

NEWS



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For Immediate Release:

Over 400 people attend Firelands Electric Cooperative's 86th annual meeting event at Ashland University

NEW LONDON, April 16, 2024 at 10:45AM — A tradition extending over 86 years continued on Saturday, April 6, when Firelands Electric Cooperative hosted its annual meeting event at the Ashland University Myers Convocation Center. Over 400 co-op members and guests enjoyed the breakfast meeting, which included gifts and prize drawings.

Firelands Electric Board of Trustees President Dan Schloemer reported the cooperative has a 10-year plan in place to maintain and improve system reliability. Certain areas of the electrical distribution system have seen increased demand, which is taxing substation capacity. "Our member-consumers continue to advise that reliability needs to be the utility's number one priority," stated Schloemer. "Last year we spent \$3.5 million on replacements and upgrades. We are investing more money than ever into the system," Schloemer added.

Firelands Electric Cooperative has allocated nearly \$10 million for the current 4-year work plan, which is scheduled to be completed next year. The co-op is also committed to replacing two substations over the next 5 years. The distribution cooperative is striving to remain on track with necessary upgrades, despite major inflation in the industry.

Another key investment to the distribution system in 2023 was \$678,000 for tree trimming 279-miles of our 996-miles of lines for improved reliability. The cooperative's four-year tree trimming cycle is regarded as one of the best in the utility industry. The tree-trimming budget for 2024 was increased to \$900,000 for 385-miles of lines, which includes three townships with 58-miles that will be trimmed on a new three-year cycle.

In his address, Schloemer advised that the cost of transformers, trucks, and wire have increased more than 70% over the past two years. The rising cost of necessary upgrades is the principal reason the cooperative's board voted to increase rates in late 2022 and again in January of this year. "The cooperative's board thinks long and hard before increasing rates, but considering all that's going on in our world, our members will likely see increases every one to two years," said Schloemer.

General Manager Dan McNaull spoke to those in attendance about balance, which comes in many forms. For the cooperative's board of trustees and general manager, it's a matter of finding balance between having reasonable rates, operating a reliable distribution system, and maintaining consistent and orderly refunds of capital credits. McNaull stated it's a priority of the co-op to make sure capital credits are returned to members in a timely manner.

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In 2023, Firelands Electric returned \$1.2 million in capital credits to members of the cooperative. "This is the second year in a row that record high capital credit refunds of over \$1 million were made, and these refunds are an example of how being a cooperative member really pays off," McNaul stated.

During the event, it was announced that Joe Williams of Greenwich, Greg Hess of Ashland, and Brian Cucco of New London were newly elected to represent districts 2, 7, and 9 on the cooperative's board of trustees. As district 2 representative, Williams will serve Cass, Greenwich, New Haven, and Ripley townships in Huron County, and Ruggles Township in Ashland County. He will also serve a portion of Blooming Grove Township in Richland County. Hess will serve Firelands' district 7 members, located in Mohican, Montgomery, Perry, and Vermilion townships in Ashland County. As district 9 representative Cucco will serve members located south of the CSX rail in the New London municipality and New London Township in Huron County.

President Schloemer also recognized trustees Gene Lamoreaux, John Martin, and Rob Turk, who are stepping down from the board after each serving the co-op for 6 years. "We will certainly miss their experience in budgeting, goal setting, and ability to think strategically," stated Schloemer. "Because they chose to serve, Firelands is a better cooperative."

During his address, Schloemer also announced the upcoming retirement of General Manager Dan McNaul, who has served the cooperative for over 30 years. McNaul was elected to the board in 1991, appointed as board president in 1999, and was then hired as general manager of the cooperative in January 2018.

"We have all benefitted from Dan's leadership and his experience running a small business. He is not a person to back down from a difficult situation. Dan's increased focus on investing in areas with frequent outages continues to benefit the co-op, while his insight has provided valuable assistance with strategically drafting the co-op's financial forecast and long-term plans," Schloemer advised.

Cooperative members who joined Firelands Electric to celebrate its 86th annual meeting were entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of seven bill credits totaling \$300. Randomly selected winners included: Larry O'Neil of Mansfield, Mike McNaul of Ashland, Hiller's County Market of Ashland, and Angela Lowther of Ashland, who each received a \$25 bill credit; Terry Jordan and Michael Strine, both of Ashland, each received a \$50 bill credit; and Tim Davidson of Ashland won a \$100 bill credit.

Firelands Electric Cooperative, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is a member-owned, not-for-profit electric utility serving more than 9,200 homes and businesses in rural areas of Ashland, Huron, Lorain, and Richland counties and ranks among the highest energy utilities in the country for customer satisfaction. Visit the cooperative's website at www.firelandsec.com, [Facebook page](#), or [Twitter feed](#) to learn more about reliable and affordable power. Photos of Firelands Electric's 2024 annual meeting event can be viewed on the cooperative's Flickr page at www.flickr.com/photos/firelandsec/albums.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

6N5A9448 – Firelands Electric Co-op General Manager Dan McNaul addressed the crowd regarding reliability during the cooperative's annual meeting.

6N5A9474 – Firelands Electric Co-op's 2024 annual meeting prize drawing winners are (shown L-R): Michael Strine, Terry Jordan, Dan Hiller of Hiller's County Market, Mike McNaul, Angela Lowther, and Tim Davidson. Not pictured is Larry O'Neil.



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