. crushed pineapple,
drained (reserve juice)
1/2 cup pineapple juice
(from reserved juice)
2 cups sugar
3 oz. pkg cranberry jello
(may also use cherry jello)
1/4 cup maraschino cherries,
finely chopped

Method

Boil cranberries with pineapple juice and sugar. When berries pop, remove from heat. Add dry jello, pineapple and cherries. Refrigerate. Keeps for up to two weeks in the refrigerator.

Elaine Rieck
Harrisburg, S.D.

CAKE BATTER DIP

Ingredients:

8 oz. softened cream cheese
8 oz. thawed cool whip
1/3-2/3 cup milk
1 box Funfetti cake mix
(unprepared)
Sprinkles

Method

Add whipped topping and cream cheese to a large mixing bowl and beat with a hand mixer until smooth and creamy.

Add cake mix and 1/3 cup milk and stir with a wooden spoon until combined. Dip will be very thick, so add more milk, a little at a time, until you get to your desired consistency. I used about 2/3 cup for my dip.

Garnish with sprinkles and serve with whatever dippers you prefer (graham crackers, animal crackers, vanilla wafers, pretzels, fresh fruit, etc.)

Kayla Beaner
Centerville, S.D.

OPEN-FACED HOT TURKEY SANDWICHES

Ingredients:

1 container (12 oz.) turkey
gravy
8 slices cooked turkey
1 loaf baguette bread,
(12 in. long)
1 cup fresh spinach leaves
1 cup prepared stuffing,
warmed
1/2 cup cranberry sauce

Method

Cook gravy and turkey slices in large skillet on medium-high heat until heated through.

Cut baguette in half lengthwise, then cut each piece in half. Place bread, cut-side up, onto four serving plates.

Top bread evenly with spinach, turkey, stuffing, any remaining gravy and cranberry sauce.

McCormick.com

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Financial Report

Statement of Operations – Fiscal Year Ending July 31, 2024

Assets	
Electric Plant in Service	\$87,101,832
Construction Work in Progress	\$278,808
Total Electric Plant	\$87,380,640
Less Reserve for Depreciation	\$30,534,925
Net Electric Plant	\$56,845,715
Investments in Associate Organizations	\$7,685,832
Other Investments	\$2,405,986
Total Other Investments	\$10,091,818
Cash - General Fund	\$697,597
Cash - Construction Fund	\$0
Temporary Investments	\$1,098,965
Accounts Receivable (Less Uncollectibles)	\$1,680,743
Material and Supplies	\$2,061,519
Prepayments	\$164,697
Interest Receivable	\$31,527
Total Current Assets	\$5,735,048
Deferred Charges	\$121,194
Other Accounts Receivable	\$0
Total Assets	\$72,793,775
Equities	
Patronage Capital	\$26,703,916

Other Equities	\$1,759,771
Total Equities	\$28,463,687
Margins	
Electric Operating Margins	\$2,541,238
Fixed Charges (Interest on Long-Term Debt)	\$1,316,099
Operating Margin (After Fixed Charges)	\$1,225,139
G&T and Other Capital Credits	\$1,224,704
Non-operating Margin	\$276,215
Net Margins	\$2,726,058
Long-Term Liabilities	
Long-Term Debt – RUS & CFC	\$38,887,297
Capital Lease	\$0
Current/Non-Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$1,067,758
Customer Deposits	\$436,675
Taxes	\$340,121
Other Current Liabilities	\$2,058,723
Total Current Liabilities	\$3,903,277

Facts and Figures ENDING JULY 31, 2024

Number of Members	5781
Number of Meters	7,285
Miles of Line	
Transmission Line	63.15
Underground Line	590.25
Overhead Line	759.99
Meters per Mile of Line	5.15
New Services – 2023	303
Outage Time (Minutes per meter per year)	78.1

Taxes Paid

Gross Revenue Tax

Meade County	\$16,477
Lawrence County	\$105,716
Butte County	\$44,339
City of Newell	\$863
City of Spearfish	\$111,780
City of Sturgis	\$9,399
City of Belle Fourche	\$8,879
City of Deadwood	\$295
Total	\$297,748

2023 Real Estate Tax

Butte County	\$32,948
Lawrence County	\$5,986
Meade County	\$7,357
Total	\$46,291



Residential	\$9,985,353
Large Commercial.....	\$3,878,064
Small Commercial.....	\$1,740,225
Other	\$573,193
Irrigation and Grain	\$625,384
Seasonal.....	\$265,516

Total Operating Revenue: \$17,067,735

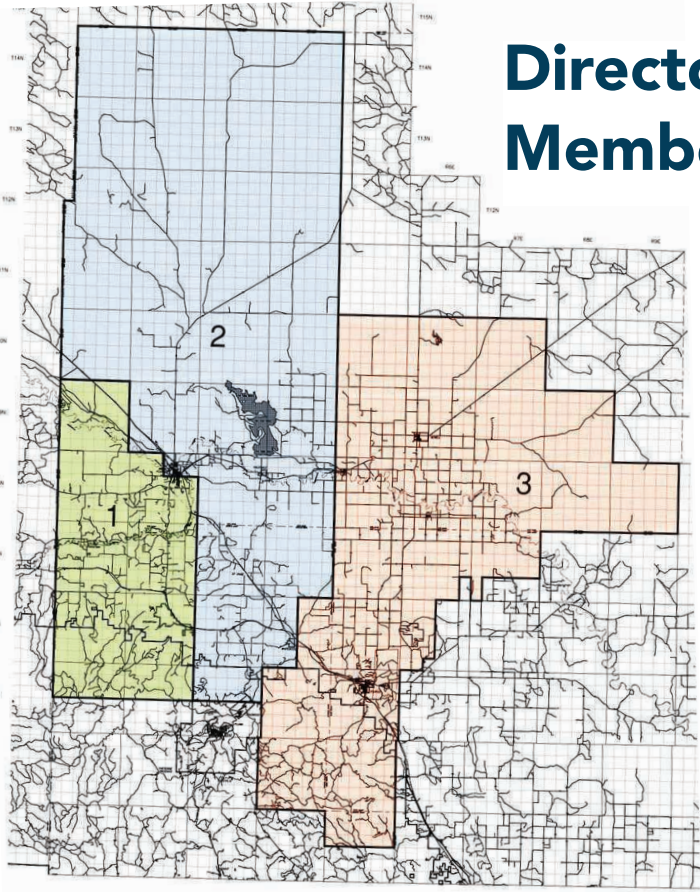


Cost of Power	\$7,987,215
Depreciation	\$2,258,043
Distribution Expenses	\$2,200,959
Administrative & General Expense ...	\$1,140,710
Customer Accounts Expense	\$354,167
Customer Service & Info Expense ...	\$319,600
Transmission Expense.....	\$234,064
Other.....	\$31,739

Total Operating Expenses: \$14,526,497

Directors Elected by the Members to Serve

The Butte Electric Cooperative board of directors consists of nine directors, elected by the cooperative’s membership, who represent one of the cooperative’s three districts. Each year at the annual meeting, cooperative members elect a director to represent each district for a three-year term. This year, the director seats held by Travis Schenk, Tom Brunner, and Paul Winkler are up for re-election.



DISTRICT 1



Travis Schenk
Spearfish



James Mortenson
Spearfish



Cris Miller
Spearfish

DISTRICT 2



Tom Brunner
Nisland



Dan Marrs
Spearfish



Chandy Olson
St. Onge

DISTRICT 3



Paul Winkler
Newell



Steve Smeenk
Newell



Dan Hefner
Whitewood



Small Communities Showcase History and Culture Through Mural Art

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Lemmon

Visitors from all over the map flock to Lemmon each year to explore the town's plethora of fascinating exhibits, from the Petrified Wood Park to the life-size steampunk-style sculptures by local artist John Lopez.

But of all the town's unique offerings, there's one stand-out exhibit that ties everything together: Boss Cowman Square.

Lopez's life-size metal sculpture of cowboy legend George Edward Lemmon is the focal point of the square. The Boss Cowman clutches the reins of his steampunk stallion, his eyes fixed on the horizon watching for stray cattle.

"Dad Lemmon," as the town's founder is so fondly known among locals, settled the town in 1906 between the Grand River and North Dakota border. It would soon be a stop along the incoming Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, which Dad Lemmon had been recruited to platte westward.

The sculpture is accompanied by a background mural depicting a scene far away from the bustling saloons and general stores of early Lemmon. In the scene, saddled-up cowboys under the careful

watch of the Boss Cowman sculpture guide a meandering herd hundreds of heads long across a river – no problem for Dad Lemmon, whose roundup skills and knowledge of the land were legendary across the West.

In 2015, as Lopez dreamt of what would one day be Boss Cowman Square, he recruited the help of two Nigerian artists, Dotun Popoola and Jonathan Imafidor, to help bring the vision to life.

"We studied a few materials and made sure all the elements were well captured, like the kinds of trees, the way the river looks and the butte in the background," Imafidor recalled about the 2016 project.

One obstacle that posed a challenge for the traveling artists – beside the shock of South Dakota's cold spring weather – was the slight differences between the cattle they knew in Nigeria and the cattle of the American West.

"We are representational artists and we've done a lot of drawings of cows, so we kind of had an idea of what the cattle should look like," Imafidor explained. "But in Lemmon, the kind of cattle that are found in the region are a little different than what we have in Nigeria. I remember when we started painting the cattle ... John Lopez told us, 'I don't think you can find those here.' Then he brought some material for

Cowboys keep a herd of longhorns moving at the bank of the Missouri River. Visitors will notice the sculpture of Dad Lemmon turned around to keep an eye on the progress. *Photo provided by John Lopez.*

us so we were able to see the difference and then we made the corrections."

After about a month of work, the mural was completed and the Boss Cowman Square was unveiled to the public in July 2016.

Burke

In Burke, K-12 art teacher Kate Witt isn't shy about brightening up her community. The mom of four has designed and painted four murals around town, including one depicting the town's beloved utility worker, Rich Bailey.

Rich's wife, Margaret Ann Bailey, commissioned the mural after Rich's passing in 2023. The mural shows the lineman hanging onto a utility pole as he works on the power lines.

"When we came here in 1970, there wasn't a bucket truck or anything," recalled Margaret Ann. "So he climbed everything, whether it was blizzarding or lightning, and he made sure people had electricity."

The mural also features emergency vehicles, as Rich served for decades as a volunteer firefighter and an emergency medical technician. Parked beneath the lines, the rusted white pickup truck Rich drove around town that over the years became synonymous with himself.

"With this mural specifically, I felt I had

a big important job,” Witt said. “This is a man who the town really loves, and I had a big job to make something beautiful that [Margaret Ann] was going to be proud of.”

Witt incorporated her own signature styles into the mural; her white outlines make the lineman’s silhouette stand out against the more geometrically designed Missouri River bluffs and cloudy sunset in the background.

“That’s where I have a little fun, putting in the modern twist and bold colors,” Witt continued. “I put this white line around everything which made some elements almost look like they’re stickers on a wall.”

Since Witt completed the mural last August, it’s become a point of pride for Margaret Ann who says it’s a testament to her husband’s years of dedication to his community.

“There was an older gal here in town, and she called him at 2 o’clock in the morning and said ‘my air conditioner isn’t working and it’s darn hot in my house,’” Margaret Ann recalled.

She said her husband explained that his job was to fix power lines, not air conditioners. Still, he went to flip the breaker on the woman’s fuse box anyway before going back to sleep.

“That’s the kind of guy he was, and I’m proud,” Margaret Ann said.

Tabor

Where in South Dakota can you find roses, ears of corn, a cardinal and Czech kolaches all in one mural?

Only in Tabor, probably.

Commissioned for the town’s 150th anniversary in 2022, the colorful mural on the sidewall of the local library meanders through the community’s history. From the heavy Czech influence of the earliest settlers represented by pastries and roses to the school’s original mascot, the cardinals, Robbie Jelsma worked very intentionally to portray the town in a way only a knowledgeable local artist could.

Growing up in nearby Springfield, Jelsma is no stranger to Tabor and its famous Czech Days, which draws thousands of people from across the country for the three-day celebration.

“I wanted to represent Czech Days and the Czech culture, so I did my own

research,” Jelsma said.

He incorporated roses, which are the national flower of the Czech Republic, as well as the fluffy pastries with fruit in the middle called kolaches.

He also incorporated local history—Tabor’s school mascot was the cardinal before merging with Springfield and Tyndall to form Bon Homme School District.

When he’s not painting murals, Jelsma is a highly sought-after tattoo artist specializing in more realistic styles. For him, the highlights of the Tabor mural is the level of depth and realism he achieved in his roses and clouds.

The hardest part of painting the mural is working with the elements, as there’s a laundry list of work that needs to be done on the surface before any real painting can begin: washing; smoothing; primer.

On top of that, unpredictable Midwestern weather requires a careful eye on the weather radar for any outdoor painting projects, Jelsma said.

“We started about early October so the fall was just getting started, and you never know in South Dakota if the weather is going to hold out or if you’ll get an early snow or strong wind,” he recalled about his three and a half weeks working on the project.

For Jelsma, the finished mural is as big of a point of pride for him, having been selected and commissioned for the work, as it is for the people of Tabor who get to show it off every summer during Czech Days.

“It’s cool I was thought of for the project,” Jelsma said. “It’s an art project that I think just lights everybody up a little bit when you drive down main street and you see something like that in a small town.”



Artist Robbie Jelsma puts the finishing touches on his mural ahead of the 2022 unveiling.
Photo provided by Robbie Jelsma.

Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc.

83RD ANNUAL MEETING

October 27, 2023 • Belle Fourche, South Dakota

The Eighty-Third Annual Membership Meeting of Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc. was held at 6:00 p.m., on October 27, 2023, at the Belle Fourche Area Community Center in Belle Fourche, South Dakota, pursuant to an official notice mailed to all members of the Cooperative at their last known address as shown on the records of the Cooperative.

Thomas Brunner, Secretary of the Board of Directors, advised there were 142 members registered and declared a quorum was present.

Cris Miller, President of the Board of Directors, called the 83rd Annual Membership Meeting of Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc. to order.

Secretary Brunner gave the invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Secretary Brunner introduced Matt Sleep, CEO of Butte Electric, who welcomed the members to Belle Fourche.

Carl Turney's name was drawn for a \$20.00 attendance prize.

Secretary Brunner read the Official Notice and the Affidavit of Mailing of the Notice.

President Miller asked if the members would like the minutes of last year's meeting read or if someone would make a motion to dispense with the reading and approve the minutes. A motion was made by Joyce Hall, seconded by Karl Jensen, and carried to dispense with the reading of the minutes and approve them as presented.

President Miller called on Attorney Ronda Miller to preside over the election. After introducing the members of the election and credentials committee, Attorney Miller called on Karl Jensen to read the Certificate of the Credentials Committee.

Petitions were submitted by:

District 1 - Cris Miller

District 2 - Chandy Olson

District 3 - Dan Hefner

Attorney Miller introduced the candidates. Attorney Miller asked for a motion that a unanimous ballot be cast for Cris Miller, Chandy Olson, and Dan Hefner. A motion was made by David Jeitz and seconded by Harold Baker. The motion carried.

Attorney Miller explained the voting procedures as it is contained in the Bylaws. The Credentials Committee was directed to gather ballots on the proposed Bylaw changes.

Marie Johnson's name was drawn for the \$20.00 attendance prize.

Travis Schenk, Treasurer of the Board of Directors presented the Financial Report for the previous year. Treasurer Schenk pointed out that total revenue from energy sales was \$15.8 million for the year. Operating expenses were \$13.2 million. Net investment in plant is just over \$2.9 million this year. Long-term debt is \$40.1 million while the total electric plant owned is just over \$82.1 million. The number of meters has reached the 7,063 mark as we continue to grow.

President Miller asked for a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement as presented. A motion was made by Harold Baker, seconded by Chance Davis, and carried to approve the Treasurer's Report and Financial Statements as presented.

Calvin Crooks' name was drawn for the \$20.00 attendance prize.

CEO Sleep gave the manager's report. He stated that the focus of his report will shift from the standard annual management report to highlighting the Cooperative's most valuable asset: its dedicated team of employees and board members. CEO Sleep introduced each employee and board member. CEO Sleep emphasized the importance of recognizing their hard work, particularly during power outages caused by various factors such as accidents and severe weather. Cooperative members were encouraged to appreciate the team's efforts and commitment to ensuring reliable electricity for the community.

CEO Sleep introduced the special guests in attendance.

Rhonda Dyer's name was drawn for the \$20.00 attendance prize.

President Miller introduced Director James Mortenson to talk about the Butte Electric Scholarship program. Director Mortenson introduced the five scholarship winners. Director Mortenson drew for the Annual Meeting attendance scholarship, and Jonah Musilek's name was drawn for the annual meeting atten-

Statement of Ownership

dance scholarship.

The By-Law results were given by Attorney Miller, all amendments to the bylaws had passed.

Drawings were held for several door prizes generously donated by local businesses that provide supplies, equipment, and services to the Cooperative.

The winner of the pre-registration prize, a TV, was Jan Bloom.

President Miller called for unfinished business. There was no unfinished business, so he asked for new business to be brought before the meeting. There was no new business.

A motion was made by Tom Brunner, seconded by Diane Miller, and carried to adjourn the meeting.

Cris Miller, President

Thomas Brunner, Secretary

CERTIFICATE OF SECRETARY

I, Thomas Brunner, do hereby certify that I am the duly elected, qualified Secretary of the Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc. (hereinafter called the 'Cooperative'); that the foregoing is a complete and correct copy of the original minutes entered in the Minute Book of the Cooperative of the meeting of its members held October 27, 2023, that at the meeting a quorum of the members was present and acted throughout; and the resolutions contained in the minutes of the aforementioned meeting have not been modified or rescinded.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name as Secretary and affixed the Corporate Seal of the Cooperative this 25th day of October, 2024.

(SEAL)
Thomas Brunner, Secretary

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PREPARING FOR WINTER WEATHER

Jacob Boyko

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As we near the frigid winter months of South Dakota, it's important for you and loved ones to stay ready for an emergency.

Even though power outages are rare, a loss of electricity can affect modern lives in critical ways; In an instant, you may no longer be able to heat your home, prepare food or access critical information.

It's crucial to prepare for power outages and other general emergencies by keeping supplies in both your home and vehicles as well as making sure you and your loved ones have a plan in place.

Brad Reiners, director of communications for the state Department of Public Safety, encourages South Dakotans to stock

up on essentials like food, water and batteries prior to the winter months.

"Make sure you have enough food and water for at least three days, and each person in the household should have one gallon of water per day," Reiners said.

State DPS recommends keeping non-perishable food items like pasta, canned goods and nutritious snacks that don't require refrigeration and don't need to be heated or cooked before consumption.

"Never use gas powered generators, grills or portable stoves indoors, as they can produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide," Reiner added.

As you prepare, remember to be proactive about your health. Have your medical prescriptions refilled in advance of a severe storm and keep a battery bank charged so you can power your cell phone in case you need to

access telehealth services, emergency services or access critical information.

In your car, keep warm blankets, winter clothes, snacks, a shovel, flashlight and a set of jumper cables in case you get stranded.

"It's also advisable to check your tires for proper inflation and tread, and make sure your windshield wipers are in good condition with freeze-resistant washer fluid," Reiners added.



Bottles of water and shelf-stable dry foods are perfect long-lasting emergency supplies to keep around.
Photo provided by Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota.

If you plan to rely on a generator or wood burning stove for heat if the power goes out, check beforehand that your equipment is in safe working order, and you have enough fuel to last several days.

Keeping warm clothes, blankets and sleeping bags at the ready can be lifesaving if you're unable to heat your home.

Meals on Wheels here to help with Blizzard Bags

For senior citizens, some of this advice is easier said than done. Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota understands that better than anyone, and they have come up with a solution.

"Blizzard Bags" have been a part of the organization's lineup for over 20 years now and include some of the essentials seniors need when hunkering down for severe weather.

"We deliver shelf-stable meals for seniors who, especially in rural areas, may not have access to food for a while if their electricity goes out," said Jennifer Paschke, regional manager for Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota. "We provide five meals in those bags they can use during a loss of power or being stranded in their homes due to weather."

The food supplied is generally items that don't require a heat source, like packages of tuna salad and crackers, protein bars or cans with a pop-top seal so no can opener is required, Paschke said.

The bags also include water and other donated supplies like batteries and flashlights from local businesses, including some rural electric cooperatives.

"The biggest success story I know in

my area is a couple of years ago when they had tornados in Philip," Paschke remembered. "The water we provided [in the blizzard bags] were some of the only sources of water some of those people had. Just having that food and water can be a godsend for some people."

Blizzard Bags are available to seniors age 60 and up who are a part of the Meals on Wheels program. The bags cost roughly \$20 to put together, according to Paschke, and are funded in part by community donors. The organization provides home deliveries for seniors living in both cities and rural areas.

Anyone interested in getting service or helping with the cause can contact Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota at (605) 394-6002.



Meals On Wheels of Western South Dakota provides blizzard bags to seniors in case weather conditions affect normal delivery. Photo provided by Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota.



Youth Tour participants Mallory Gant, left, and Madison Robertson pose for a photo at the FDR Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Photo by Frank Turner.

EMPOWERING THE FUTURE

The Impact of Local Electric Cooperative Youth Programs

Frank Turner

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It is a core tenet of rural electric cooperatives to inform the public – particularly young people – about the nature and benefits of cooperation. Electric cooperatives have a long history of engaging youth in South Dakota through cooperative-sponsored youth

experiences, including trips like the annual Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., Youth Excursion in North Dakota, and Youth Leadership Conference at the annual NRECA PowerXchange conference.

These opportunities provide many South Dakota students with their first travel experiences outside the state. For

many, it's their first time flying on an airplane. Students not only gain valuable insights into rural electric cooperatives and energy, but they also learn basic life skills, such as how to navigate a city or use public transportation.

Former SDREA communications director Brenda Kleinjan, now a communications specialist with Sioux Valley Energy, was the driving force behind many of these programs through her 20 years of youth engagement for South Dakota cooperatives. From 2000 to 2019, Kleinjan coordinated and facilitated the many youth trips sponsored by electric cooperatives, leading hundreds of students to explore the impact of rural electricity on Capitol Hill and energy generation in North

Dakota over the course of her career.

According to Kleinjan, many alumni of the electric cooperative youth programs have gone on to achieve great things.

“These trips are an investment that our co-ops are making for not only our youth and their families, but our state and regions’ future,” Kleinjan said. “We are tapping into the drive of our most energetic teenagers with the idea of encouraging them to explore their world, their communities and their future.”

Youth Tour

Since 1963, South Dakota electric cooperatives have sponsored youth trips to Washington, D.C., each June for the annual Youth Tour. This year, Mallory Gant was one of 36 students from South Dakota who participated in a weeklong exploration of the nation’s capital, learning about the cooperative network and rural electrification. Sponsored by Charles Mix Electric, Gant visited the many memorials and monuments of the capital city and met South Dakota’s congressmen in the U.S. Capitol to ask questions.

Gant, who lives on farm and ranch outside Platte, made the most of her time by making new friends while experiencing the history of sites like Ford’s Theater, Mount Vernon and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

“It was definitely an eye-opening experience – to be able to fly on a plane and visit these huge cities,” Gant said. “A big part of the trip for me was meeting the friends I made along the way. Since the trip, I’ve seen them at volleyball and FFA events. When you go on the trip, you are out there with people you don’t know, so you are forced to get out of your comfort zone and meet new people. I think it sparked a lot of friendships for me.”

Youth Leadership Council

In addition to Youth Tour, Gant was selected as this year’s South Dakota representative for the annual Youth

Leadership Council. As the state’s sole representative, Gant will join 43 other young leaders at the NRECA PowerXchange Conference in Atlanta from March 7-12 next spring.

“From the first moment of being a representative, I had to introduce myself to a room of almost 2,000 kids,” Gant said. “It really put me on the spot, but it was really cool to be able to know I was capable of doing that.”

Leading up to the event, Gant is working to complete a creative and engaging community project by setting up an agriculture-focused electric safety booth at the upcoming South Dakota 4-H Land and Range Judging Contest with Charles Mix Electric, her sponsoring electric cooperative.

Gant will also prepare and deliver a short speech at a Charles Mix Electric meeting for the opportunity to be chosen as the 2025 Youth Leadership Council National Spokesperson. If chosen, Gant will deliver a speech in Atlanta Georgia at the PowerXChange Conference.

“I think the whole experience has made me a more vocal and outgoing person,” Gant said.

Youth Excursion

Erica Fitzhugh is one of many alumni from the rural electric youth program whose life has been shaped by her experience traveling to North Dakota to learn about electricity generation.

In 2005, Northern Electric sponsored Fitzhugh, then a high school junior, on a trip to tour energy infrastructure in Beulah, North Dakota.

Fitzhugh vividly recalls visiting Basin Electric Power Cooperative’s complex, where electricity is generated and transmitted to homes and businesses, as well as the Freedom Mine, the nation’s largest lignite coal mine by deliveries.

“I remember standing in the bucket of the dragline for a photo and thinking it was an amazing experience,” Fitzhugh said.

Her connection to the local electric cooperative continued after the trip. As a member of 4-H, Fitzhugh attended monthly meetings hosted at Northern Electric’s office. Each year, she would write thank-you letters to Jim Moore, Northern Electric’s CEO at the time, for supporting their program and hosting their meetings.

Years later, Northern Electric awarded Fitzhugh The Northern Electric Scholarship when she was a high school senior. That investment paid off when Moore later hired Fitzhugh as the Northern Electric director of communications.

“Jim Moore was the person who hired me, and I had handwritten him thank you letters in high school for the 4-H club,” said Fitzhugh, now a communications specialist for Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

Interested in Local Youth Opportunities?

Whether it’s scholarships, Youth Tour or Youth Excursion, there are several youth events and opportunities catered to young electric co-op members that continue to thrive. Please contact your local co-op to learn more about these ongoing youth opportunities.



To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

OCT. 26
Mortimer's Monstrous Halloween
 3 p.m.-6 p.m.
 Oakwood Lakes State Park
 605-627-5441

NOV. 2
Wall Community Craft Show
 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
 Wall, SD
 605-279-2665

NOV. 2
Fall Fling Craft Show
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Dakota Christian School
 Corsica, SD
 605-366-7940

NOV. 8-9
Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show
 Friday, 12 p.m.-8 p.m.
 Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-332-6004

NOV. 9
Deadwood's Big Whiskey Festival
 4 p.m.-8 p.m.
 Main Street
 Deadwood, SD

NOV. 22-JAN.5
Winter Wonderland
 Nightly - 5 p.m.-12 a.m.
 Falls Park
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-275-6060

NOV. 9
Christmas at the Homestead
 12 p.m.-4 p.m.
 North Sioux City, SD
 605-232-0873

NOV. 9-10
Zonta Craft & Vendor Show
 Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Ramkota Hotel
 Pierre, SD
 605-280-1511

NOV. 16
Festival of Trees
 6 p.m.
 Lead, SD
 605-584-2067

NOV. 23-24
Winterfest: A Winter Arts Festival
 Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Aberdeen, SD

NOV. 30
A Hometown Christmas Market
 2 p.m.-6 p.m.
 Main Street
 Elk Point, SD

NOV. 29-DEC. 29
Trees & Trains Exhibit at SD State Railroad Museum
 Hill City, SD
 605-665-3636

DEC. 1
A Christmas Carol
 2 p.m.
 Gayville Music Hall
 Gayville, SD
 605-624-2859

DEC. 5
Christmas on the Prairie
 4 p.m.
 Main Street
 Miller, SD

DEC. 5
Holiday Festival of Lights
 4 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
 Yankton, SD
 605-665-3636

DEC. 6-8, 13-15
A Sherlock Carol
 Dec. 6-7, 13-14, 7:30 p.m.
 Dec. 8, 15, 2:30 p.m.
 Corson, SD
 mightycorson.com

DEC. 7
KJAM Parade of Lights
 5:30 p.m.
 Madison, SD
 605-256-4514

DEC. 7
Santa Day
 2 p.m.
 Stockholm Buggy Museum
 Stockholm, SD
 605-467-3940

DEC. 7-31
Garden Glow at McCrory Gardens
 5 p.m.-9 p.m.
 Brookings, SD
 605-688-6707

DEC. 14
Parade of Lights
 Wessington, SD
 605-359-2049

Note: Please make sure to call ahead to verify the event is still being held.