

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## Co-ops at the Capitol

**Every Voice Counts**

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**Easements Bring Safety and Reliability**

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(left to right) Rosebud Electric Directors Dennis Purvis and Boyt Young and Butte Electric CEO Matt Sleep serve a homemade meal to legislators, state employees and Capitol visitors in South Dakota State Capitol.

*Photo by Jacob Boyko*

# The Importance of Serving as a Director on an Electric Cooperative Board

## Empowering Communities and Discovering Personal Rewards



**Chris Larson,  
General Manager**

### WHY BECOME A DIRECTOR ON AN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE BOARD?

Electric cooperatives are the backbone of countless communities across America, providing reliable, affordable power to homes, farms, and businesses. At the heart of every cooperative is a dedicated board of directors, elected from among the membership, who guide the organization's mission, strategy, and values. Serving as a director is more than a position, it's a chance to make a lasting difference in your community.

### MAKING A MEANINGFUL IMPACT

Directors have a direct hand in shaping the future of the cooperative. They are responsible for setting policies, overseeing financial health, and ensuring that the cooperative meets the needs of its members. This role is vital in maintaining affordable rates, investing in infrastructure, and promoting innovation. By serving, directors help safeguard the interests of their neighbors and build a more resilient local economy.

### REWARDS OF BOARD SERVICE

While the responsibility is significant, the rewards are equally profound. Board members gain the satisfaction of contributing to the greater good and seeing tangible results from their efforts. Serving offers opportunities for professional development, leadership training, and networking with other passionate community leaders. Directors also develop a deeper understanding of energy issues, governance, and the cooperative business model.

- Personal Growth: Enhance leadership,

**Serving offers opportunities for professional development, leadership training, and networking with other passionate community leaders.**

decision-making, and strategic thinking skills.

- Community Engagement: Build lasting relationships with members and stakeholders.
- Legacy Building: Create positive change that benefits future generations.
- Education: Access ongoing training and resources to stay informed about energy trends and cooperative governance.

### WHO SHOULD CONSIDER SERVING?

If you are passionate about your community and eager to make a difference, consider running for the board. No special background is required—just a commitment to serving your fellow members, a willingness to learn, and a desire to see your cooperative

thrive. By stepping forward, you can ensure that the cooperative remains responsive, innovative, and member focused.

### CONCLUSION

Serving as a director on your electric cooperative board is a chance to be part of something bigger than yourself. It's about

stewardship, collaboration, and community pride. The role may be challenging, but the opportunity to leave a lasting legacy and experience personal growth makes it incredibly rewarding. If you're ready to help shape the future of your cooperative, consider board service—you'll be making a difference where it matters most.

**Thank you again, for allowing us to provide your electric service needs.**

**Chris Larson  
General Manager  
[clarson@clayunionelectric.coop](mailto:clarson@clayunionelectric.coop)**

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### CLAY-UNION ELECTRIC SPARKS

(USPS 116-800)

Office Hours  
Monday through Friday  
7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
31321 SD Hwy. 19, Vermillion, S.D.

#### Board of Directors

Tom Larsen, President  
Christopher Kinney, Vice President  
Mike Slattery, Treasurer  
Sara Schulte, Secretary  
Asst. Secretary, Vacant

#### Staff

Chris Larson, General Manager  
Beth Bottolfsen, Manager of Finance & Administration  
Alan Gauer, Operations Manager  
Lori Rueb, Senior Billing Coordinator  
Penny Aschman, Member Services Specialist  
Jackie Williams, Marketing/Communications  
Joey Nickles, Electrician Foreman  
Josh Anthofer, Electrician  
Quinn Springer, Crew Foreman  
Curt Johnson, Lead Lineman  
Nick Buckman, Lead Lineman  
Travis Wells, Journeyman Lineman  
Casey Ihnen, Journeyman Lineman  
Jake Husby, Journeyman Lineman  
Clayton Sorensen, Apprentice Lineman  
Kobe Culver, Apprentice Lineman

#### POWER FAILURE - 24-hour service In case of Power Failure Call: 1-800-696-2832 or 624-2673

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## BASIN ELECTRIC SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED

The Basin Electric Scholarship Program will award more than 150 scholarships in 2026.

- Basin Electric will award \$2,500 in scholarships to Clay-Union Electric members (\$2-\$1,250 scholarships).

- The Cooperative Member Employee Dependent Scholarship will be \$1,000 each.

All scholarships must be used for educational expenses, and recipients must enroll in college in the fall semester of the school year for which the scholarship is awarded.

Scholarship checks will be made payable to the student's college, university, or technical school and will be distributed by Basin Electric in August.

The applicant must be a student who is enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time graduate or undergraduate course of study at an accredited, two year or four year college, university, or vocational/technical school and parent or guardian must be a member of Clay-Union Electric.

Applications are available on our website at <https://clayunionelectric.coop/scholarship-opportunities> or call 605-624-2673 to request one.

Completed applications must be received by February 3rd, 2026 and can be emailed to [jwilliams@clayunionelectric.coop](mailto:jwilliams@clayunionelectric.coop), dropped off at 31321 SD Hwy. 19 or mailed to PO Box 317, Vermillion, SD 57069.

### YEAR-TO-DATE FINANCIALS

	October 2025	Year To Date
Number of Consumers.....	3,568.....	3,918 Avg.
Total Revenue .....	\$670,723.....	\$8,122,722
Total Cost of Service.....	\$756,664 .....	\$8,418,165
Operating Margins .....	\$(85,941).....	\$(295,443)
Other Margins.....	\$2,904.....	\$95,875
Total Net Margins.....	\$(83,037).....	\$(199,568)
kWh Purchased.....	5,177,335 .....	65,373,324
Cost of Power .....	\$388,079 .....	\$4,582,650
kWh Sales.....	4,870,122 .....	62,423,631
Residential Average Usage .....	1,095.....	1,281
Residential Average Monthly Bill.....	\$159 .....	\$175

# Tree Trimming Safety

Trees are majestic, beautiful and good for the soul. But we also know that our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses. South Dakota's electric cooperatives strive to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming.

Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we've seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages nationally can be attributed to overgrown vegetation.

Overgrown vegetation and trees also pose a risk to power lines. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose grave danger to families. If children can access those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone. Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor like a tree. A proactive approach also diminishes the chances of fallen branches or trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for line workers to restore power.

If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can be-

### BENEFITS OF TREE TRIMMING

- ✓ Improves service reliability
- ✓ Speeds up restoration time
- ✓ Keeps crews & communities safe



come overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

When it comes to vegetation management, there are ways you can help too. When planting new trees, make sure they're planted a safe distance from overhead power lines. Medium-height trees (40 ft. or smaller) should be planted at least 25 ft. from power lines. Taller trees (over 40 ft.) should be planted at least 50 ft. from power lines. You can also practice safe planting near pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. from the transformer door and 4 ft. from the sides. If your neighborhood has underground lines, remember to contact 811 before you begin any project that requires digging.

Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch that's dangerously close to overhead lines, please contact your local electric cooperative.

We have deep roots in our community, and we love our beautiful surroundings. It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program is a crucial tool in ensuring service reliability.



**"Watch for overhead power lines."**

**Jacob Ymker, Age 10**

Jacob reminds readers to watch out for overhead power lines. Great job, Jacob! Jacob's parents are Mark and Marion Ymker from Armour, S.D.

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.

# Heart-Warming DESSERTS

Picture by Elena Veselova from Shutter stock

## APPLE BREAD

### Ingredients:

1/2 cup brown sugar  
1 1/2 tsps. cinnamon

*Mix in small dish & set aside.*

2 eggs (room temperature)

1/2 cup sugar

1 tsp. vanilla

1/2 cup melted butter or  
margarine

*Mix together in a bowl and add:*

1 1/2 cups flour

1 tsp. baking powder

1/2 tsp. baking soda

2 cups chopped apples

### Method

Pour 1/2 of the batter into a greased and floured bread pan. Sprinkle 1/2 of the cinnamon and sugar mixture over it. Add remaining batter and top with remaining cinnamon sugar mixture.

Bake at 350° for 45-60 minutes.

**Grace Klein**  
**Sioux Valley Energy**

## PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE DESSERT

### Ingredients:

1 cup heavy whipped cream  
8 oz. cream cheese, whipped  
1/3 cup sugar  
1/2 cup brown sugar  
1 can pumpkin puree  
1 tbsp. pumpkin pie spice  
1 tsp. vanilla  
1 pkg. cheesecake pudding mix

### Method

Beat 1 cup heavy whipped cream and set aside.

In a separate bowl, mix and beat the cream cheese, sugar, brown sugar, pumpkin puree, pumpkin pie spice, vanilla, and cheesecake pudding mix.

Fold the whip cream into this mixture and spread in a graham cracker crust.

Refrigerate two hours before serving plus add a spray of whip cream and sprinkle cinnamon on top.

(Optional) add chopped pecans or walnuts.

**Susan Forma**  
**Union County Electric**

## CHERRY COCONUT BARS

### Ingredients:

#### Crust

1 cup flour, sifted  
1/2 cup butter  
3 tsbps. powdered sugar

#### Mixture

2 eggs, slightly beaten  
1 cup sugar  
1/2 tsp. baking powder  
1/4 cup flour  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1 tsp. vanilla  
3/4 cup chopped nuts  
1/2 cup coconut  
1/2 cup red maraschino cherries, quartered

### Method

Mix together flour, butter and powdered sugar. Spread in 8" square pan. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until it is a delicate brown.

In a bowl, mix in the remaining ingredients in the order given: eggs, sugar, baking powder, flour, salt, vanilla, chopped nuts, coconut, maraschino cherries.

Spread this mixture over the crust and bake again for 25-30 minutes. cool and cut into squares.

**Barbara Anderson**  
**Lake Region Electric**

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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# Board of Director Nomination Petitions for District #3 Available

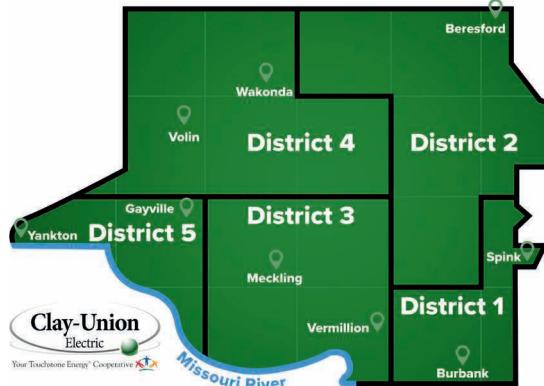
Pursuant to Section 7, Article 3 of the By-Laws of Clay-Union Electric, as amended by the members March 27, 2012, nominations for the Board of Directors of Clay-Union Electric are accomplished by petition.

Director Nomination Petitions are available for the nomination of a member in good standing with Clay-Union Electric from District #3. Petitions are available at the cooperative office and can be picked up by the person pursuing the position. Clay-Union Electric, 31321 SD Hwy. 19, Vermillion, SD. Office hours: Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Phone: 1-605-624-2673 or 1-800-696-2832.

The completed petitions must be returned to Clay-Union Electric no later than 4 p.m. Thursday, February 13, 2026 or postmarked no later than February 13, 2026.

**DISTRICT 3:** The territory served by Clay-Union Electric beginning at a point on the Northeast corner of the territory at the junction of 464th Ave. and 309th St.; thence south on 464th

Ave. to where a projection of 464th Ave. meets the Missouri River; thence west along the South Dakota boundary of the Missouri River to a point that would be a projection south of 452nd Ave.; thence north on 452nd Ave. to the intersection with 309th St.; thence east on 309th St. to the intersection with 464th Ave., the point of beginning.



## Director Sought for District #5

Jim Ryken District #5 resigned his position on the Clay-Union Electric Board in 2025. Thank you Jim for over 36 years of dedicated service.

Clay-Union Electric By-Laws state that the Board of Directors, by a majority vote of the remaining directors, shall select a new director to fill the vacant director position, provided however, that the successor meet the following qualifications of office.

A. No person shall be eligible to become or remain a director or hold any position of trust in the Cooperative who:

1. Is not a member in good standing and bona fide resident in the area served or to be served by the Cooperative and of the district they are to represent; or

2. Is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative, or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to the members of the Cooperative;

3. Has been convicted of, plead guilty or no lo contend-ere to, or received a suspended imposition of sentence for any felony offense;

4. Attends less than two/thirds (2/3) of the monthly board meetings during the past year;

5. Was employed or whose spouse was employed by the Cooperative during any time within the past five (5) years;

6. Is currently employed by the Cooperative or has an immediate member of the family employed by the Cooperative;

7. Lacks the capacity to enter into legal contracts or otherwise meet the requirements of the office.

**DISTRICT 5:** The territory served by Clay-Union Electric beginning at a point on the Northeast corner of the territory at the junction of 452nd Ave. and 309th St.; thence south on 452nd Ave. to where a projection of 452nd Ave. meets the Missouri River; thence west along the South Dakota boundary of the Missouri River to a point that would be a projection south of 440th Ave.; thence north on 440th Ave. to the intersection with 308th St.; thence east on 308th St. to the intersection with 446th Ave.; the south on 446th Ave. to the intersection with 309th St.; thence east on 309th St. to the intersection with 452nd Ave., the point of beginning.

If you live in District #5 and would like to be considered, please submit a letter of qualifications and why you are interested in serving on the Clay-Union Board of Directors to:

Clay-Union Electric  
%Chris Larson  
P.O. Box 317  
Vermillion, SD 57069

# Basin Tour - June 8-10, 2026

Registration is now open for members interested in learning more about where your electricity is generated. Basin Electric Power Cooperative is open for tours and we are taking advantage of their offer. This is a FREE opportunity for Clay-Union Electric members to travel with Union County Electric and Bon Homme Yankton Electric members to Beulah, ND by bus with a full schedule planned. Clay-Union will be accepting up to 14 members to attend. Don't wait, apply today.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

(If registering as a couple include both names)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration is due by April 1, 2026. Mail to

Clay-Union Electric

PO Box 317, Vermillion, SD 57069

For complete details or to register online visit  
<https://clayunionelectric.coop/basin-bus-tour>



## Use a Space Heater with Care

Electric space heaters can help warm a room quickly. However, they can be as dangerous as convenient if used improperly. Safe Electricity urges everyone in the home to understand the importance of using space heaters safely:

- Make sure the space heater is clean and in good condition. Cords should not be frayed, brittle, or cracked.
- Purchase only space heaters that have been safety tested and

**EVEN THREE IS A CROWD.**



**NEVER OVERLOAD OUTLETS.**

Helping members use electricity safely, that's the power of your co-op membership.

Learn more from the experts themselves at [TouchstoneEnergy.com](http://TouchstoneEnergy.com).

Your source for power. And information.

UL approved. Make sure the unit has an emergency tip-over shut-off feature and heating element guards. Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for operation and care.

- Make sure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are in good working condition before using a space heater.
- Place the heater out of high-traffic areas and on a level, hard, non-flammable floor surface—NOT on carpets, furniture, or countertops.
- Never use them to thaw pipes, cook food, or dry clothing or towels. Space heaters have one purpose —to provide supplemental heating.
- Remember to keep space heaters at least three feet from combustible liquids, like fuel, spray cans, and paint, and flammable items such as draperies, blankets, and sofas.
- Never allow pets or children near an electric heater. Accidental contact could cause serious shock or burns.
- Plug space heaters directly into the outlet, and never use an extension cord or multiple plugs.
- Do not overload circuits. Make sure not to plug the unit into the same circuit as other electric appliances.
- If your space heater is plugged into a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) and it trips, don't assume there is something wrong with the GFCI. Immediately stop using the heater until a professional can check it—if not, a serious shock could occur.
- Replace older space heaters with newer, safer models.
- Always turn off space heaters when not in use. Never leave one of these devices on unattended or after going to bed. Do not attempt to warm your entire home using only space heaters. Space heaters are useful in small areas, such as a study or living room. However, if you need to keep large areas warm, your home heating system will do the job more efficiently.



The South Dakota State Capitol  
in Pierre, S.D.  
Photo by Frank Turner

# CO-OPS AT THE CAPITOL EVERY VOICE COUNTS

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Electric cooperatives carry a wide range of responsibilities to the members they serve. Beyond keeping the lights on, co-ops represent their communities, focus on member needs and help strengthen the places they call home. But behind the scenes, cooperatives also stay actively involved in legislative discussions to stay engaged in the decisions that shape how they serve their members.

According to Steve Barnett, general manager of the South Dakota Rural Electric Association, legislative efforts help protect reliable electricity, keep costs manageable and support rural communities across South Dakota.

“While it’s important that we stay involved in the topics that are relevant to our industry, it’s really about sharing our values and telling our story,” Barnett said. “Being involved means being engaged and aware of the challenges and issues coming up in the 2026 Legislative Session,”

In addition to SDREA’s internal

leadership, legislative efforts are supported by the association’s lobbying team in Pierre, led by Darla Pollman Rogers of Riter Rogers LLP. Rogers and her colleague, Ellie Bailey, have been involved with SDREA’s legislative work for more than two decades.

“A key component of this work involves relationship building with legislators to establish trust and credibility,” Rogers said.

Rogers noted that member engagement strengthens the cooperative voice during session and throughout the year. “The grassroots approach is huge for co-ops,” she said. “Hearing from members across the state and from different cooperatives helps strengthen our overall impact.” Rogers added that one of the best ways members can get involved is by getting to know their local legislators or attending Co-op Day at the Capitol to observe the process firsthand.

With the next session approaching, several topics are already drawing the attention of not only electric cooperatives but utilities across the

state. One of the proposals SDREA is following closely is Rep. Kent Roe’s data center bill, identified as Draft HB 31.

“We’re seeing an increase in interest from large data center developers looking to site facilities in cooperative service territory,” said Chris Studer, chief member and public relations officer at East River Electric Power Cooperative, a wholesale power supply cooperative which serves distribution co-ops in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. “We have been providing input on the data center bill to make sure the law would fit within our process and require data centers to invest in generation and transmission infrastructure to serve them, so we can protect our current cooperative consumers from the risk of building generation to serve these large consumers. At the end of the day, we’re not going to put our member-owners at risk, and engaging with lawmakers working on that issue is very important to our cooperative network.”

The association has also been working

with investor-owned utilities on wildfire mitigation legislation, which stands out as another priority for South Dakota cooperatives.

“Wildfire risk is a growing concern, and this proposal gives utilities a clear, consistent way to plan ahead. At its core, this legislation is about preparedness – making sure utilities have a plan and have reviewed it with their governing authority. By strengthening infrastructure, improving vegetation management, and coordinating closely with communities, the framework helps protect public safety while supporting the reliable service South Dakotans depend on,” Black Hills Electric General Manager Walker Witt said.

Cooperative members also have an important role in legislative advocacy. Their engagement helps ensure that rural needs and perspectives reach decision makers. Barnett encouraged members to stay active by reaching out to local lawmakers in their districts and attending local legislative forums and cracker barrels. These are formal town hall style gatherings where legislators answer questions and update the community.

“Members can contact legislators in their respective districts via email or by telephone,” Barnett said. “Attending cracker barrels is also a good way to stay engaged. These opportunities give members a chance to hear updates, ask questions, and share how policy decisions affect their communities.”

Barnett also noted the importance of staying alert during the legislative process, particularly when a bill is significantly amended. He explained that when a bill gets “hog housed,” it means it has been changed so much that the original version is no longer recognizable. “A hog housed bill is changed or amended significantly, to the point where a person may change their position on the bill,” he said. “Tracking these changes is essential to understanding the real impact a proposal may have if it becomes law.”

Barnett said SDREA will continue to represent the interests of both cooperatives and rural communities across the state. At the end of the day, it’s all about providing dependable electricity and keeping the lights on.



Gov. Larry Rhoden takes a picture with members of the electric cooperative network at Co-op Day at the Capitol last February.

*Photo by Jocelyn Johnson*

## STAYING INVOLVED

### Co-op Day at the Capitol

Electric cooperatives’ efforts to engage local legislators extend far beyond traditional lobbying. Every February, cooperatives from across the state gather for a light-hearted dinner at the South Dakota State Capitol to break bread with lawmakers, provide attendees industry updates and sit in on legislative committee meetings.

Last year, South Dakota cooperatives continued their time-honored tradition of serving pulled pork sandwiches and cowboy beans prepared by Ken Gillaspie, who formerly served as a director for East River Electric and as board president for Oahe Electric, and Roger Crom, a former loss control manager at SDREA.

The next Co-op Day at the Capitol is scheduled for Feb. 17, 2026.

### Legislative Banquets

In addition to Co-op Day at the Capitol, select electric cooperatives across the state host legislative banquets as a means of communicating the latest legislative environment with both their members and local lawmakers. Many times, these events provide a free meal to attendees and include updates on both the successes and challenges for the co-op.

Reach out to your local cooperative to learn more about local Legislative Banquets, Co-op Day at the Capitol or the latest legislative news affecting cooperatives. The co-op network is more than happy to engage.

# BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

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## Clay-Union Electric Corporation Board Meeting Summary

OCTOBER 24, 2025 • VERMILLION, SOUTH DAKOTA

The board meeting was called to order on October 24, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. by board President Tom Larsen. The meeting was held in the conference room at the Clay-Union Electric Headquarters.

In attendance were Tom Larsen, Chris Kinney, and Mike Slattry. Sara Schulte attended the meeting at approx. 10:00 a.m., the board seat for District #5 is vacant. Attending staff members included Chris Larson, Beth Bottolffson, Alan Gauer and Jackie Williams.

**Agenda (ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the agenda as presented.

**Visitors to Be Heard** – Jeff May, East River Electric, Cyber Security

### Approval of Minutes from the September Board Meeting

**(ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the September board minutes held on 9/22/25.

**Approval of Minutes from the September Executive Session (ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the September executive session held on 9/22/25.

**Check List & Electronic Funds Transfer** – The board reviewed the EFT/ACH payments, and the monthly check list as presented.

**New Members and Refunds (ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve new members, refunds and credit deposits as presented.

**Early Retirement of Capital Credits** – None

**Contracts** – None

**Policy Review (ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve changes to Board of Directors Policy 106, Compensation and Reimbursement of Directors.

**Work Order and Special Equipment Summary** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve submitting the Work Order Inventories 521 through 523 and the Summary of Special Equipment for January – June 2025 as presented to RUS for reimbursement.

### Management Reports:

**A. Manager's Report** – Manager Larson provided reports on the monthly activities:

**November Board Meeting** – The date of November 24, was set as the next regular board meeting to begin at 1:00 p.m.

**East River Reed/Mac** – Manager Larson reported on the REED Board and MAC Meeting held October 1st in Madison.

**East River Electric Cyber Program** – Jeff May gave some insights on the Cyber Security Program and the monthly report that is provided by his staff.

**NRECA Region 6 Meeting** – Manager Larson gave a report on the NRECA Region 6 meeting held in Madison, WI.

**Eide Bailly Master Agreement** – Manager Larson reported that Eide Bailly agreed to the changes that were requested at the

suggestion of our attorney.

**Midwest Annual Meeting** – The Midwest Annual Meeting will be December 9-11.

**Director Seat** – An article will be in the next newsletter advertising for individuals interested in the open seat on the board of directors.

**Annual Meeting Date (Action)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to set the annual meeting date for April 14th with a backup date of April 21st at the Wakonda School.

**Lewis and Clark Rate for 2026 (Action)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the rate for Lewis and Clark Regional Water for 2026.

**SE Managers** – The SE Managers met on October 10th in Armour for the quarterly meeting.

**Legislative Forum** – The legislative forum has been scheduled for November 24th in Yankton at the Best Western Kelly Inn.

**Resolution to Authorize the Amendment for the 401k Plan 2 (Action)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve Resolution 2025-03 which gives authorization to Manager Larson to sign the Addendum to Adoption Agreement "A" RUS# 42003-002.

**Basin 2026 Load Forecast Resolution (Action)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to adopt the Basin 2026 Load Forecast Resolution 2025-04 as presented.

**2026 Rate Discussion** – After lengthy discussion and the presentation of information from staff, the Board reached a consensus on the direction of a rate increase for 2026. Rate tariffs will be adopted at the November meeting.

**SD Legislators** – Basin and East River will be hosting a meeting for managers and legislators at Deer Creek Generation Station on October 30th to learn more about the cooperative power supply network and ask questions about data centers and other large loads.

**Executive Session** – The board went into Executive Session at 12:39 p.m., Executive Session was adjourned at 1:32 p.m. There was no action taken.

**B. Administrative Report** – Manager of Finance and Administration Bottolffson reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Billing Activities
- Financial Forecast & Budget 2026
- Capital Credit, General Retirement
- Treasury Direct Loan Advance
- September Financials
- Work Orders & Summary of Special Equipment

*All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.*

**C. Operations Report** – Operations Manager Gauer reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Monthly department work summary
- New Services - None
- Retired Services
- September Outage Report
- Damage to Clay-Union Electric
- Service Upgrades
- Wiring

*All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.*

**Financial Report** – Manager of Finance and Administration

# YOUR CO-OP INFORMATION

Bottolfsen reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Actual to Budget
- Balance Sheet
- Interest Income
- kWh Sales Report
- Large Power
- Line Loss
- Operating Statement
- Power Bill
- Summary of Purchased Power
- Wiring Income & Expense

*All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.*

**Legal Report** – None

**Strategic Planning** – None

**Safety Meeting Minutes** – None

**Cyber Security** – The September Cyber Security report from East River IT was posted to the website for the board to review and was discussed during the meeting.

**Video and/or Meeting Reports** –

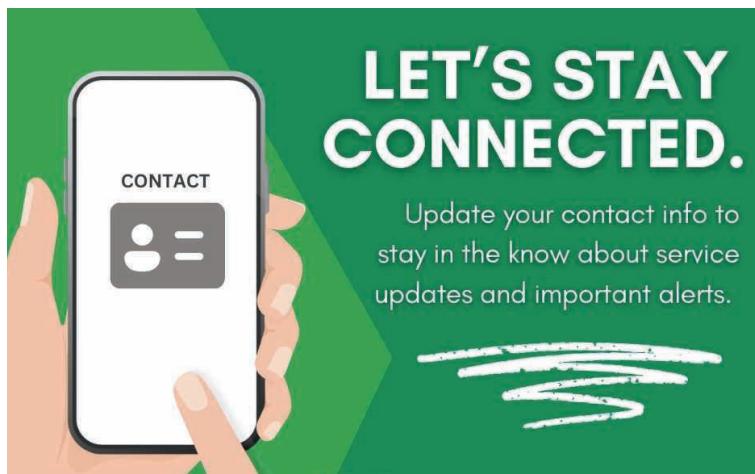
- East River Report
- East River Financials
- Basin Reports
- SDREA Reports

**Calendar** – The board reviewed the November 2025 calendar.

**Adjournment** – There being no further business, a motion was made, seconded, and carried, to adjourn the meeting at 2:22 p.m.

Thomas Larsen, President

Sara Schulte, Secretary



## Outage Reports

Cause	Date	Time	Township	Members
Equipment	11/3/2025	9:30 p.m.	Prairie Center	1
Animal	11/4/2025	2:45 p.m.	Bethal	8
Trees	11/8/2025	7:30 a.m.	Volin/Emmet	10
Trees	11/8/2025	9:40 a.m.	Fairview	24
Animal	11/11/2025	4:00 p.m.	Gayville	32
Member Caused	11/12/2025	1:00 p.m.	Volin	4

## Office Hours and Due Dates

Our office hours are Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please remember your

**PAYMENT DUE DATE is the 20<sup>th</sup> of EACH**

**MONTH**. Your payment must ARRIVE in our

office on the 20th to avoid any penalties.

Please allow mailing time as we go by the received date, **NOT the postmark**. If the 20th falls on a weekend or holiday, payment is due the following business day. If payment is still not received by the first of the following month, a \$30 collection fee will be applied and a disconnect notice will be mailed. If disconnection for nonpayment occurs, all past and current energy charges, a reconnect fee and sufficient credit deposit will be required before the meter can be reinstalled.

## FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, WE ALSO ACCEPT THESE PAYMENT OPTIONS:

### Online Billing:

[www.clayunionelectric.coop](http://www.clayunionelectric.coop)

Set up your user profile to manage your account, pay your bill and receive billing notification emails.



**Bank Draft:** Have your payment automatically deducted from your checking or savings account on the due date.



**Recurring Credit/Debit Card:** Have your payment automatically deducted from your card on the due date.



**By Phone:** Call in your credit/debit card payment.

**In Office:** We accept cash, check, money order or credit/debit card.

**By Mail:** Send check or money order with your payment slip.

**Drop Box:** Located on the right side of our main entrance at 31321 SD Hwy 19.

***There are no additional fees to use any of the above payment methods.***

Collection Fee ..... \$30

Trip Charge-Reconnect Fee

During Business Hours..... \$75

Dishonored Payment ..... \$40

**Delinquent Accounts (gross rate)**  
**10 percent on the first \$200 plus 2 percent on the balance.**



# EASEMENTS BRING SAFETY, RELIABILITY

## Why More Room Makes Sense for Co-ops, Line Crews & Members

**Jacob Boyko**

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Serving rural members means maintaining thousands of miles of power line – and finding the space to safely build and access it. At your local electric cooperative, building, maintaining and repairing thousands of miles of infrastructure is a logistical challenge, but each and every piece of the system has its role in a functioning and reliable electric grid.

That's why easements, or agreements to use and access private land, are essential for co-ops and their members. At East River Electric Power

Cooperative, the generation and transmission co-op serving 25 member distribution systems in South Dakota and Minnesota, Engineering and Planning Services Manager Jon Aus works directly with co-op members to get easements for power lines.

In 2025, most cooperatives prioritize building lines along the public right of way – the area between the road and fence lines along roadways – instead of along quarter lines like they have historically, back when rights-of-way were cluttered with telephone and other overhead lines.

"That's where we like it from an access and maintenance perspective,"

South Dakota law allows electric cooperatives to place poles along public rights-of-way without needing an easement. Shown here, East River Electric's transmission lines north of Pierre are built within the right-of-way. In cases where the rights-of-way are crowded, have obstacles, or are otherwise not suitable for poles or line work, a co-op may seek an easement outside of the right-of-way.

*Photo by Jacob Boyko*

Aus said of rights-of-way. "Nowadays, when we develop a route for a line, we pick the roads we want to zigzag down to get from Point A to Point B."

Placing infrastructure along roads improves accessibility for crews and speeds up outage response time, especially when mud or snow are a factor, Aus added. But the trade offs are a workspace limited to the shoulder and ditch and overall limited access to the infrastructure.

That's where easements make all the difference. When a co-op member allows an easement, the co-op will set poles back just several more feet away from the road right-of-way onto private land, and crews can cross behind the fence when they need to access the poles. The impact on private land is minimal, but it's a massive benefit for the line crews.

"Having an easement allows crews to work on the backside of the structures," Aus said. "If you don't get an easement and you don't have any access rights, they're stuck working everything from the ditch and the roadside."

Engineers are meticulous when mapping routes for new lines, Aus added, noting the lengthy process for engineers as they consider pole placement, obstacles, hazards and community impact.

"At the onset of any project, we're evaluating the impact of our routing," Aus continued. "Public impact is right up there on our priorities along with reliability and maintenance. We don't go down routes we foresee to have challenges with public impact."

Distribution cooperatives see similar challenges on the ground. In southwest South Dakota, Black Hills Electric Cooperative System Coordinator Jesse Sorensen aims to manage a system that's not only reliable and affordable, but also built on cooperation with members.

"Very rarely do we have someone reject giving an easement," he said. "We've had very good luck sitting down with members and explaining everything to them that there are hundreds – if not thousands – of landowners that allowed easements so we could get electricity to this property."

He continued, "The biggest concerns from landowners are about losing their trees or the aesthetic value of their property, and we'll work with landowners by rerouting lines to prevent cutting prize trees or installing lines in prime views."

At East River Electric, Aus' team fields similar questions from landowners, usually concerning specific pole placement and whether poles will interfere with field access, an approach or operation of large machinery. He says it's usually something the engineers can accommodate because ultimately, co-ops want to leave members' land as good or better than they found it.

"We'll even work with landowners to pay to replace any trees we have to remove if we obtain an easement from them," Aus said.

As the co-op steadily grows and expands its transmission system, East River Electric General Counsel Danny Brown stresses that the co-op relies on voluntary easements, and in its 75-year history has never used eminent domain to obtain an easement.

"Eminent domain is not something we ever want to use," Brown explained. "We try to educate and work with the property owners the best we can. At the end of the day, an easement is voluntary, and if we can't make it work from the right of way, we have to start thinking about changing our route."

But opting for alternate, less-efficient routes is a concession that can severely impact system reliability and leads to a higher price tag for co-op members to pay. Fortunately, Aus and Sorensen said most landowners understand the value of working with their cooperative for themselves and their community.

"There have been several times when landowners have said, 'Absolutely, bring that line through here,'" Aus recalled. "They want to improve their reliability, or they know that they just need more electricity in that area for whatever they might be doing on their property. Most of the time we're welcomed with open arms."

That willingness helps keep cooperative power moving across the countryside.



When a co-op obtains an easement to build a line along a road right-of-way, the line is placed several feet away from the right-of-way border. In this photo, the right of way border is about at the fence line, with the poles placed several feet behind the fence.

On this route, East River Electric has an easement for 30 feet behind the fence line for when line crews need to maintain or repair the line, giving crews more room to work and better access to the structures.

*Photo submitted by East River Electric.*

# WORKING TOGETHER IS POWERFUL

## Understanding the Three-Tier Co-op Structure

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

### What Is an Electric Cooperative? (Tier 1: Distribution Co-ops)

An electric cooperative is a non-profit, member-owned utility governed by a member-elected board of directors. Co-ops are different from a typical utility because they don't report to shareholders; a co-op's responsibility is solely to the people it serves.

Member-ownership keeps the co-op focused on serving the interests of the community and maintaining low costs to members. Co-ops employ democratic principles; each member has one vote, which keeps control local and shields the co-op and members from outside interests.

Your local electric cooperative owns and maintains distribution power lines to serve members throughout its territory. While electric cooperatives' territories cover almost all of South Dakota, most of the state's population lives in cities and small towns and purchase electricity from a city-owned municipal power system or a for-profit investor-owned utility.

Most of the electric distribution cooperatives in South Dakota were organized by members beginning in the 1930s and 1940s to serve the rural areas that investor-owned utilities determined would not be profitable enough to be worth serving.

Rural residents formed co-ops, going

door-to-door collecting \$5 sign-on fees – a lot of money at the time – from their neighbors to kickstart the fledgling co-ops. They applied for loans from the Rural Electrification Administration to begin construction, and by the early 1950s, most rural South Dakotans were enjoying amenities made possible by electricity.

### Who Supplies My Co-op's Power? (Tier 2: Regional G&Ts)

East River Electric Power Cooperative in Madison and Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative in Rapid City are generation and transmission (G&T) cooperatives that sell electricity to a total of 27 distribution systems in South Dakota.

East River sells electricity to 19 member systems located in eastern South Dakota and six member systems in western Minnesota, while Rushmore sells electricity to eight member systems: seven located in western South Dakota and Cam Wal Electric Cooperative serving Campbell and Walworth counties in eastern South Dakota.

Both East River and Rushmore are governed by a board of directors comprised of directors from the distribution co-ops. Therefore, each distribution co-op receives one vote on its respective G&T's board.

Beyond selling electricity, East River and Rushmore assist their member systems in other areas; East River builds and maintains transmission systems to serve its member systems and offers support for information technology, marketing, public relations and economic development. Rushmore also offers marketing, PR and IT support, along with engineering services.



Two co-op systems in South Dakota are affiliated with neither East River nor Rushmore. Rosebud Electric Cooperative, based in Gregory, and Grand Electric, based in Bison, are part of District 9 – a collection of other distribution cooperative systems in Minnesota and North Dakota that purchase their energy from multiple sources rather than from a single supplier.

### Who generates my electricity? (Tier 3: Basin Electric)

Rushmore Electric, East River Electric, and District 9 systems including Rosebud Electric and Grand Electric purchase energy from Basin Electric Power Cooperative, a G&T cooperative based in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Just like the regional G&Ts it serves, Basin is governed by a board of directors representing its member systems. There are 11 directors on Basin's board, and they know the energy industry inside and out – after all, to serve on the Basin board, the directors must also serve on their local co-op's board as well as the regional G&T's board, and are elected by their colleagues to represent the co-op, board, and its members.

Currently, Mike McQuistion of the Fort Pierre area represents his local co-op, West Central Electric Cooperative, on Rushmore's board, and represents Rushmore on Basin's board.

Kermit Pearson of the Lake City area represents his local co-op, Lake Region Electric Association, on East River's board, and represents East River on Basin's board.

The cooperative systems that comprise District 9 also elect a director from

a District 9-affiliated co-op to represent them on Basin's board. Wayne Peltier from Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative in Montevideo, Minn., represents Rosebud, Grand and the other District 9 co-ops on Basin's board.

Basin Electric was formed in 1961 by electric co-ops in the upper Midwest to generate and transmit electricity exclusively for cooperative systems to purchase. The system has grown to serve North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico.

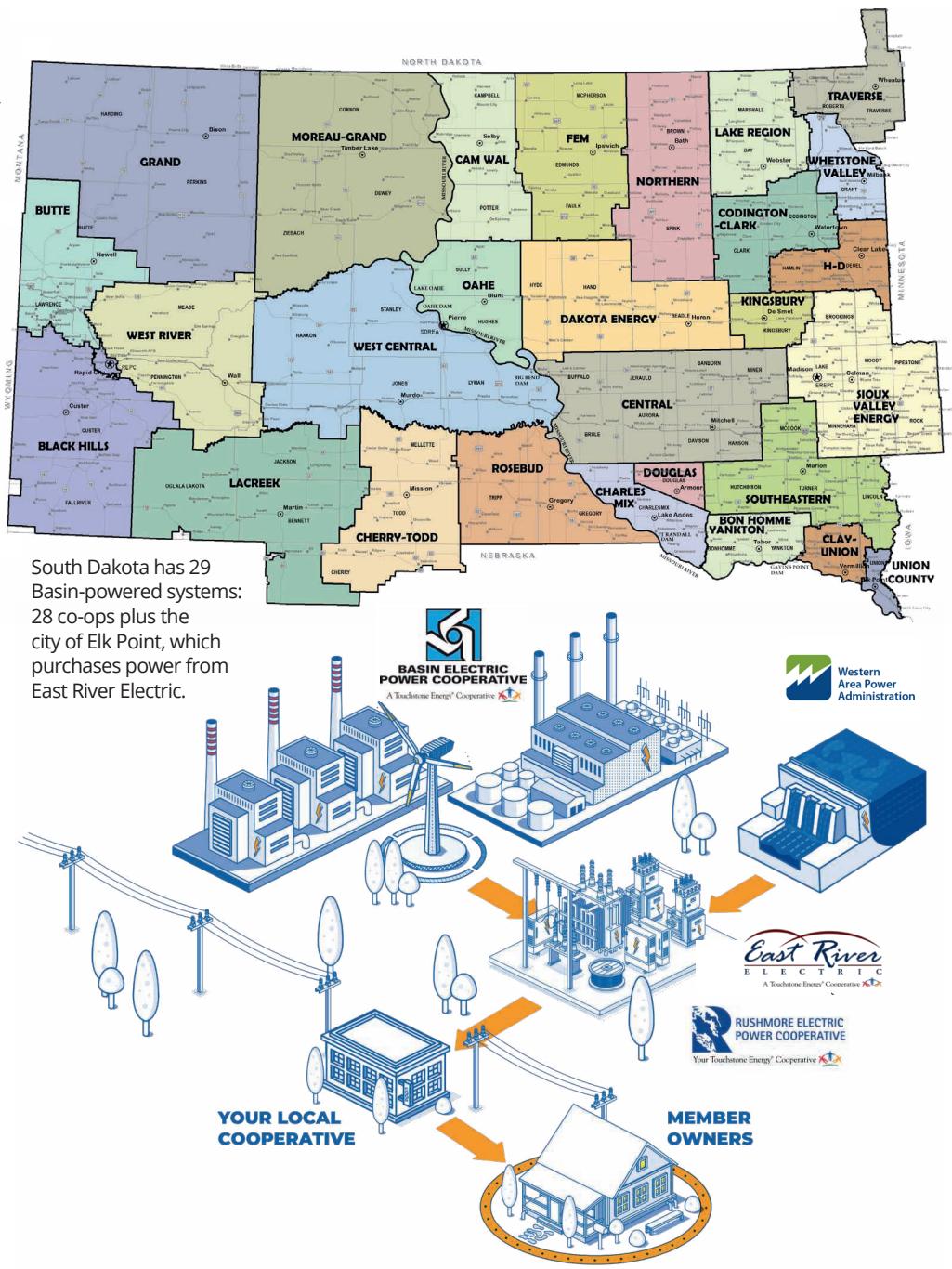
Basin Electric generates electricity using its owned and leased generation assets, which include coal, natural gas, solar, wind, oil and waste heat, with a maximum generating capacity of about 8,500 megawatts.

## Other Generation: Western Area Power Administration

East River, Rushmore and the District 9 systems also purchase an allocated amount of electricity from the Western Area Power Administration. WAPA is the power marketing administration under the U.S. Department of Energy that markets and transmits power from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-operated Missouri River dams and other generators in the western U.S.

WAPA purchases make up about 18% of East River Electric and 12% of Rushmore Electric's purchases, respectively. District 9 systems also purchase some of their electricity directly from WAPA.

Each year, WAPA transmits about 25,000 gigawatt hours of electricity across its 17,000-circuit mile transmission system. WAPA serves a 15-state region that includes North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Wyoming, Montana, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Utah, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and California.



## Basin Electric Directors Representing South Dakota



**Kermit Pearson**  
East River, Lake Region  
*Submitted Photo*



**Wayne Peltier**  
District 9, Minnesota Valley  
*Submitted Photo*



**Mike McQuistion**  
Rushmore, West Central  
*Submitted Photo*

## REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at the Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_



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.

### UNTIL DEC. 26

#### **Christmas at the Capitol**

8 a.m.-10 p.m. (Holidays Included)  
South Dakota State Capitol  
Pierre, SD  
605-773-3178  
[christmasatthecapitol.sd.gov](http://christmasatthecapitol.sd.gov)

### DEC. 20-21, 23-24, 27-28 **1880 Train Holiday Express**

Hot Chocolate, Santa  
Hill City, SD  
[www.1880train.com](http://www.1880train.com)  
605-574-2222

### DEC. 31

#### **New Year's Eve Bash**

Doors Open at 5:30 p.m.  
American Legion  
Sioux Falls, SD  
Tickets: 605-336-3470

### JAN. 6-8

#### **Dakota Farm Show**

USD Dakota Dome  
Vermillion, SD  
[www.dakotafarmshow.com](http://www.dakotafarmshow.com)

### JAN. 10

#### **Knights of Columbus Coats for Kids Bowling Tournament**

1 p.m.  
Meadowood Lanes  
3809 Sturgis Rd.  
Rapid City, SD

### JAN. 20

#### **Prohibition & the Pig**

Lake Cty. Museum Fundraiser;  
Prohibition-Era Bootlegging  
6 p.m.-7:30 p.m.  
\$60 per ticket  
The Office Bar & Grill  
Madison, SD  
605-256-5308

### JAN. 22

#### **Gentleman's Quartet: Instrumental**

7 p.m.  
Johnson Fine Arts Center  
Aberdeen, SD

### JAN. 23-24

#### **Pro Snocross Races**

Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1876

### JAN. 30-FEB. 7

**Annual Black Hills Stock Show**  
Central States Fairgrounds  
Rapid City, SD  
[www.centralstatesfairinc.com](http://www.centralstatesfairinc.com)  
605-355-3861

### FEB. 1

#### **The Great Lake County Hotdish Competition**

11:30-1:30 p.m.  
St. Thomas School Gym  
Madison, SD  
605-256-5308

### FEB. 7-8

**The Black Market/Formerly Benson's Flea Market**  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-332-6004

### FEB. 13-16

**12th Annual Frost Fest**  
Brookings, SD  
605-692-7444

### FEB. 20-22

**Winterfest**  
Fireworks, Parade of Lights,  
Bonfire, Snowshoeing  
Lead, SD  
[www.leadmethere.com/winterfest](http://www.leadmethere.com/winterfest)  
605-584-1100

### FEB. 21

**Bellator Titans**  
**Casino Night Fundraiser**

6-11 p.m.  
City Lights Bar & Event Center  
Aberdeen, SD

### FEB. 22

**C Street Brass**  
4 p.m.  
Johnson Fine Arts Center  
Aberdeen, SD

**Note:** We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.