



Photo: Terri Barrett, March Calendar Photo Contest Winner

Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

March 2024

Manager's Article *by Jenny Stryhn, General Manager*

As member-owners of Agralite Electric Cooperative, your connection with the cooperative goes beyond being a member; it's about actively participating in the energy that powers our community. Your input, ideas, and participation are crucial for our success and the well-being of our cooperative. By getting involved, you not only contribute to the cooperative's vitality, but also have the opportunity to make a lasting impact on the services and benefits we provide.

This month, Agralite will be hosting our new Power Hour events in Clinton and Swift Falls. These new events provide you, our member-owners, the opportunity to meet and interact with directors and cooperative staff, ask questions about your electric cooperative, share your feedback, and talk with other members of the cooperative in a casual environment. We will discuss where the cooperative is at on our headquarters facility, member programs, and much more.

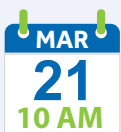
We hope to see you at these events. Together, we can electrify positive change and continue to power the future.



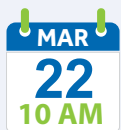
2024 Power Hour Events

Do you want to meet the cooperative's new CEO, discuss the recent rate adjustment, or ask questions about our plans for the cooperative headquarters? Join us for our new 2024 Power Hour events. 1320400 Power Hour events provide members with the opportunity to meet their directors and staff, ask questions, and mingle with other co-op members in a casual environment. It is a time to hear what is happening at your local electric cooperative including member programs, work plan projects, and the financial health of the cooperative.

Upcoming Power Hour Events



CHS
31999 US 75
Clinton, MN



Camp Lake Town Hall
Danelz Ave.
Swift Falls, MN
(Next to Brink's Beer Joint)

EMPOWERING

communities with
innovative, sustainable
energy solutions

FOR OVER

80 YEARS

CONTENTS

Page 1 ► Manager's Article, Power Hour Events

Page 2 ► Director Nominations Now Open For Districts 1 & 2, Find Your Account Number And Win, Energy Saving Tip

Page 3 ► Clearing The Path To Reliability, 3 Ways To Help Limit Tree Trimming

Page 4 ► 2024 Agralite Scholarship, A Balanced Team For Reliability, A Diverse Fuel Mix Is A Slam Dunk For Reliable Electricity

Page 5 ► Cogeneration - Annual Notification To Membership, Average Prices For Residential Electricity, Cold Weather Rule

Page 6 ► Board Meeting Minutes, Storm Safety Fill-in-the-Blank

Agralite Electric Co-op

We're member-owned!

320 US-12, Benson, MN

(320) 843-4150

1-800-950-8375

www.agralite.coop

 Like us on Facebook



Office Hours

8:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.



Touchstone Energy®

Agralite is a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative.



Find your account number and win a \$100 credit!

If your account number (as it appears on your monthly electric bill) is one of the [four account numbers](#) hidden in this issue, give our office a call by the end of the month and you will receive a \$100 bill credit. If more than one member finds their account number in a single issue, \$100 will be split equally amongst them.

Congratulations to

Beth Burmeister, Michael Bender, and Shane Rust for finding their account numbers in the January Newsletter.

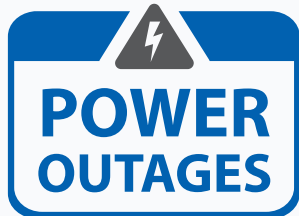
Energy Saving Tip:

Lengthen the life of your clothes dryer with regular cleaning.



Clean the lint filter after every load. It improves air circulation and safety. Check the lint trap opening to ensure it's clean. Use a vacuum to remove any lint that's fallen inside the opening.

If you use dryer sheets, check the lint filter for residue buildup. Remove any residue with hot water and a nylon brush or toothbrush. 1291400 Over time, dryer sheets can leave a film on filter, which can affect the performance of the motor.



**Call Day or Night
1.888.884.3887**

[Do not call the office for outages](#)

March Energy Payment is due April 20.*
*We accept Visa, Discover & Mastercard.

Director Nominations Now Open For Districts 1 & 2

Would you like to serve as a Director on the Agralite Electric Cooperative Board for your district? Agralite Electric Cooperative is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors elected by our membership. The cooperative's service territory is divided into seven districts with each district represented by a director who resides in that district. Directors elected serve a three-year term.

This year, we will have an election for directors for Districts 1 and 2.

District 1 includes the townships of: Almond, Upper Prior, Lower Prior, Malta, Otre, Big Stone, Upper Odessa, Lower Odessa, and Ortonville.

District 2 includes the townships of: Donnelly, Rendsville, Swan Lake, Pepperton, Morris, Framnas, Baker, Scott, Everglade, Eldorado, Graceville, and Moonshine.

Any member meeting the qualifications as specified in the Bylaws of Agralite Electric Cooperative may become a candidate for election to the Board by submitting a written petition for nomination with the signatures of no less than 15 members who are residents of the district for which the election is being held. All voting will be done by mail. Ballots will be mailed to all Agralite voting members on record in these districts before the Annual Meeting. The election takes place at the Annual Meeting on June 4, 2024.

Please call 320-843-4150 or stop by our office if you have questions on the nominating process or about becoming a director, and to pick up a petition for nomination.

Petitions are due to the office no later than 4:30 pm on Thursday, April 25th, 2024.

AGRALITE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS PETITION FOR NOMINATION

To: Jeff Hufford, Board Secretary

I _____, would like to be a candidate to serve as a director for Agralite Electric Cooperative representing District No. _____. I hereby certify that I meet the requirements set forth in Article III, Section 2 of the Bylaws of the Cooperative and I request that my name be placed on the ballot that will be mailed to the members with the notice of the annual meeting of the Cooperative to be held on June 4, 2024. I respectfully file this petition with a minimum of fifteen (15) members of the Cooperative who are residents of District No. _____ and who support my candidacy.

Signature of Candidate

We, the undersigned, certify that we are members of Agralite Electric Cooperative and that we reside in District No. _____. We are familiar with the requirement for serving as a director of the Cooperative and we believe that the above-named candidate meets the requirements to become and/or remain a director of Agralite Electric Cooperative representing District No. _____. By our signatures below we show our support for this Petition for Nomination. We further attest that, to the best of our knowledge and belief, the above-named candidate is a member of Agralite Electric Cooperative and is a resident of District No. ____.

Printed Name	Signature	Address	Phone #	Date
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Clearing The Path To Reliability

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. That's why Agralite Electric Cooperative strives 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.

Reliability

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 can be attributed to overgrown vegetation. This is why you sometimes see Agralite crews or contractors out in the community trimming trees near power lines. Our trimming crews have been trained and certified based on the latest industry standards.

In fact, all U.S. electric utilities are required to trim trees that grow too close to power lines. Scheduled trimming throughout the year keeps lines clear from overgrown or dead limbs that are likely to fall, and we are better able to prepare for severe weather events. Plus, we all know it's more cost-effective to undertake preventative maintenance than it is to make repairs after the fact.

Safety

Working near power lines can be dangerous, and we care about your safety as well as the safety of our lineworkers. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose a grave danger to families. If children can reach those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone. Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor such as a tree.

Any tree or branch that falls across a power line can become hazardous. A proactive approach reduces the potential for fallen trees during severe weather events and helps prevent complicated power restorations and dangerous situations for lineworkers.

Affordability

As a co-op, Agralite always strives to keep costs down for our members. If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can become 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.



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch that's dangerously close to overhead lines, please let us know by contacting our office at 320-843-4150.

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.

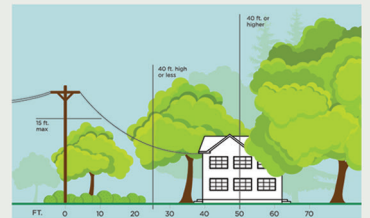
3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead powerlines?

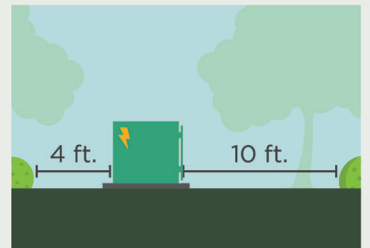
We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them.

Here's how you can help:

- 1. Plant trees in the right place.** Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



- 2. Don't block pad-mounted transformers.** Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.



- 3. Report dangerous branches.** If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.



Trimming improves safety for all. Let's work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.

2024 Agralite Scholarship Qualify? Please Apply!

Agralite Electric Cooperative is entering its 9th year of its annual scholarship program. This program is funded in part from unclaimed capital credits and in part through administration proceeds from the Rural Economic Development Loan program. This program is available to the four-county region that Agralite provides service to—Big Stone, Pope, Stevens, and Swift counties. New this year, the cooperative will award ten \$2,000 scholarships. Two of the scholarship awards are intended for persons interested in becoming an electrician or electrical lineworker. Applicants who applied for the Basin Electric Power Cooperative scholarship may also apply for the Agralite scholarship. Winners will be drawn randomly pending a completed application.

How Do I Apply?

Obtain forms and applications from your school counselor, the Agralite Electric Cooperative office, or www.agralite.coop.

The completed application and all other necessary information must be returned to Agralite Electric Cooperative

No later than April 5th, 2024.

A Balanced Team For Reliability

Historically, successful basketball teams play well consistently and feature players with varying abilities. Some are better at shooting three-pointers, while some are skilled in defense. Having a balanced mix of skills makes the team a powerhouse on the court. The way to keep electricity reliable is a bit like that, too.

The power team first requires a foundation of consistent sources that can be put in the game any time they're needed. 1616801 Having enough "always available" fuel sources, like natural gas and coal, can ensure consistent power generation.

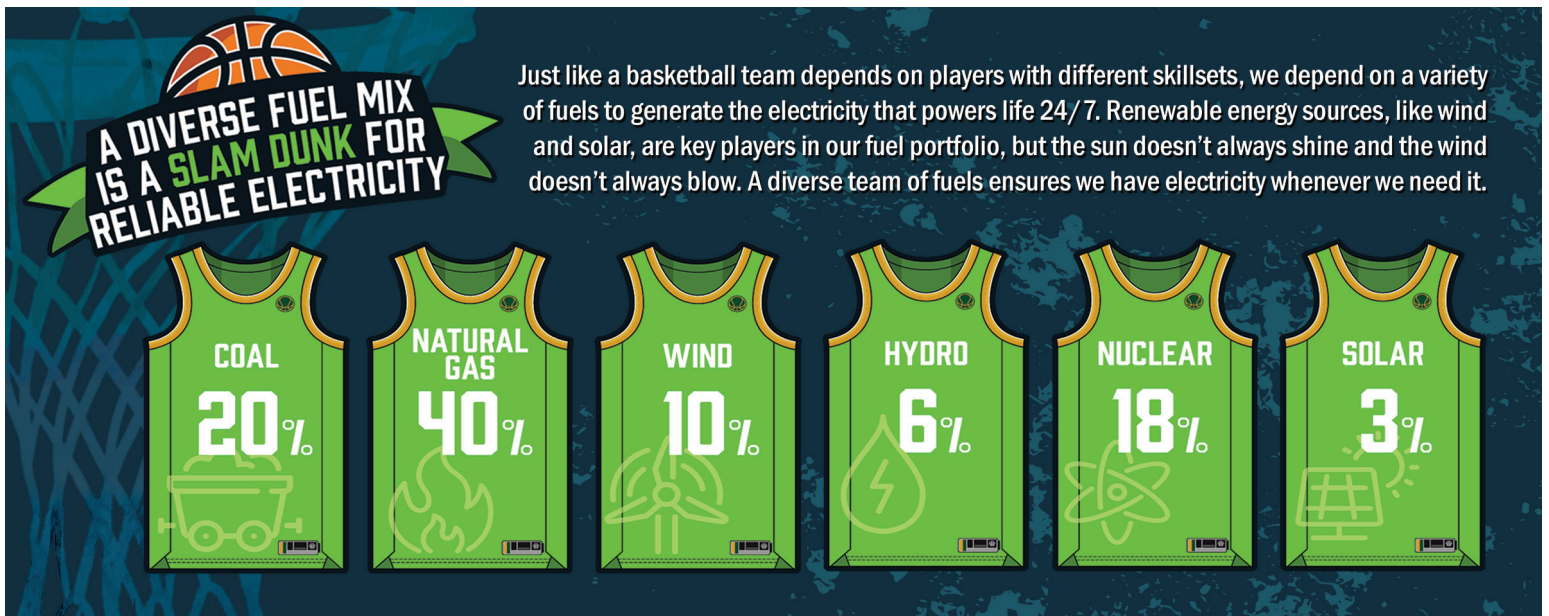
Just like a team needs different players for different situations, our power grid requires multiple sources to keep the grid running. Relying solely on one player to win every game is not an effective strategy—if they get injured, you'll likely lose. Similarly, using a single fuel source for electricity generation poses a significant risk to energy reliability. Natural disasters, geopolitical tensions, or unforeseen disruptions can severely impact the supply chain of a particular fuel. A diverse mix of energy sources acts as a safeguard, ensuring that the grid remains operational even in the face of unexpected challenges.

A diverse energy mix also enhances grid flexibility by accommodating the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources like solar and wind. Think of solar power like a team's inconsistent three-point shooter. It's awesome when the sun is shining bright, but what if it's nighttime or a cloudy day? That's where the other players, like wind, hydro, nuclear, natural gas, and coal can step up and keep the team scoring.

Diverse fuel sources contribute to the stability and reliability of the electric grid. The different sources have varying characteristics, including generation patterns, responsiveness, and storage capabilities. This diversity allows for a more balanced and resilient energy system that can adapt to fluctuating demand and unforeseen circumstances. Having a mix of these energy sources is like having a team with different skills to handle various situations and scenarios.

A diverse set of energy sources is essential, but that's not the only thing we need to have reliable electricity—or a winning team. Basketball teams are always trying out new plays or training rookies to create a versatile lineup. Similarly, electric cooperatives are constantly innovating to maintain reliability for tomorrow. But creating new ways to make our power sources more efficient and reliable takes time, money, and advances in technology that aren't necessarily ready yet.

As we continue to work on the innovations of tomorrow, the key to keeping our electricity reliable right now is ensuring a diverse "team" of fuels. Each one brings something special to the table, and together, they make sure we have the power we need, whenever we need it.



Cogeneration - Annual Notification To Membership

In compliance with Agralite Electric Cooperative's adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production, Agralite Electric Cooperative is obligated to interconnect with and purchase electricity from cogenerators and small power producers that satisfy the conditions as a qualifying facility. Agralite Electric Cooperative is obligated to provide information free of charge to all interested members upon request regarding rates and interconnection requirements. All interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility. Any dispute over interconnections, sales, and purchases are subject to resolution by the Agralite Electric Cooperative Board.

You can find all of our Cogeneration information on our website at www.agralite.coop. Interested members should contact Agralite Electric Cooperative, 320 E Hwy 12, Benson, MN 56215 or call 320-843-4150.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

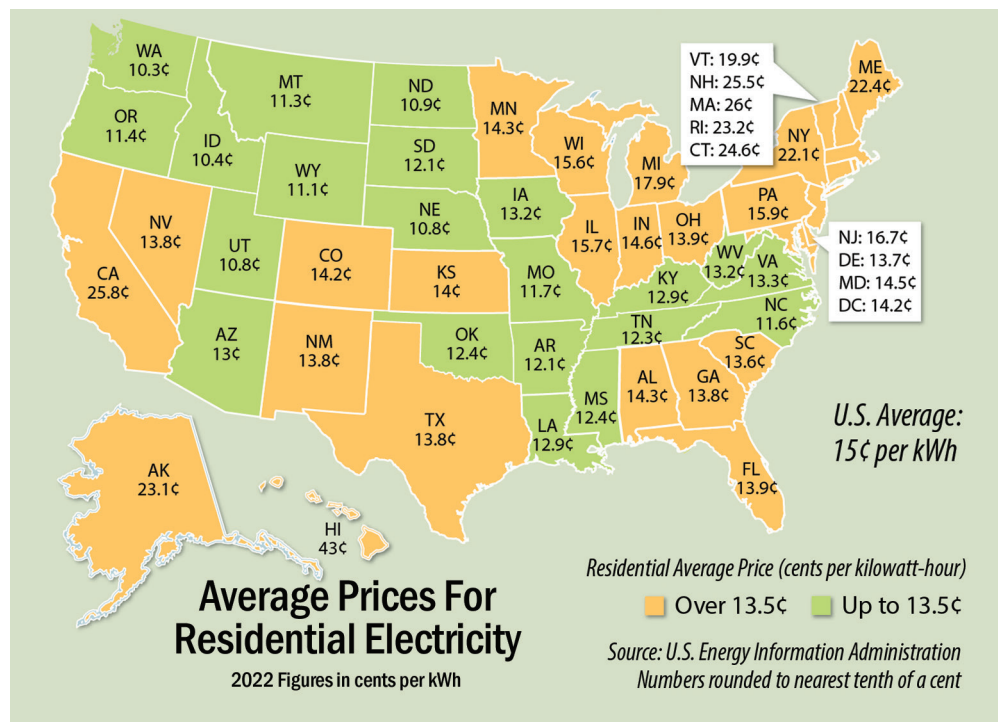
To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

When it comes to electrical safety,

DON'T RELY ON LUCK

Flickering lights indicate an electrical problem that needs to be fixed. Don't take a chance, hire a professional.

 Safe
Electricity.org



COLD WEATHER RULE & ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM NOTICE

In accordance with Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule, electric service cannot be disconnected for nonpayment between October 1 and April 30 if electricity is the primary heat source and ALL of the following statements apply:

- Your household income is at or below 50% of the state median household income. Income may be verified on forms provided by Agralite Electric Cooperative or by the local energy assistance provider.
- You enter into and make reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce your energy bills from Agralite Electric Cooperative.

Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule does not completely stop winter disconnects

Before disconnecting electric service to residential members between October 1 and April 30, Agralite Electric Cooperative must provide:

- A 30-day notice of disconnection;
- A statement of members' rights and responsibilities;
- A list of local energy assistance providers;
- Forms on which to request Cold Weather Rule protection; and
- A statement explaining available payment plans and other options to continue service.

Energy Assistance Program

The Energy Assistance Program (EAP) is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps low-income renters and homeowners pay for home heating costs and furnace repairs. Household income must be at or below 50% of the state median income (\$58,793 for a family of four) to qualify for benefits. Applications must be received or postmarked by May 31, 2024.

To learn more about the EAP program or to apply for assistance:

- Visit the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Assistance website, <https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/>, for more details and to access the application portal.
- Contact your county EAP service provider for additional information and assistance.
- Agralite Electric Cooperative exists because of you, and we are dedicated to the people and communities we serve. If you are having difficulty paying your electric bill and do not qualify for either of these programs, please contact our billing department to set up a payment plan.

Prairie 5 CAC 320-269-7976 West Central CAC 800-492-4805
Heartland CAC 320-235-0850

CURRENT AGRALITE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kathy Draeger, Clinton

District 1

Jeff Hufford, Morris

District 2 - Secretary/Treasurer

Bennett Zierke, Hancock

District 3

Steve Nelson, Starbuck

District 4

Orvin Gronseth, Murdock

District 5 - Vice President

Andrea Thomson, Benson

District 6

Warren Rau, Appleton

District 7 - President

MINUTES OF MEETING BOARD OF DIRECTORS January 2024

Board Chairman Warren Rau called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., January 25, 2024. All members of the Board were present except Director Nelson, who joined by Zoom. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, the monthly disbursements, the payment of capital credits of deceased members, Work Order #556, Work Order #557, and Work Order #558 were approved.

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed load control for the month. He gave an update on the ALM project. He discussed the updated 2024 Cogeneration Reports and the Board approved them. He discussed the Science Expo at Morris High School and Co-ops in the Classroom at Chokio Elementary School.

Stephanie Wroblewski, Manager of Finance/CFO, discussed preliminary margins for the month of December. She stated that Gabrielle Doscher has been hired as the new CSR and she will begin January 29th. She stated that the 2023 audit is scheduled for the week of January 29th with Eide Bailly.

The financials were given by Stephanie with a PowerPoint presentation.

Jenny Stryhn reported on activities of the Engineering & Operations department for the month. She discussed line crew projects and outages for the month. She discussed upcoming grant opportunities.

She stated a purchase agreement was signed to buy a 2-acre parcel in section 16 of Hodges Township for a new 115kV

STORM SAFETY FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

Spring is a wonderful season,
but it can bring powerful storms.

Read the clues below, then use the
word bank to complete the storm
safety tips.



1. Keep a _____
handy in case of a power outage.
2. Be watchful for signs of a
thunderstorm, including
dark skies, flashes of
_____ or
strong winds.
3. If a _____ is
issued, seek shelter in a
centrally-located room in your
home, a basement or storm cellar.
4. If you're outside and hear
_____,
go indoors immediately.
5. Practice a tornado
_____ with
your family once a year.

Answer key: 1. flashlight 2. lightning 3. tornado warning 4. thunder 5. drill

WORD BANK

- thunder
- drill
- flashlight
- tornado warning
- lightning

substation, which will be named Hodges Sub.

Jenny gave the Year in Review safety report.

Board Policies 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 108, 109, 110, 111, and 112 were reviewed and the Board approved the recommended updates.

Jenny Stryhn, General Manager/CEO, reviewed her report to the board. She discussed sales for 2023. She discussed recent meetings she attended including East River, NRECA, and GRE. She brought forth Resolution to Vote in Favor of Amendment to Appendix B of the Transmission Service Contract and the Board approved it. She brought forth Resolution for Application for Rural Economic Development Grant for Mini Sota Children's Museum and the Board approved it.

Donations to MREA and NRECA were discussed again. A motion was made to grant MREA a donation. A vote was held and the motion did not pass.

Jenny gave an update on the headquarters building project and stated she sent out an RFP.

A roundtable was held including discussions on battery storage, podcast on solar flares, and director training.

The February board meeting was set for the 29th.

Being no further business came before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.