

Rural Power

INSIDE

- 2 | Calendar
- 2 | NRECA Legislative Conference goes virtual
- 3 | KEC announces retirements, staff changes

Please send
your news
announcements to
ruralpower@kec.org.

Chairman Seiwert presents 80th anniversary tribute to KEC

KEC received special recognition at the Feb. 11 meeting of the House Committee on Energy, Utilities & Telecommunications. Energy Chair **JOE SEIWERT** (R-Pretty Prairie) presented KEC CEO **LEE TAFANELLI** with a House Tribute commemorating KEC's 80th anniversary.

Through the tribute, the House of Representatives congratulated KEC on eighty years of service to member cooperatives. The document stated, "In recognition for the electric co-op's commitment to power homes, businesses, and dreams."

Tafanelli provided a brief overview of both KEC and electric co-ops at the committee meeting. He described to the legislators how the cooperative business model is centered on consumer ownership. Tafanelli also noted the unique characteristics of co-op governance and the co-ops' mission of providing safe, reliable, and affordable electric service.



During the Feb. 11 meeting of the House Committee on Energy, Utilities & Telecommunications, Chairman Joe Seiwert (right) presents KEC CEO Lee Tafanelli (center) with an 80th anniversary tribute while Vice Chair Mark Schreiber (left) and Ranking Member Annie Kuether (on screen) look on.

Unprecedented winter weather puts cooperatives on alert

Due to an unprecedented weather event and subsequent Southwest Power Pool (SPP) energy alerts this week, Kansas electric cooperatives were notified to be prepared for rolling or controlled outages and to promote energy conservation.

The SPP, which balances electricity production and use for a 14-state region including Kansas, declared an Energy Emergency Alert (EEA) Level 3 just hours after issuing a Level 2 alert on Feb. 15. The Level 3 declaration required the SPP to direct its member companies to prepare to implement controlled interruptions of service if necessary.

Kansas electric cooperatives asked their members to conserve energy wherever safely possible to prevent worsening system conditions that could impact a broader area or have longer-lasting effects.

The record-breaking cold also strained natural gas supplies. The cold weather froze off natural gas production, making less gas available for delivery to customers.

"We are facing several critical days where both electric and natural gas supplies will be extremely tight," said **LEE TAFANELLI**, KEC CEO. "By reducing power usage where safely possible, we can help protect the integrity and reliability of the electric grid."

KEC staff provided resources for member-cooperatives to use in communicating with their membership, including news releases and social media messaging. For more information, visit www.kec.coop.

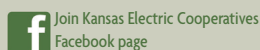
Day at Capitol event postponed

As a result of the extended weather event, KEC postponed the virtual *Day at the Capitol*, originally scheduled for Feb. 16, 2021.

"In light of the State of Disaster Emergency regarding energy supply, and the ongoing alerts from SPP, we postponed our virtual event," said **LESLIE KAUFMAN**, Vice President of Government Relations and Legal Counsel. "We will certainly look for other opportunities for legislative engagement."



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
PO Box 4267
Topeka, KS 66604-0267
www.kec.coop



NRECA Legislative Conference goes virtual

Electric cooperative leaders are invited to meet online in April to discuss priority legislative issues and hear from members of Congress and administration officials.

NRECA will convene the 2021 Legislative Conference in an online format. The program will include elements that have always made the Legislative Conference a valuable opportunity for leading advocates in our electric cooperative movement to directly engage with elected officials and one another.

Virtual briefings on priority policy issues and training for “virtual advocacy” will be conducted on April 19 in preparation for online meetings with members of Congress and administration officials. On April 20-23, “virtual advocacy” meetings will be coordinated with elected representatives and staff.

KEC conducts communications survey

KEC member co-op staff, managers, and trustees are being asked to share their thoughts in a new survey to help KEC improve its communication. KEC strives to find ways to communicate more effectively and efficiently with each of its co-op member groups, including CEOs and managers, department leaders, and trustees. Those who complete the short survey by the Feb. 22 deadline will be entered into a drawing for one of four \$25 gift certificates. For more information, email Vicki Estes, vestes@kec.org.

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.

- ▶ Lane-Scott seeks warehouse position.
- ▶ Sunflower 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

FEBRUARY

- 23 **Nemaha-Marshall Annual Meeting**, Axtell American Legion, Axtell, 12:45 p.m.
- 24 **MDM Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka, 10 a.m.
- 25 **Brown-Atchison Annual Meeting**, drive-in meeting, Horton Fairgrounds, Horton, 10:15 a.m.

MARCH

- 4 **CoBank Mid-Plains Region Virtual Customer Meeting**, virtual
- 5 **KEC Legislative Call**, virtual, 2 p.m.
- 9-10 **KEC Committee Meetings**, virtual
- 11 **KEC Board of Trustees Meeting**, hybrid meeting, Wichita Marriott, 12:30 p.m.
- 12 **KEC Legislative Call**, virtual, 2 p.m.
- 17 **Sunflower Board Meeting**, hybrid Sunflower Headquarters, Hays and via Microsoft Teams, 8:30 a.m.
- 18 **KEPCo Board Meeting**, hybrid meeting, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka, 10 a.m.
- 19 **KEC Legislative Call**, virtual, 2 p.m.
- 23-24 **Online NRECA Directors Conference**
- 25 **MDM Meeting**, KEPCo Headquarters, Topeka, 10 a.m.
- 26 **KEC Legislative Call**, virtual, 2 p.m.
- 30 **Heartland Annual Meeting**, drive-in meeting, Heartland headquarters, Girard, 6 p.m.

Co-op board members attend training workshops

Over the span of four days, 74 total participants representing 18 electric cooperative systems attended a newly-developed directors course hosted by KEC.

From Feb. 8 to 11, **BRYAN SINGLETARY** facilitated 971.1 *Governance Challenges of the Evolving Distribution Cooperative*.

The course focused on different ways of thinking, data collection, and analysis at the board level so that boards are able to fulfill their oversight responsibilities and strategic vision.

“In today’s era of the political divide, it is easy to make emotion-based decisions,” Singletary said. “This course details a process that helps boards make decisions that are data driven.”

The courses were held at Victory’s



Above: Bryan Singletary kicks off the week of courses at Victory Electric on Feb. 8. Right: Singletary facilitates the virtual board leadership course from KEC’s headquarters on Feb. 11.



headquarters on Feb. 8, DSO’s headquarters on Feb. 9, and at 4 Rivers’ headquarters on Feb. 10. The series ended with a virtual option on Feb. 11.

KEC plans to schedule additional board training opportunities later this year. The NRECA Directors Conference will be held online March 23-24.

upcoming training

KEC to offer virtual HR Summit in April

The 2021 HR Summit will be offered online through morning sessions on April 6-9.

Topics for the training will include an update of employment law, how to protect your employees from fraudulent unemployment claims, resources for onboarding new employees and keeping

existing employees engaged, an NRECA benefits update, and a member-driven roundtable discussion on local issues.

Program details and registration information will be emailed to the cooperatives as we near the event dates. For more information, email Shana Read, sread@kec.org.

KEC announces retirements, staff changes

KEC recently announced several staff changes.

CHARLOTTE PROVO-BLENDEN, manager of administrative services, will be retiring after 45 years of service. Her last day will be Feb. 26.

In addition to the distinguished member service she provided within the state, Provo-Blenden was also appointed from 2012 to 2015 to NRECA's Executive & Administrative Professionals Advisory Council.

Also retiring at the end of February is **BOB HALL**, KEC's director of finance. Joining KEC in August 2012, Hall used his financial expertise to help KEC advance its financial position by improving the accounting structure and working with the board of trustees on short- and long-term financial planning.

CAROL DORR has been promoted to manager of administrative services. Dorr first worked for KEC from 1991 to 1999 as Rural TV assistant and then as administrative assistant. She left KEC briefly but returned in 2006 as executive

secretary.

MINDI PFANNENSTIEL joined KEC on Feb. 15 as director of finance and HR. She most recently worked for the Sports Car Club of America, in Topeka, first serving as manager of accounting and HR from 2002 until 2015 when she was promoted to senior director of finance and administration.

Pfannenstiel has an appreciation for and understanding of the electric cooperative business. She began her career at KEC initially working

part time before being hired full time to support multiple departments with the organization. She then went to Kansas Electric Power Cooperative, Inc., (KEPCo) where she worked in several capacities including manager of accounting and HR.

Pfannenstiel earned a bachelor's degree in organizational leadership and management from Friends University, Wichita, and is a member of the Society of Human Resources Management.



Charlotte Provo-Blenden



Carol Dorr



Bob Hall



Mindi Pfannenstiel

Co-op managers retiring after long co-op careers

Two electric cooperative managers are retiring with a combined 73 years of service.

After 31 years, Butler's CEO/manager **DALE SHORT** will retire on Feb. 28, 2021. Short began his co-op career in 1989 as the general manager of the co-op subsidiary Regional Media Corporation (RMC). At that time, RMC sold satellite dishes and cable TV service. In 1996, Short was promoted to the role of assistant manager and in 2000 became CEO/manager.

Throughout Short's tenure, the co-op's accomplishments include a rich history of safety, the development of an innovative electric rate, and the launch of the Velocity internet project.

Short served on KEPCo's board since 2003, and was president from 2019-2020. He also served as District 7 representative to the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative Board of Directors.

CHUCK LOOK, who retired in January, remembers his first day at Prairie Land on June 19, 1978. He only knew how to shovel dirt, tamp poles, and roll wire. Since that time, Look served in a variety of roles at the cooperative until 2019 when he was named CEO.

"The one thing that has stayed the same is the quality of the people that work here," Look said, reflecting on his 42 years at the co-op. "Some of the best people I've ever met are the people we serve."

KEC Auxiliary names Hampton, Heglin as \$1,000 scholarship winners

At the KEC Annual Meeting on Jan. 26, the winners of the inaugural KEC Auxiliary scholarship program were announced.

The winners of the scholarships are **ADISON HAMPTON**, sponsored by Ninnescah, and **SLATER HEGLIN**, sponsored by Pioneer. Each has earned a \$1,000 scholarship.

Hampton attended the 2017 Youth Tour, the 2018 Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp, and returned to camp as an ambassador in 2019. She is currently a sophomore at the University of Kansas.

Hampton said, "I am so blessed to have received all these life-changing opportunities and I will always have a special place in my heart for both KEC, and my hometown co-op, Ninnescah."

Heglin attended the 2018 Youth Tour and is a sophomore at Ft. Hays State University.

"Having the opportunity of a lifetime as a Youth Tour delegate in 2018, and now as a KEC Auxiliary Scholarship recipient, the 7 Cooperative Principles have been instilled in my daily life. These life-long principles have proven to be successful, both in the classroom and through my servant-leadership activities in the community," Heglin said. "I hope to have the opportunity to support and give back to KEC and Pioneer Electric, as these two presti-



Adison Hampton



Slater Heglin

gious organizations have given so much to me already. Thank you for supporting the leaders of today and for inspiring the leaders of tomorrow."

The KEC Auxiliary scholarship program

provides two \$1,000 scholarships to college students who participated in either the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour or the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp. Applicants must have been sponsored by a KEC member co-op and they must have completed at least one semester at an accredited university, college, or trade school as a full-time student.