

Rural Power

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your news
announcements to
ruralpower@kec.org.

KEC Board names Lee Tafanelli as new CEO

Major General **LEE TAFANELLI** has accepted the position as Chief Executive Officer of Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. effective on or about May 1, 2020.

Tafanelli currently serves as the Kansas Adjutant General, responsible for three primary duties: ensuring the wartime readiness of over 7,000 soldiers and airmen of the Kansas Army and Air National Guard, coordinating the overall emergency preparedness for the state's response to natural disasters and emergencies, and serving as the Homeland Security Advisor for the state of Kansas.

Tafanelli served in the Kansas House of Representatives from 2001-2005, when he took a leave from office to command the 891st Engineer Battalion in Iraq. After his deployment, he resumed his legislative post in 2006 where he served until January 2011, when he was appointed Kansas Adjutant General.

During his time in the Kansas Legislature and as Adjutant General, Tafanelli developed a deep interest and focus on issues affecting



Lee Tafanelli

rural Kansas. "I'm honored and excited to have the opportunity to lead a group that does such important work for Kansans in rural areas," he said. "I have deep respect for the complex challenges faced by KEC members who work hard everyday to provide critical and reliable service for Kansas communities."

"Major General Tafanelli has dedicated himself to public service and defending our nation," **GOVERNOR LAURA KELLY** said. "In addition to his work with the Kansas National Guard, the Adjutant General led the Kansas Department of Emergency Management, where he has been responsible for marshalling resources to communities that have been impacted by disasters such as tornadoes, flooding and more recently wildfires. His efforts and leadership have benefited Kansans statewide, and I have no doubt that he will continue this same level of commitment and dedication in his new role outside of government."

Tafanelli will replace Bruce Graham who has announced his plans to retire as CEO of KEC. Graham has 40 years of association and electric cooperative industry experience and has served as KEC CEO since 2012. He will continue to lead KEC until the transition date.

Industry, legislative updates planned for KEC Annual Meeting

The KEC Annual Meeting will kick off with two strong keynote speakers on Jan. 27: NRECA CEO **JIM MATHESON** will deliver a membership message, and **REP. ADAM SMITH**, Chairman of the Rural Revitalization Committee, will speak about major issues expected during the 2020 legislative session.

The meeting activities will be held at the Capitol Plaza Hotel and adjoining Maner Conference Center in Topeka, Jan. 25-28.

Other speakers include the following. "**TROOPER BEN**" **GARDNER**, Kansas Highway Patrol, will share his experiences using social media and will give us some great stories. **MIKE BEAM**, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Agriculture, will describe the State of Kansas Agriculture. **MIKE NASI**, a partner with Jackson Walker

LLP, will present The Truth about the Texas Market.

GERARD BRAUD, an expert in crisis communications, will share how co-ops can prepare to provide effective communications before critical times. **PHIL IRWIN**, President and CEO of Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange, will give an update.

The luncheon program features **MIKE RAYBURN** who is billed as the world's funniest guitar virtuoso. He will share simple, powerful tools that took him from playing empty bars to headlining Carnegie Hall.

The program includes G&T updates by KEPCo's **SUZANNE LANE** and Sunflower's **STUART LOWRY**. **KEITH MCNICKLE**, KEC President, and **BRUCE GRAHAM**, KEC's CEO, will report on achievements and activities in the State of the Statewide presentation.



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congrats

Doniphan selects Dan O'Brien as new manager

Doniphan Electric's board has hired a new general manager. **DAN O'BRIEN** took his new position at the co-op on Jan. 2.



Dan O'Brien

O'Brien has 32 years of electric cooperative experience. He began his career at Kaw Valley Electric Cooperative in 1979 as Manager of Member Services, and served as General Manager from 1989 to 2011.

O'Brien replaces James Lednicki who had served as the general manager since June of 2017.

Griffin joins Flint Hills staff

TRAVIS GRIFFIN has joined the staff at Flint Hills RECA as the Member Services Manager.

Previously, Griffin served as the Director of Member Services for Butler Electric Co-op for the past 13 years.

jobmarket

KEC helps to promote co-op careers by listing openings on the careers section of the KEC website.

Visit <https://www.kec.coop/careers> to learn more about the following positions.

- ▶ 4 Rivers has linemen positions open.
- ▶ FreeState has multiple openings.
- ▶ KEPCo has an opening for an Administrative Assistant-Receptionist.
- ▶ Pioneer has an opening for a Communications Specialist.
- ▶ Sunflower has multiple openings.
- ▶ Wheatland has multiple openings.

Send your open position listings to ruralpower@kec.org. Positions will be posted on the website for one month, unless otherwise directed by the co-op.

co-opcalendar

JANUARY

- 17 **Sunflower Board of Directors Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 25-28 **KEC Annual Meeting**, Capitol Plaza Hotel, Topeka
- 28 **KEC's 5 Steps to Effective Crisis Communications workshop**, 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m., Topeka
- 28 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka

FEBRUARY

- 18 **KEC Day at the Capitol**, Topeka
- 19-20 **KEPCo Board of Trustees Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka
- 21 **Sunflower Board Meeting**, Sunflower Headquarters, Hays
- 27 **MDM Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka

upcomingtraining

KEC offers Crisis Communications workshop

It has been said that it can take a lifetime to earn a good reputation, but only minutes to lose it.

Crisis communications expert **GERARD BRAUD** has developed a workshop that will reveal the secret to protecting your co-op's reputation and revenue, which requires meticulous planning before an event, constant preparedness throughout the year, and rapid response at the first sign of trouble.

Braud will give an overview during his presentation at the KEC Annual Meeting on Jan. 28 in Topeka. Follow-

ing adjournment of the meeting, Braud will then facilitate an in-depth workshop from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., where board members and staff will learn about a battle tested, five-step process to help cooperatives prepare for and respond to any situation before it turns into a full-blown crisis.

Registration is \$40 per attendee and includes lunch. Deadline to register is Jan. 17. Further details about the training event were emailed to the cooperatives.

For more information, please contact Shana Read at sread@kec.org.

KEC plans 2020 HR Summit

The 2020 HR Summit will be at the Wichita Marriott. This event will include a full day of training on April 21, and a half-day on April 22.

Topics for the training will include best administrative practices for documentation and personnel files, problem avoidance and risk management, creating job descriptions, effective on-board-

ing procedures, difficult conversations and change management, RUS Civil Rights Compliance Overview, and an NRECA benefits update.

To make a hotel reservation, call the Wichita Marriott before April 6 at 316-651-0333, and ask for the "KEC HR Summit" rate of \$137. Meeting registration will be emailed in March.

Save-the-Date: KMSDA Meeting

The Kansas Member Services Directors Association (KMSDA) 2020 Spring meeting will be March 25-27 at the Courtyard by Marriott at Old Town in Wichita.

To make a hotel reservation, call 866-522-8909 by March 4. Ask for the "KMSDA Block" rate of \$128 (which does not include breakfast and parking).

Detailed program information will be emailed closer to the meeting dates.

Save-the-Date: 2020 IT Summit

The 2020 KEC IT Summit will be from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on April 30, and from 8 a.m. to noon on May 1 at the Courtyard by Marriott at Old Town in Wichita.

To make a hotel reservation, call 866-522-8909 by April 9. Ask for the "KEC IT Summit Block" rate of \$136 (which includes breakfast and parking).

Detailed program information will be emailed closer to the meeting dates.

Charles Ayers to be inducted into the Kansas Cooperative Council Hall of Fame

CHARLES AYERS, a retired board member from Wheatland, will be inducted into the Kansas Cooperative Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame, sponsored by the Kansas Cooperative Council, is valued for recognizing the contributions of co-op pioneers and honoring those who have gone “above and beyond the call” in advancing the cooperative philosophy.

Ayers has given decades of service to electric cooperatives. He served on the Wheatland Board from 1986 to 2017. During that time, he also served on the boards for Sunflower, Western Fuels Association, ACES Power Marketing, and the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC).

He was nominated for his advocacy, innovation, and vision that has



Charles Ayers

had lasting effects on the electric cooperatives in Kansas.

“Charles lobbied hard for the Sunflower Holcomb 2 Plant, played a major role in the restructuring of the Sunflower RUS debt, and helped champion the change to the Retail Service Act that provided for the equitable protection for electric cooperatives when municipalities seek to annex electric cooperative certified service territory,” said **WES CAMPBELL**, Sunflower Board Chair.

“Charles was instrumental in the purchase by Sunflower and its members of the Aquila electric system in 2006,” Campbell continued. “All of these accomplishments have helped to ensure the long-term viability of Sunflower and its members.”

“As we worked together with legislators and regulators, he never lost his focus on the individual farmer, rancher, or business person that we were seeking to serve,” said **EARL WATKINS**, retired Sunflower President and CEO, who nominated Ayers for the Hall of Fame award.

Ayers will be inducted into the Hall of Fame on March 11 in Wichita.

Also to be inducted is **STEVE RIEGEL**, who served as Board Chairman of Ford Kingsdown Co-op and who currently serves on the Board of Directors of CHS, a leading global agribusiness company owned by farmers, ranchers, and co-ops across the United States.

After a reception and dinner, Ayers and Riegel will be honored for their commitment to the growth and development of the cooperative movement.

The two inductees' biographical information will be placed alongside other honorees in the Kansas Cooperative Hall of Fame showcase display at the Kansas State Fairgrounds. Located in the Pride of Kansas Building, this permanent display highlights the achievements of Kansas' great co-op leaders and preserves co-op history. It also plays a significant role in educating others about the uniqueness of the cooperative business model.

Since it was established in 1999, 47 individuals from all types of cooperatives have been inducted into the Kansas Cooperative Hall of Fame. Nominations for potential inductees are accepted each December.

KEC to host 2020 Day at the Capitol

KEC invites co-op representatives to attend the Day at the Capitol, scheduled for Feb. 18, 2020, at the Kansas Statehouse in Topeka.

Please plan to join in the all-day event including a luncheon meal with legislators, committee meetings, special presentations from legislative leadership, and an evening dinner with the greater Kansas City legislative delegation that didn't have an opportunity to attend a 2019 Co-ops Vote event.

Notifications will be sent throughout the day on the KEC app. To download the app, search for “Kansas Electric Cooperatives” using either the App Store or Google Play. Members will log in using the email they use for KEC.

The Day at the Capitol event will be in addition to KEC's annual Legislative Reception, which is held in conjunction with the January Annual Meeting.

KEC has emailed hotel information

and other details directly to the cooperative managers. RSVP to Carol Dorr at 785-478-4554 or cdorr@kec.org.

The 2020 Legislature began Jan. 13. Legislators typically spend the weekdays from Jan. 13 to April 3 in Topeka, and then return home for the weekends where they can be found at legislative coffees or town hall events.

Throughout April during what is known as first adjournment, legislators continue to hold events back home while they wait for final consensus revenue estimate numbers. Those numbers assist in finalizing the state's budget and provide an opportunity to make any necessary adjustments during the veto session in Topeka on April 27.

The veto session typically runs until the legislature hits the 90th day, which is currently slated for May 13, but can end earlier or later. Legislators will anticipate the end the legislative session so they can focus on the 2020 campaign trail.

Q What is KS Energy Facts?

A KS Energy Facts is an online resource that has information about some of the policy discussions that are occurring at the statehouse. It is a great resource for co-op staff and board members to build talking points about the issues that Kansas legislators might be hearing about... [READ MORE](#).

Each issue of *Rural Power* will feature an answer to a question or a solution to a problem provided by KEC to a member cooperative. Past answers are listed on [KEC's website](#).

Asked & Answered

Sub. SB 69 study of Kansas retail rates released

On Jan. 8, London Economics International LLC (LEI) released its study of retail rates of Kansas electric utilities. The document is available online at <http://bit.ly/sb69study>.

LEI was retained by the Kansas Legislative Coordinating Council to perform a study of retail rates of Kansas electric utilities as mandated by Substitute for Senate Bill 69 passed by the 2019 legislature.

The stated purpose of the study is to assist future legislative and regulatory efforts in developing an electric policy that includes regionally competitive rates and reliable electric service.

The 324-page report recognized that the current electric cooperative ratemaking process is in the public interest and ensures consumer interests are primary considerations.

"We are pleased the report validates what we have long-known in the electric cooperative

community – that our member-owned, member-controlled structure works for the benefit of those we serve," noted **LESLIE KAUFMAN**, KEC Vice President of Government Relations and Legal Counsel.

The report recommends several near term steps that the consultants believe could gradually achieve regionally competitive electricity rates over time.

"While retail choice is not on the near term list, the consultants include choice as a possible way to lower rates in the state," said **BRUCE GRAHAM**, KEC CEO.

"We certainly think the down-sides of retail wheeling were not adequately detailed in the report, but we have anticipated that possibility and are ready to respond to legislators and through social media with the message that too often, residential and small consumers are losers under retail choice, not winners."

Lyon-Coffey, Radiant electric cooperatives become 4 Rivers

As of Jan. 1, the consolidation of Lyon-Coffey and Radiant became official and the co-ops are now operating as 4 Rivers Electric Cooperative, Inc.

4 Rivers Electric has offices in Lebo, Fredonia, and Emporia, serving more than 7,200 members and 13,000 meters in 15 counties in southeast and eastern-central Kansas. The consolidation will save money and provide better service for the membership.

"The employees have done an enormous amount of work to get us to this point – consolidating mapping, billing, accounting, safety rules, computer systems, and others," said 4 Rivers General Manager/CEO **DENNIS SVANES**. "The Board of Trustees has also worked hard to get the bylaws and policies in place for 4 Rivers. We still have work to do to get everything finalized, but it's exciting to see our plans become reality."

Energy internships in Rome offered by Enel Foundation

A new cooperation project between Enel Foundation and the Fulbright Program has resulted in four internships to U.S. students in the fields of electricity, energy transition, and climate mitigation. The internships will be carried out at Enel Foundation in Rome.

Students who wish to apply for internships can check criteria and submit applications online at <http://www.fulbright.it/saeg/> until Feb. 14.

Applications are open for candidates with all degree levels with at least two years of studies in the electricity sector in technical, policy, financial, or legal fields.

The grant period is May through July 2020. Tasks include providing support to senior researchers.

Co-ops connect with members at annual farm show

Three electric co-ops joined forces to sponsor a booth at the Topeka Farm Show, Jan. 7-9. 4 Rivers, Bluestem, and FreeState used the opportunity to interact with members and the public.

Members who stopped at the co-op booth were invited to learn about the consolidation between Lyon-Coffey and Radiant to form 4 Rivers, and visit with cooperative staff about residential energy efficiency tips, cooperative programs, and renewable resources.



Representing co-ops at the event (from left): Mike Tweedy, 4 Rivers; Matt Lambert and Corey Calvert, FreeState; and Kevin Heptig, Bluestem.

Members could also register to win one of three Instant Pot pressure cookers donated by KEPCo.

More than 300 exhibiting companies participated in the event that drew more than 22,000 attendees at the

Sunflower, Mid-Kansas Electric merge

Sunflower Electric Power Corporation announced its merger with Mid-Kansas Electric Company Inc. effective Jan. 1, 2020. The merger of the two cooperatively operated, wholesale electric utilities incorporates Mid-Kansas into Sunflower.

Regulatory filings for the merger were submitted in Aug. 2018 to the Kansas Corporation Commission, which approved the merger in March 2019. Sunflower and Mid-Kansas also filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to obtain approval to combine transmission zones and rates.

In 2005, Sunflower's six member-cooperatives formed Mid-Kansas to bid on the sale of Aquila's Kansas Electric Network properties. Member-owners of Mid-Kansas include five distribution cooperatives and one wholly owned subsidiary of a distribution cooperative that serve in Kansas. Mid-Kansas began operation on April 1, 2007.

The intent of Sunflower's and Mid-Kansas' member-owners has been to merge the two generation and transmission providers to capitalize on synergies and offer added value to their members. Savings will result from operational efficiencies and access to lower financial lending rates due greater financial stability of the merged entities.

Kansas Expocentre in Topeka.

The Topeka Farm Show celebrated its 31st anniversary this year. The electric cooperatives began attending the show in the early 1990s and have had a presence every year since.