



GM'S REPORT

THE POWER OF YOUR

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Cast your ballot in the upcoming trustee election



Don Englet
GENERAL MANAGER

We've all heard it stated or even said it ourselves: "Why bother voting? My one vote doesn't make a difference." But what if everyone felt this way when it came time to cast their ballot on an important piece of legislation or to fill a vital government role? The result could be disastrous and would make it impossible for our community or our country to thrive.

The same goes for Firelands Electric's board of trustee elections. Trustees represent

members like you. They are tasked with looking out for the cooperative and its members by determining the policies best suited for its success. Without qualified individuals on the board, your co-op could struggle, or even fail, to serve the needs of its community.

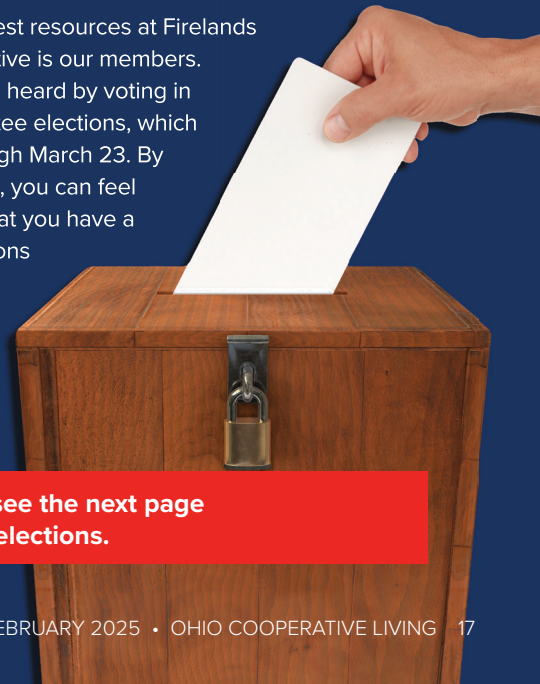
Board trustees are tasked with setting policies and providing guidance to help the cooperative meet its needs, while also ensuring that members are supplied with safe, reliable, and affordable electric power. And as a member-owner, it is your responsibility, as well as your right, to elect the people who will determine these policies most effectively.

The cooperative's board structure is unique when compared to other electricity providers. The nine men and women sitting on Firelands Electric's board are fellow

co-op members, your neighbors, and your friends. Like you, they live and work in Firelands Electric's service territory, so they have a vested interest in the co-op's success. While this already provides its own set of advantages, it's still important to have the "best person for the job" representing you on the board.

Firelands' board members are not appointed by stockholders whose primary focus is growing profits and shareholder dividends, as happens at investor-owned utilities. The co-op's trustees are democratically elected by you — by those who are directly affected by the decisions they make. It can be easy to forget how precious this right is and it can often be taken for granted. To continue effectively serving the community, we rely on our members and trustees to provide guidance. Firelands values your perspective; we cannot operate successfully and help our community thrive without you.

One of the greatest resources at Firelands Electric Cooperative is our members. Let your voice be heard by voting in your co-op's trustee elections, which run Feb. 10 through March 23. By casting your vote, you can feel good knowing that you have a part in the decisions that impact your family and your community.



For more information about the election process, see the next page or visit www.firelandsec.com/cooperative-elections.



TRUSTEE ELECTIONS

VOTING PROCEDURES

In 2025, members of Firelands Electric will elect trustees to represent districts 4, 5, and 8.

- Voting will be conducted by mail and online ballot. A third-party, independent provider will manage the election, overseeing the printing and mailing of ballots, the online voting portal, and receiving and tallying all votes.
- Candidate biographies and a paper ballot will be mailed to every member on Feb. 7.
- Votes may be cast online via the secure link available at www.firelandsec.com or by returning the completed paper ballot in the envelope provided. If casting your vote online, the account number on record, which is found on your printed or emailed monthly billing statement, will be required.
- Only original ballots will be accepted — no photocopies are permitted. If more than one ballot is submitted or more than one voting method is used, the first ballot received by the independent provider will be considered final.
- Voting opens on Friday, Feb. 7, and will close Sunday, March 23, at 11:59 p.m. Any ballots received by the independent provider after the close of voting will not be counted, so please allow ample time for delivery if sending by mail.
- Paper ballots must be mailed to the independent provider and cannot be accepted at the co-op office.
- Winners of the election will be announced at Firelands Electric Cooperative’s annual meeting on Saturday, March 29, at Ashland University Myers Convocation Center. Results will also be posted on the co-op’s website and published in Ohio Cooperative Living magazine.



87TH ANNUAL MEETING

Save the date

MARCH 29, 2025

at the Ashland University Myers Convocation Center

Complete details will be included in the March issue of *Ohio Cooperative Living*.

YOUTH PROGRAMS



Education helps shape the leaders of tomorrow. That's why Firelands Electric includes it as one of our seven core principles. The A Team is a cooperative program designed to encourage students in their pursuit of academic excellence. Students in grades 6 to 8 are invited to participate and be recognized for their hard work and dedication to education.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Winners of December drawing receive \$15 gift cards



Max Moffett
C.E. Budd School (Loudonville)
Son of Josh and Hannah Moffett



Olivia Stevens
New London Middle School
Daughter of Steve and Trish Stevens

Send us your grade card and win!
The next drawing will be held on Feb. 10.

How you can win

Students in grades 6 to 8 who have a minimum of three A's on their most recent report card and whose parents or guardians are members of Firelands Electric Cooperative are eligible to apply. A copy of the report card should be submitted by mail to Attn: The A Team, Firelands Electric Cooperative, 103 Industrial Drive, New London, OH 44851. Report cards may also be emailed to members@firelandsec.com.

Be sure to include the student's name, school, grade, address, phone number, parents' or guardians' name(s), and an email address on your entry.

Complete program details are also available at www.firelandsec.com/team.



Lynnae Stacklin
Seneca East Middle School
Daughter of Dan and Crista Stacklin



RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE

A CUT ABOVE

Right-of-way program helps keep the lights on

Right-of-way maintenance is an important part of Firelands Electric Cooperative’s annual work plan. Also referred to as tree-trimming or vegetation management, this task is vital for delivering safe, reliable power to our members.

What is a right-of-way?

A right-of-way is the strip of land underneath and around power lines and equipment, which Firelands Electric has the authority and obligation to access, maintain, and clear to prevent disruptions in electric service or harm to line crews or the public. Specifications vary, but a general rule of thumb for a safe right-of-way is maintaining 20 feet of clearance on either side of primary power lines. The area above poles and wires should be kept clear of all vegetation. There should be a minimum of 10 feet between shrubs and other plants and pad-mounted, or ground, transformers.

Why is this important?

Downed trees cause a substantial number of power outages, and each year our crews take steps to reduce their impact. Clearing the right-of-way is crucial for keeping our members’ power on. Branches that come into contact with power lines can cause voltage fluctuations, blinking lights, or even outages.

Right-of-way clearing also keeps your family safer by ensuring that tree branches and vegetation do not become energized due to close contact with a power line or other electrical equipment. With the ability to carry up to 34,500 volts, a power line touching a tree branch can be incredibly dangerous — even deadly — so always be mindful around trees that are close to power lines.

Our responsibility

Firelands Electric maintains 996 miles of line, which bring power to more than 9,200 homes and businesses, making right-of-way maintenance a big job. Each year, we schedule contractors to work in specific areas of the cooperative’s service territory to try to keep ahead of any potential issues.

If a tree invades the right-of-way, the cooperative’s vegetation management team will trim back branches and brush using a combination of large and small equipment. We also occasionally use chemical control methods to stop low-growing plant

species that can climb poles and trees and interfere with power lines.

If you have existing trees on your property that are in danger of touching the cooperative’s power lines, we encourage you to notify us. For more information on the cooperative’s vegetation management program, questions about tree trimming, or assistance in

selecting the right tree to plant, visit our website at www.firelandsec.com/right-way-clearance or contact Firelands Electric’s System Right-of-Way Coordinator James Miller at 1-800-533-8658.



James Miller
SYSTEM RIGHT-OF-WAY
COORDINATOR

Keeping power lines clear of tree limbs and brush helps the co-op:

- Reduce power interruptions
- Improve service reliability
- Restore outages more quickly
- Avoid unexpected and costly repairs
- Create a safer environment for crews and the community

Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place

Trees beautify our neighborhoods, and when planted in the right spot, can even help lower energy bills. But the wrong tree in the wrong place can be a hazard ... especially to power lines.

LARGE TREES

Height/spread of more than 40 feet, such as:

- Maple
- Birch
- Oak
- Sweetgum
- Spruce
- Linden
- Pine

MEDIUM TREES

Height/spread of 25 to 40 feet, such as:

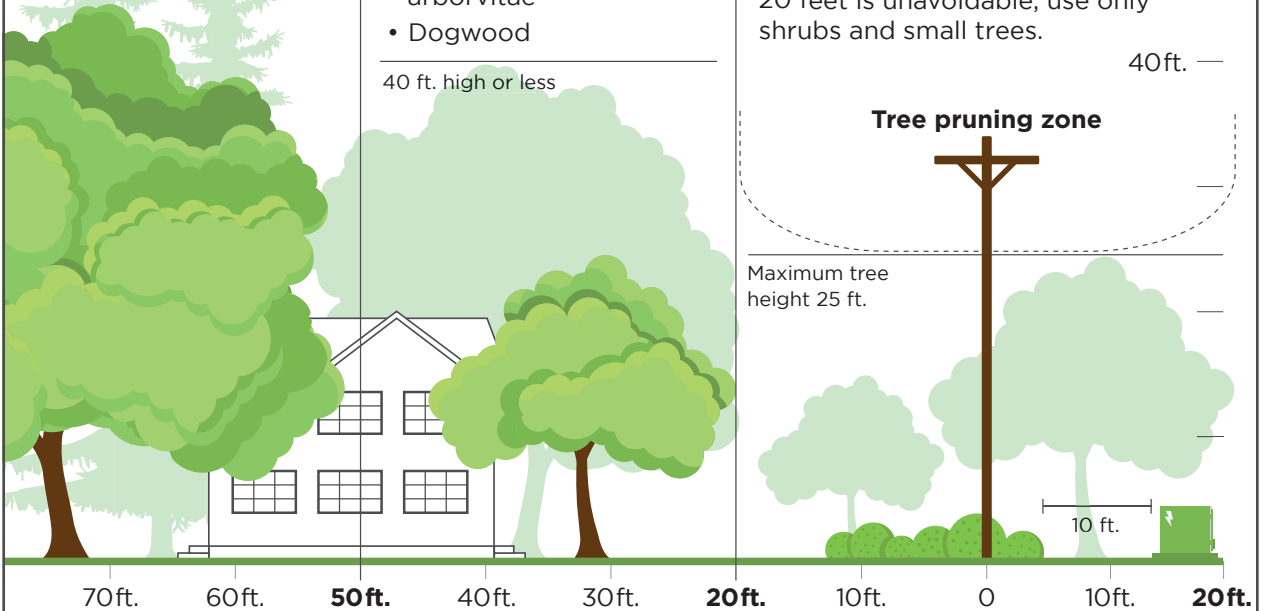
- Washington hawthorn
- Golden rain tree
- Eastern redbud
- American arborvitae
- Dogwood

SMALL TREES

Height/spread of no more than 25 feet, such as:

- Star magnolia
- Crabapple
- Lilac

Avoid planting within 20 feet of power lines. When planting within 20 feet is unavoidable, use only shrubs and small trees.



Source: The Arbor Day Foundation and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

2025 RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

Vegetation management and right-of-way tree maintenance is tentatively scheduled in 2025 for the following areas:

- Ashland County — Green, Mifflin, and Milton townships
- Huron County — Fairfield, Harland, and Clarksfield townships
- Richland County — Mifflin Township



SAFETY

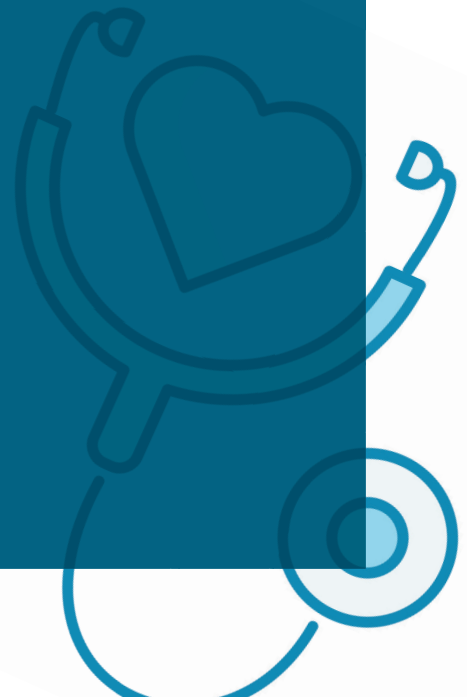
PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES

when you rely on medical equipment

If you rely on medical equipment that requires electricity, it's extremely important to work with your health care providers to develop an emergency plan in the event of an extended power outage.

DETAILS TO CONSIDER:

- Talk to medical equipment suppliers about backup power options for your specific device.
- If your device is battery-operated, make sure you have extra batteries on hand.
- Keep backup batteries or portable battery packs fully charged at all times.
- Make arrangements for alternative housing in the event of a prolonged power outage. Is there a family member, friend, or emergency shelter where you can temporarily stay?
- Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about any medications that need to be refrigerated. Find out how long they can be safely kept outside of the refrigerator and know how to quickly replace those that are no longer usable.
- Keep your cellphone charged so that you can call for help or be reached by someone else, in case of an emergency.
- Consider investing in a backup generator.



CO-OP CONTESTS

WATT are you reading?

New contest gives students chance to win books

This coming March 2 would have been Dr. Seuss' 120th birthday! It is also the National Education Association's Read Across America Day.

To celebrate the wonderful works of Dr. Seuss and share his love for reading, Firelands Electric Cooperative is sponsoring a special contest for students in kindergarten through fifth grade from Feb. 1 through March 2.

Setting the scene (aka the rules)

1. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade who live in a home receiving its power from Firelands Electric are eligible to enter.
2. Entries will be open Feb. 1 through March 2 and are limited to one per child.
3. To enter, students simply need to complete and submit the entry form below or the digital version available on our website at www.firelandsec.com/contests. Make sure the student tells us the title of their favorite book or the name of their favorite author.
4. A parent or guardian must also sign the entry form.
5. Completed entries may be mailed to: Reading Contest, Firelands Electric Cooperative, 103 Industrial Drive, New London, OH 44851-9112. Entries may also be dropped off at the co-op office or completed online at www.firelandsec.com/contests.
6. Entries must be received by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, March 2.
7. Students' names will be placed into a drawing for a chance to win one of three prize packages containing age-appropriate books about electricity. Prize packages are valued at a minimum of \$30 each.
8. Winners will also be featured in the local pages of a future issue of *Ohio Cooperative Living* magazine, as well as on Firelands Electric Cooperative's website and social media outlets.

Questions regarding this contest may be directed to the member services department at 1-800-533-8658 or by emailing members@firelandsec.com.

"You can find magic wherever you look. Sit back and relax; all you need is a book."

— Dr. Seuss 

Please complete the information below and mail to:
Reading Contest, Firelands Electric Cooperative,
103 Industrial Drive, New London, OH 44851-9112.

Child's name

Child's favorite book or author

Grade

Address (please include city and ZIP code)

Parents'/guardians' names

Phone

Email

Parent/guardian signature



IN THE COMMUNITY

SUPPORTING SOLDIERS

Co-op wraps up another successful USO drive

Since 2007, Firelands Electric Cooperative has partnered with local radio stations WLKR-FM and K96-FM to collect donations for USO Ohio's Step Up for Soldiers annual drive.

From Veterans Day through mid-December, collection boxes were available in the lobby of Firelands Electric's office in New London. Donated items included razors, deodorant, toothpaste, shampoo, chewing gum, chips, beef jerky, trail mix, and numerous other snacks and hygiene products. The items were then distributed by USO Ohio to our state's military personnel and their families.

For the seventh year, South Central Local Schools' Aimee Lloyd (whose son Collin served with the Ohio

National Guard) has helped organize the collection of care package items from the students, staff, and families of the district. Through the efforts of the high school's Teen Leadership Corps and the junior high Student Council, more than a dozen boxes of donated items were delivered to Firelands' office. Firelands also received a large donation of items from the members of New London's Our Lady of Lourdes Church, with the collection spearheaded by the church's Altar and Rosary Society.



Above, Firelands Electric's Tracy Gibb (left) and WLKR Station Manager Bill Forthofer (right) fill the radio station's van with donations from the co-op's membership and the community. At right, Aimee Lloyd stands among the more than a dozen boxes of items collected by the students at South Central Local Schools.



The USO supports military families through more than 250 locations nationwide. The organization serves active duty, guard, and reserve members in all branches of the military. USO Ohio is a nonprofit organization that relies solely on the kindness of citizens, organizations, and corporations throughout the state and receives no government funding. Visit the USO Ohio website at <https://ohio.uso.org> to learn more or to make a tax-deductible monetary donation.



IN THE COMMUNITY

SMALL CHANGE with BIG RESULTS



Imagine if just a handful of coins could have a significant positive impact in your community. Since 1995, with the help of members like you, Firelands Electric has been able to do just that. On March 27 of that year, the cooperative's Operation Round Up program issued its first grants, including funding for an emergency life support system and a wheelchair. It's now been 30 years and to date, more than \$1,374,000 in charitable grants has been reinvested in the communities we serve.

Operation Round Up receives its funding from Firelands Electric members who allow their monthly bills to be "rounded up" to the next whole dollar. The average monthly contribution per member is only 50 cents — just \$6 a year. By combining the contributions

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

While an individual member's donation may not make much difference on its own, by combining it with the contributions from more than 7,800 other co-op members, these small amounts can accomplish big things. In 2024 alone, the co-op awarded 13 charitable grants totaling \$49,428 — simply by collecting the equivalent of spare change.

Operation Round Up 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, numerous other charitable organizations, and qualifying families and individuals.

Separately, the few coins may not amount to much, but together they are 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 2024. Additional photos of past grant recipients can be viewed on Firelands Electric's Flickr page at www.flickr.com/photos/firelandsec/albums. For more information about Operation Round Up, visit www.firelandsec.com/operation-round.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEW ERA SURFACING

Thirteen community organizations benefited from Firelands Operation Round Up grants in 2024, including the three projects pictured here: Jeromesville Fire Department's training smartboard (top left), North Fairfield Improvement Group's pickleball court (bottom left), and the accessibility ramp at the Ashland County Fairgrounds' Coliseum (right).



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

SCOTT'S ENERGY SPOT: SMART T-STATS

Efficiency tips from Firelands Electric's energy advisor



Scott Carbarly
ENERGY ADVISOR

Energystar.gov defines a smart thermostat as a “Wi-Fi enabled device that automatically adjusts a heating or cooling system’s temperature settings in your home for optimal comfort and energy savings.” Smart stats can be used on nearly all types of heating and cooling equipment, including residential, commercial, gas, electric, geothermal, and air source heat pumps.

Nowadays, there are a multitude of smart thermostats on the market. Some features

are as simple as allowing you to access and adjust the temperature settings and schedules from your smart phone or computer. Others make automatic adjustments to the temperature by using built-in motion sensors or geofencing to “learn” your daily habits. Geofencing technology looks for your smart phone and automatically starts adjusting your home’s temperature based on your proximity to the thermostat.

Energy Star estimates the potential heating/cooling energy savings of smart thermostats to be in the 8% to 10% range. Several years ago, Firelands’ statewide association, Ohio’s Electric Cooperatives, performed its own smart thermostat study on a wide range of HVAC equipment types at cooperatives across the state. The results of their study revealed savings as high as 15%.

Smart thermostats can also log the run times and possible equipment errors of your HVAC equipment. This can be useful when troubleshooting equipment issues or making energy efficient improvements to a member’s home.

Smart thermostats do have some limitations, including the need for internet access. They will work without access but are limited to only the functions of a basic digital thermostat. Smart stats also do not work very well on radiant or hot water heating systems due to the slow heat recovery of these appliances. In addition, it’s important to make sure that both the thermostat and the mobile app are configured correctly. (Failing to do so can actually cost you money, rather than save it!) There is also a learning curve to get the full benefits of a smart thermostat, which takes some patience. Higher end smart stats take a little time to learn your schedule and comfort settings.

As a final note, it’s not typically recommended to install a smart thermostat on HVAC equipment older than 4 or 5 years because of the potential for tech compatibility issues. If you are considering installing a smart stat on an older unit, I suggest having a professional HVAC contractor check your system first.



REBATE PROGRAMS

SAVE WITH MEMBER REBATES

Check out the chart below for a quick peek at some of Firelands Electric Cooperative’s most popular rebates. A complete listing of current programs, as well as their specific eligibility requirements, is available on the co-op’s website at www.firelandsec.com/member-programs.

PROGRAM TYPE	AMOUNT	GENERAL REQUIREMENTS
HVAC SYSTEM & LOAD MANAGEMENT REBATES		
All-electric geothermal systems	\$800* rebate	Installation of a new or replacement all-electric geothermal or heat pump system with a Cool Returns load management device installed . Communicating systems that are incompatible with the load management device will receive the rebate, less \$100.*
All-electric heat pump systems	\$500* rebate	
Dual-fuel geothermal & air-source heat pump systems	\$300* rebate	New or replacement geothermal or air-source heat pump unit added to any fossil-fuel furnace. Communicating systems that are incompatible with the load management device will receive a \$200* rebate.
All-electric ductless or mini-split heat pumps	\$300* rebate	New or replacement all-electric ductless or mini-split heat pump system. Limit of 3 outdoor unit installs/program year.
SMART THERMOSTAT REBATES		
Smart thermostat	\$150* rebate	Installation of any new, ENERGY STAR-certified smart thermostat with a Wi-Fi connection. Residential installations only and limit of 2 rebates per home/program year. Limited number of rebates available.
LOAD MANAGEMENT INCENTIVES		
Central air-conditioning systems	\$100* bill credit	Installation of a Cool Returns load management device on a new or existing central cooling unit that does <u>not</u> qualify for other member program incentives.
ELECTRIC WATER HEATER INCENTIVES		
New standard electric water heaters (no existing switch)	\$300* bill credit	Installation of a new or replacement electric water heater that has a 50-gallon or larger tank capacity, with an EF of 0.91 or higher that <u>does not already have a load switch</u> . Same as above, except tank has an existing load management switch installed.
Replacement electric water heaters (existing switch)	\$150* bill credit	
Electric heat pump or communicating water heaters	\$150* bill credit	Installation of a new or replacement electric heat pump or communicating water heater that meets the energy efficiency standards above that is incompatible with an RCS switch.
Electric water heater other than those listed above	\$50* bill credit	Installation of load management device on an electric water heater that doesn’t meet the cooperative’s energy efficiency standards. Solar and on-demand/tankless water heaters do not qualify for this incentive.
ENERGY STAR APPLIANCE REBATES		
Refrigerator & freezer	\$100* bill credit	Purchase of an ENERGY STAR-certified electric appliance to replace an existing appliance. Purchase receipt, proof of removal of old appliance, and proof of ENERGY STAR certification required.
Clothes washer, dishwasher, & dryer	\$50* bill credit	
Dehumidifier	\$25* bill credit	Installation of an ENERGY STAR-certified dehumidifier with a minimum capacity of 50 pints/day. Purchase receipt for the new appliance and proof of ENERGY STAR certification required.

*A complete listing of specific eligibility requirements for all incentives is available on Firelands Electric Cooperative’s website at www.firelandsec.com.



COOPERATIVE UPDATE

BOARD MEETING *highlights*

Firelands Electric Cooperative's Board of Trustees met Nov. 26 and covered the following items:

- Board President Dan Schloemer reported that the cooperative received 40 membership applications for approval by the board.
- General Manager Don Englet reviewed the monthly safety and training and outage reports.
- Director of Operations Rick Bowers reported on activities in the operations department, including the information on the progress of AEP's transmission upgrade in New London and expenses for the Coulter substation project.
- Englet presented a revised version of the proposed 2025 capital budget. Following review, the board voted to approve the budget as presented.
- The board reviewed the cooperative's 10-year financial forecast.
- Director of Finance and Accounting Tabi Shepherd reviewed the October financial reports and provided an update on recent accounting and billing department activities.
- Englet discussed dates for the 2025 board meetings.
- The board reviewed a report on recent activities involving the member services and IT departments.
- Englet presented information regarding the expenses for the 2024 tree-trimming work plan and the recent PAC breakfast.
- The board reviewed several meetings attended by Englet, as well as recent community events hosted at the co-op's facility, including the Huron County Teacher Boot Camp, Huron County Growth Partnership Quarterly Breakfast, EHOVE Career Exploration Day, and Leadership Huron County.
- Englet also advised the board of Firelands' participation in mock interviews with students at South Central.

The cooperative's next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 25. 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
New London, OH 44851
1-800-533-8658

OFFICE HOURS

Mon.-Fri. 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
www.firelandsec.com



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dan Schloemer
President, District 1

Bruce Leimbach
Vice President, District 4

Carl Ayers
Secretary/Treasurer, District 5

Joe Williams
District 2

Tom Lucha
District 3

Kevin Reidy
District 6

Greg Hess
District 7

Elaine Oswald
District 8

Brian Cucco
District 9

GENERAL MANAGER

Don Englet

HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

Email your ideas to:
members@firelandsec.com

