



## GM'S REPORT

# YOU HAVE THE POWER

As a member of Firelands Electric Cooperative, you have the power to help shape your community's energy future.

Cooperatives are democratically controlled by the members they serve, which means you have a say in who governs Firelands Electric. By voting in the annual co-op elections, you can weigh in on the leaders who will make important decisions about the future of the cooperative and our local energy needs.

They help us make informed decisions on capital credits retirements, cybersecurity, renewable projects, and community partnerships — while also maintaining the financial health of the cooperative for today and well into the future.

Firelands Electric has nine trustees, who are each elected for a term of three years. Members vote for three of these nine positions each year. Throughout the month of March, cooperative



**Dan McNaull**  
GENERAL MANAGER

members will cast their ballots to select the fellow members they want to represent them on Firelands Electric's board of trustees for districts 2, 7, and 9.

If you've never voted in past elections, or haven't cast your ballot in several years, I encourage you to do so in 2024. Your board of trustees makes important decisions — ones that can affect rates and co-op projects or play a critical role in shaping our energy future. The job of a trustee should not be taken lightly, so making your voice heard in selecting the right candidate to fill these positions is essential. Voting is quick and simple, and your co-op and your community's future depend on it.

For more information on the voting process, see the next page.

The co-op considers our trustees the eyes and ears of the community because they each provide a unique perspective on the various local issues. This is why it's important for the board of trustees to include community-minded individuals with diverse skill sets.

We rely on our trustees to assist with planning long-term investments for our power lines, substations, and other portions of our distribution system.

### 4 REASONS TO VOTE IN YOUR CO-OP TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

1. As a member of the co-op, your input matters.
2. Trustees represent you on important energy-related issues.
3. Trustees' decisions can impact electricity rates and future projects.
4. With convenient voting options available, it only takes a minute to cast your ballot.



## TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

# ELECTIONS OPEN MARCH 1

Members to vote on board trustees and proposed changes to the cooperative's Code of Regulations

For trustee candidate bios, proposed code changes, and a link to vote online, visit [www.firelandsec.com/cooperative-elections](http://www.firelandsec.com/cooperative-elections)

Members of Firelands Electric Cooperative will choose trustees to represent board districts 2, 7, and 9 this year. Also on the ballot are proposed updates to the co-op's Code of Regulations, including:

- Granting exception to the requirement to purchase all electricity used at a member's property from the co-op, which allows for power to be generated on said premises.
- Removing male, husband, and wife designations and replacing them with "they, them, their, member, and spouse."
- Removing the requirement of membership certificates and the option for joint memberships.
- Adding the option of telephonic voting, "...as determined by the board of trustees."

A copy of the entire Code of Regulations, including the proposed changes, is available at [www.firelandsec.com/cooperative-elections](http://www.firelandsec.com/cooperative-elections).

Voting for trustees and the Code of Regulations changes will be conducted by mail and online ballot. Members were mailed candidate biographies, code update information, and a paper ballot at the end of February. Co-op Ballot, an independent service provider, is managing the election by printing and mailing ballots, overseeing the online voting portal, and receiving and tallying all votes.

### How to cast your vote

Starting Friday, March 1, Firelands Electric members can vote online via a secure link available on the co-op's website (<http://firelandsec.coopballot.com>). Members may also vote by returning their completed paper ballots in the envelopes provided.

To cast your vote online, you will need your account number, which is found on your printed or emailed monthly billing statement. Paper ballots must be mailed using the provided, pre-paid envelope and cannot be accepted by the cooperative's office. Only original paper ballots should be submitted; no photocopies are permitted. If a member submits more than one ballot, or more than one voting method is used, the first ballot received by the independent service provider will be considered final.

### Timeline

Voting opens on Friday, March 1, and will close Sunday, March 31, at 11:59 p.m. Any ballots received by the independent service provider after the close of voting will not be counted, so please allow ample time for delivery if casting your ballot by mail.

Results of the election will be announced at Firelands Electric Cooperative's annual meeting, which will be held at the Ashland University Myers Convocation Center on Saturday, April 6. Results will also be posted on the co-op's website and published in *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine.

The Firelands Electric Cooperative office will be closed March 29 in observance of Good Friday.

**Firelands Electric**  
COOPERATIVE  
A Truist Energy Cooperative

Happy Easter

## ANNUAL MEETING

# Official MEETING NOTICE

Join us April 6 for your Annual Meeting of Members

Firelands Electric Cooperative's 86th annual meeting is scheduled for Saturday, April 6, at the Ashland University Myers Convocation Center, located at 638 Jefferson Street in Ashland. The center's doors will open at 8:30 a.m. for registration. Members must bring their Official Annual Meeting Invitation on the day of the event to receive their free membership gift bag. Attendees will also be entered into a drawing for the chance to win one of seven bill credits, worth up to \$100.

A complimentary hot breakfast buffet will be served from 8:30 a.m. until 9:15 a.m. The streamlined business meeting will begin immediately following breakfast and last until approximately 10:15 a.m. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend the business meeting, but seating for the hot breakfast is limited, so please remember to RSVP by 4 p.m. on Monday, March 25. Complete your reservation online at [www.firelandsec.com/annual-meeting-members](http://www.firelandsec.com/annual-meeting-members) or by contacting Firelands Electric's office at 1-800-533-8658.

Election results for the board of trustees and the proposed code changes will be announced during the

business meeting. The cooperative will also be collecting pop tabs for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Akron (RMHC) at the event. If you have been saving pop tabs, please bring them in a container or resealable plastic bag to help make a difference in the lives of the many families served by RMHC.

Mark your calendar today, and join us April 6 to keep informed about your cooperative's operations, financial health, and future plans. We hope to see you there!

## 2024 ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

**Saturday, April 6**

**Doors open: 8:30 a.m.**

**Breakfast buffet served: 8:30 to 9:15 a.m.**

**Cooperative business meeting: 9:15 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.**

**Location: Ashland University Myers Convocation Center  
638 Jefferson Street, Ashland**

***BREAKFAST RSVP DUE BY 4 P.M. MONDAY, MARCH 25***





CO-OP NEWS

## Cooperative plays role in EV charger installation

Gas Depot in New London recently added a new service to its Amoco station.

Located near the railroad crossings, at the corner of Akron and Clinton streets, the station has offered gasoline and diesel, propane refills, a convenience store, Subway, and Hunt Brothers Pizza for years. Now it also boasts one of just a handful of electric vehicle (EV) chargers within a 20-mile radius. The dual-port ChargePoint Level 2 charger was made possible with the help of a program through Firelands Electric Cooperative and its statewide association, Ohio's Electric Cooperatives (OEC).

Firelands Electric has been working behind the scenes for some time to have an EV charger installed somewhere in New London. When Gas Depot owner Creighton Ruggles learned of the program, he saw it as an opportunity to expand the station's business by drawing in the growing EV driver market. After several months of planning and coordinating with Firelands, OEC, and BCU Electric of Ashland (the contractor who installed the unit), the new charger went online in late December.

"Electric vehicles are not commonplace in rural areas yet," says Firelands' General Manager Dan McNaul. "One of the reasons for this is a lack of charging stations. Located near the intersection of two main highways — State Route 60 and State Route 162 — Gas Depot is the perfect location for a charging station. Those

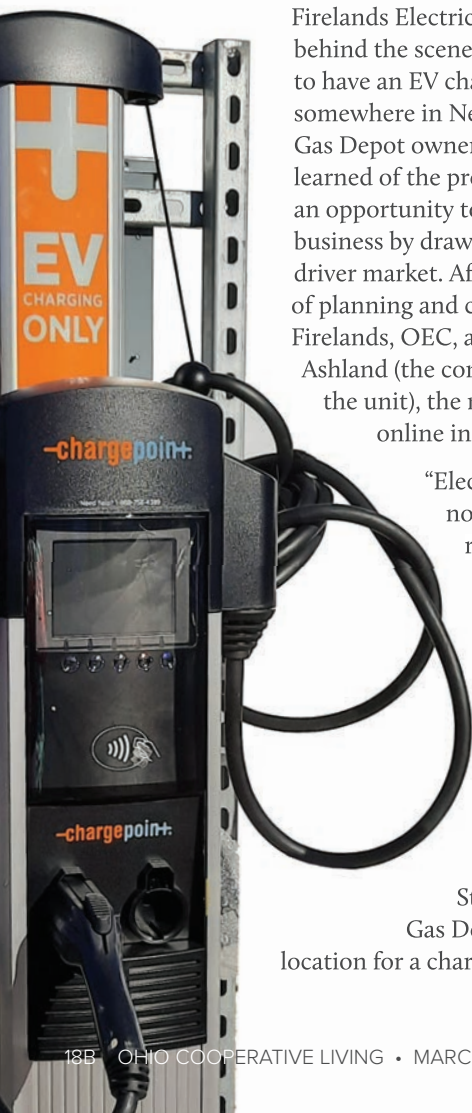


Co-op member Dan Osborne of Willard (left) takes advantage of the new EV charger at New London's Amoco/Gas Depot. Pictured with him are Gas Depot owner Creighton Ruggles (center) and Firelands Electric Cooperative General Manager Dan McNaul (right). The station was able to install the dual-port ChargePoint Level 2 charger with the help of a program through Firelands Electric and Ohio's Electric Cooperatives.

passing through on their way to Cedar Point or Lake Erie can easily charge their EVs while grabbing a bite to eat or picking up drinks and snacks."

The average national price per kilowatt (kW) at a public Level 2 charger ranges anywhere from \$0.10 to \$0.45. Providing up to 7 kilowatts from either of its two ports, the charger in New London costs \$0.22 per kW. This comes out to approximately \$1.55 for a one-hour charge — which, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation, is good for about 10 to 20 miles of drive time, depending upon weather conditions and other environmental factors.

"The new ChargePoint station is a win for everyone," says McNaul. "It will bring in customers for Gas Depot and other businesses in the village, while also ensuring that EV drivers have readily available access to charge their vehicles."



## IN THE COMMUNITY

# THE COLLECTIVE POWER OF COINS

Carrying around spare change can be somewhat of a nuisance. But what if that handful of coins was combined with the change of nearly 7,800 other co-op members? As demonstrated by Firelands Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up, the result has an immensely positive impact on our community. With the help of members like you, the co-op awarded 16 charitable grants totaling \$39,173 in 2023 — all with just spare change.

While an individual member's loose change may not make a significant difference, pooling together contributions from other co-op members allows Firelands' Operation Round Up program to make these small amounts accomplish big things. The average monthly contribution per member is only 50 cents — just \$6 a year. But, by

combining the contributions from every co-op member who participates in Firelands' Operation Round Up, the program collects nearly \$3,900 per month.

Grant recipients are selected through an application process conducted every other month by the People Fund Board. Appointed by Firelands Electric's trustees, this group of co-op members oversees the distribution of funds collected through Operation Round Up. Grant recipients have included schools, fire departments, childcare centers, health care facilities, youth groups, qualifying families and individuals, and numerous other charitable organizations.

Separately, those coins in your pocket may not amount to much, but together they can be a powerful force in our community.

The photos on this page represent just a few of the organizations that benefited from Operation Round Up grants in 2023. Additional photos of grant recipients can be viewed on Firelands Electric's Flickr page at [www.flickr.com/photos/firelandsec/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/firelandsec/)

albums. For more details about Operation Round Up and a list of the grants awarded in 2023, visit [www.firelandsec.com/operation-round-up](http://www.firelandsec.com/operation-round-up).



An archery net for Pathfinder Farms in Ashland County (center left), a trip for New London fourth-graders to attend the Cleveland Guardians Weather Education Days program (top left), and gently used instruments for South Central's first-year band students (bottom left) were among the 16 grants awarded through Firelands Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up program in 2023.





## OPERATIONS UPDATE

# *Out with the* **OLD...** *in with the* **NEW**

### Crews make progress on rebuild projects

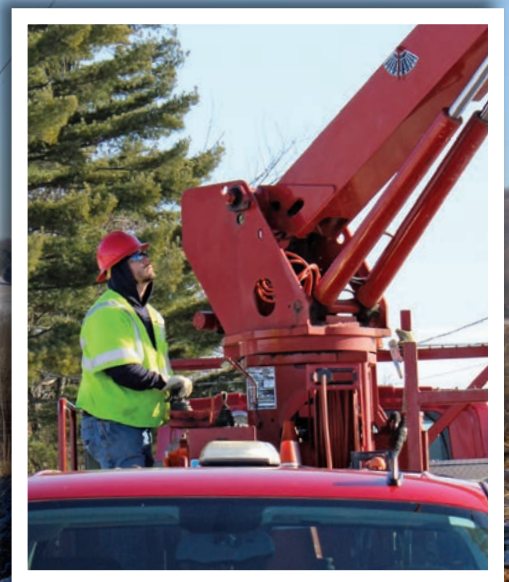
Over the past several months, Firelands Electric crews and third-party contractors have made considerable progress on the cooperative's current system construction work plan. These projects will help maintain and improve reliability, add more backfeed capability between substations, and increase load capacity for members' future electricity needs. The plan also includes the replacement of aging poles, conductors, and other outdated equipment to reduce safety concerns and prevent power interruptions.

As of November, 37 of the 43 decaying or damaged poles identified during Firelands' most recent pole inspection have been replaced. An additional 50 poles were retired along a 3.6-mile span on Township Road 856 in Clear Creek Township, Ashland County. Replaced with 62 new poles and a heavier grade aluminum conductor steel reinforced wire (ACSR), this updated section of three-phase service will provide members in the area with improved reliability, while also increasing voltage for future growth. The installation of additional poles during this and other recent line rebuild projects are part of the co-op's efforts to make our equipment more resistant to storms and extreme weather events.

Additional work was also recently completed in southern Ashland County, in the Green Township area. This particular project involved updating 4.2 miles of line and 128 poles. Wherever possible, power lines and

poles set a significant distance from the roadway, or in other hard-to-reach areas, were relocated closer to the road for easier access in the event of an outage. The new poles are also taller to improve ground clearance for farm equipment and provide space for the future attachment of telecommunications lines. While completing the rebuild in this area, crews also cleared trees in several densely wooded sections to reduce the risk of future power interruptions.

As spring approaches, Firelands continues to move forward with its work plan, including rebuilding an additional 18.2 miles of line located in Mifflin, Mohican, and Vermillion townships in Ashland County and Mifflin and Monroe townships in Richland County. Having a work plan in place is essential for supplying our members with safe, reliable power today — and for years to come. Whether this plan includes routine maintenance and upgrades, or addresses an unexpected outage, you can rest assured that Firelands Electric Cooperative is working hard to keep your lights on.





Lead Lineman Rick Bowers (left) replaces a utility pole with the help of Apprentice Lineman Zach Hart (opposite page), who operates equipment to hold the new pole in place. Bowers, Hart, and Lead Lineman Phil Pickering (cover) are just one of several co-op and contractor crews completing Firelands' current work plan.

To view additional photos of recently completed work plan projects, visit [www.flickr.com/photos/firelandsec/albums](http://www.flickr.com/photos/firelandsec/albums).

## IMPORTANT PAYMENT METHOD INFORMATION

*Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS)  
are changing on March 31, 2024.*

In order to protect consumers' sensitive information, the global financial regulation group PCI Security Standards Council has updated the requirements for taking credit and debit card payments made over the phone.

To adhere to these new regulations, Firelands Electric will be making changes to our procedures for processing phone payments over the next several months. Once in place, members who wish to make a payment by phone who do not already have a card saved to their electric account will be forwarded to an automated payment system.

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we transition to procedures necessary to follow the new mandated guidelines.





## COOPERATIVE UPDATE

# BOARD MEETING *highlights*

*Firelands Electric Cooperative's Board of Trustees met Dec. 21 and covered the following items:*

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 45 membership applications for approval by the board.
- General Manager Dan McNaul reviewed the current status of trustee petitions for the 2024 election.
- The board reviewed a report from the safety and training meeting held on Nov. 17.
- McNaul summarized the tree-trimming and outage reports for the past month.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the November financial reports and provided an update on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- McNaul gave the board an overview of the member-owned renewable energy generation systems located in the co-op's service territory.
- The board reviewed the proposed 2024 capital budget, which they approved following discussion.
- Information from a recent seminar on the EV industry was discussed by the board.

- The board selected McNaul as the co-op's CRC and NRECA voting delegate and Director of Communications and Technology Andrea Gravenhorst as the alternate.
- McNaul reviewed the fee schedule for new services, line extensions, and upgrades for 2024, comparing them to the fees in 2023.
- The board was advised that Gravenhorst's report on recent activities involving the member services and IT departments was included in the packet sent to board members prior to the meeting.
- Director of Operations Don Englet reported on activities in the operations department, including updates on the 69kV line project in New London.
- McNaul recognized Englet for graduating from Project Leadership of Huron County. He also recognized Accountant Cindy Thompson for completing the Ohio's Electric Cooperatives Leadership Program.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 26. If you would like to attend the next scheduled meeting, please contact the Firelands Electric office at 1-800-533-8658.

### FIRELANDS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

#### OUTAGE HOTLINE

1-800-533-8658

#### OFFICE

103 Industrial Drive  
P.O. Box 32  
New London, OH 44851  
1-800-533-8658

#### OFFICE HOURS

Mon.-Fri. 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.  
[www.firelandsec.com](http://www.firelandsec.com)



### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dan Schloemer  
President, District 1

Bruce Leimbach  
Vice President, District 4

Carl Ayers  
Secretary/Treasurer, District 5

Gene Lamoreaux  
District 2

Tom Lucha  
District 3

Kevin Reidy  
District 6

Rob Turk  
District 7

Elaine Oswald  
District 8

John Martin  
District 9

### GENERAL MANAGER

Dan McNaul

#### HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

Email your ideas to:  
[members@firelandsec.com](mailto:members@firelandsec.com)

