



Co-op Advantage

Focus on the future by voting

We're setting our sights on 2020 in a big way. This year, members in Districts 3 and 6 will elect their co-op leaders. Because current director Greg Kvasnicka was the only member nominated in District 1, he has been acclaimed the winner. No election will be held in District 1.

The ECE Credentials and Election (C&E) committee met February 26 and approved Rick Olson, Steve K. Vanden Heuvel, and incumbent Wayne Eller as District 3 candidates. Candidates approved for District 6 include Chad Erdmann and incumbent Wes Siemers.

It's easier than ever to be an educated voter. We've provided a profile on each candidate inside this issue, so please read them thoroughly.

Official ballots will be mailed the week of March 30, and the outcome of the election will be announced at the ECE Annual Meeting on April 23.

As a reminder, ECE does not participate in the tabulation of ballots. Instead, we contract with Survey and Ballot Systems (SBS), a third-party election management provider.



Please note: paper ballots must be received by SBS no later than 8 a.m. April 22, so be sure to mail your ballot early. Online voting closes at 8 a.m. on April 22.

Participating in politics is a hard-won right in our nation, and voting is more important than ever—especially at the local level. How do you envision the future of your co-op? Your vote will help decide the direction of ECE.

*Candidate profiles
inside this issue!*

Official notice EAST CENTRAL ENERGY ANNUAL MEETING April 23, 2020

TWO LOCATIONS

BRAHAM EVENT CENTER
655 8th St. SW, Braham, MN 55006

ECE SUPERIOR OPERATIONS CENTER (via live video)
3617 E. Baumgartner Rd., Superior, WI 54880

Registration begins at 5 p.m.
Business meeting at 6 p.m.
Light refreshments will be served.

ENERGY to keep moving

District 1 acclaimed Director

This year in District 1, the only candidate nominated by petition was the incumbent, Greg Kvasnicka, who was confirmed and acclaimed winner by the ECE Credentials and Election committee. Voting by ballot in this district will not be necessary this year.



Greg Kvasnicka

Incumbent

What strengths would you bring to the cooperative's board of directors?

Knowledge gained as a current ECE Director and 25 years employment at ECE. Retiring as a department-level manager, I acquired knowledge of financial, operational and administrative aspects of the electrical utility business, specific to ECE. In addition, I hold an electrical technology degree and a MN Master Electrician License.

What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?

Providing affordable electric rates to our members and at the same time maintaining ECE's financial stability, achieving a transition to both voluntary and government-mandated clean power sources, keeping up with technological advances, and maintaining power reliability and overall customer service at a level expected by our members.

Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?

I would like to continue serving because I believe I have the professional background and dedication necessary to be a good representative of our membership. I can contribute to board decision-making that will properly guide ECE through the challenges and opportunities it will face in the future.

Recent board/council experiences:

East Central Energy, Director, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer
Park Township Board (Pine County), Board Clerk - 37 years
Pine County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA),
Commissioner, Board Vice-Chair
Pine County Historical Society, Board Director
Interstate Energy (Former ECE Subsidiary), Board Director

Serving Wisconsin townships: *Amnicon, Bennett, Blaine, Dairyland, Frog Creek, Gordon, Hawthorne, Highland, Lakeside, Minong, Oakland, Parkland, Solon Springs, Summit, Superior, and Wascott.*

Serving all or part of the following Minnesota townships:

Arna, Atkinson, Birch Creek, Blackhoof, Bremen, Bruno, Clear Creek, Danforth, Dick, Finlayson, Fleming, Holyoke, Kerrick, Kettle River, Millward, New Dosey, Nickerson, Norman, Park, Partridge, Pine Lake, Silver Brook, Sturgeon Lake, Twin Lakes, Wagner, Wilma, Windemere, and Wrenshall, including the cities of Denham and Finlayson.

District 3 Board of Director candidate



Wayne Eller

Incumbent

What strengths would you bring to the cooperative's board of directors?

As a current ECE Director, 18 years of executive responsibilities at Habitat for Humanity and five years of board membership with "A Place for You" transitional homeless shelter, I have extensive oversight experience with budgeting. Other community services include Army veteran and 21 years as a Natural Resources Conservation Officer.

What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?

Cyber security to protect our members' private information and the integrity of our power grid will remain top priorities for ECE. Emerging wind, solar, and storage technologies must skillfully converge to meet changing electrical, transportation, communication, and social needs of our members while protecting their precious natural and financial resources.

Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?

I wish to continue serving and representing my fellow ECE member-neighbors, working to resolve issues that arise and celebrating with them the success of professional ECE employees that cheerfully always go that extra mile to resolve electrical concerns and provide safe, reliable, and affordable electricity.

Recent board/council experiences:

East Central Energy, Director
East Central MN Habitat for Humanity,
Executive Director/CEO
A Brush with Kindness of Chisago County,
Executive Director/CEO
A Place for You (homeless shelter), Board Member

District 3 Board of Director candidates *(continued)*



Rick Olson

What strengths would you bring to the cooperative's board of directors?

Over 15 years of experience as an owner and board member of a growing small business. Leadership experience where I can advocate for members' best interests. Ability to adapt and stay up to date to ever-changing economic fluctuations. Approachable, personable and available to listen to fellow members' concerns.

What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?

Maintaining competitive and low energy prices while still providing excellent and reliable service. As a growing community, coming up with innovative ways to meet the needs of all members within the region.

Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?

To be an advocate for homeowners like myself who expect the highest service at competitive prices. I have a passion and the time to serve my community and to be a voice for other members.

Recent board/council experiences:

Olson Power and Equipment, Owner/Board Member
North Branch Volunteer Fire Department, Engineer
Tried and True (advocacy committee for small engine repair programs in local schools), Board Member



Steve K. Vanden Heuvel

What strengths would you bring to the cooperative's board of directors?

I have proven business and banking management abilities with an extensive background in the financial industry. My board, council and commission experience for a number of governmental, private and non-profit organizations allows me to contribute and blend well in both business and social settings.

What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?

Utility providers are confronted with aging infrastructure and costs of modernizing while transitioning to cleaner, renewable energy sources in a timely yet cost-effective manner. Ever-evolving cyber risks to technology is a challenge, as is retaining and attracting competent employees.

Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?

As a banker, business owner and 31-year ECE member, my background would be an asset to the board and its mission. Having volunteered as youth coach, golf board, church committees, Chamber president, treasurer positions and other experiences noted, I wish to continue this process as director on ECE's board.

Recent board/council experiences:

Vanmore Companies, Board Member
Dalmark Development Corporation, Board Member
North Branch Area Education Foundation,
Board Member (former)
City of North Branch City Council, Member (former)
City of North Branch Economic Development Commission,
Member (former)

Serving all or part of Minnesota townships: *Amador, Chisago Lake, Fish Lake, Franconia, Lent, Nessel, New Scandia, North Branch, Oxford, Rushseba, Shafer, and Sunrise, including the cities of Harris, North Branch, Rush City, and Scandia.*

District 6 Board of Director candidates



Chad Erdmann

What strengths would you bring to the cooperative's board of directors?

With my experience in construction and agriculture I have learned strong leadership capabilities and financial responsibility. I am eager to serve on the ECE Board and help guide the future of the co-op to ensure all patrons have access to affordable, reliable, and environmentally-conscious electricity for generations to come.

What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?

The biggest challenges facing ECE in the coming years include maintaining an experienced, efficient and productive workforce while promoting a safe environment for employees and patrons alike. The co-op also needs to be vigilant in complying with ever-changing industry regulations while keeping rates affordable.

Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?

I am excited to serve my community in a director capacity to help guide future operations in electrical distribution, production and customer service to ensure an affordable, safe future for all patrons. I am also interested in exploring feasible options for integrating renewable energy sources into our current grid.

Recent board/council experiences:

Benton County Solid Waste Advisory Board, Board Member
Rice Contracting and Development Services, Vice President



Wes Siemers

Incumbent

What strengths would you bring to the cooperative's board of directors?

My wife and I owned and operated our own business for over 33 years. Owning and operating your own business gives you critical experience in problem solving, making important financial decisions and working with the public. I also have helped some of our ECE members with issues, which were resolved.

What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?

Hiring a new CEO is our biggest challenge for the ECE co-op future. Hiring and maintaining key employees. Also, keeping the cost of electricity down by keeping the co-op's overhead as low as possible

Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?

I bring to the board common sense and down-to-earth thinking.

Recent board/council experiences:

East Central Energy, Director - 4 years

Serving all or part of Minnesota townships: *Alberta, Blue Hill, Buckman, Gilmanton, Glendorado, Graham, Granite Ledge, Greenbush, Haven, Langola, Mayhew Lake, Maywood, Milaca, Milo, Minden, Morrill, Palmer, Pease, Sauk Rapids, St. George, Santiago, and Watab, including the cities of Foley, Foreston, Gilman, Glendorado, Milaca, Pease, Rice, Ronneby, Santiago, Sauk Rapids, and St. Cloud.*



Q&A with Linda Laitala ECE Board Chair



Twelve members serve on the ECE Board of Directors, two from each of our six districts, and are entrusted with the future of the co-op. With an election approaching, we asked Linda Laitala, ECE Board Chair, to answer a few questions about the Board of Directors.

Why does ECE have a Board of Directors?

ECE was formed and is owned by its members to deliver electric energy and other services and products. The Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the cooperative dictate the work of the Board of Directors. These documents also outline the procedures by which directors are elected, and legally empower the board to act on behalf of the membership.

What does the board do?

Some of the responsibilities of the board include determining strategic goals for the co-op, approving rates, reviewing financials, budgets and audits, and hiring the President/CEO. We have four primary responsibilities: member representation, governance, fiduciary, and monitoring control. We distribute profits in the form of capital credits back to the members. We also review and approve investments in affiliated businesses.

Are there policies in place that guide the board?

Absolutely. Not only do the policies lay out our duties, but they also explain the qualifications necessary to run for a board position and the lines of authority for the

board. Directors agree to the code of conduct, a confidentiality agreement, and complete a conflict of interest disclosure form.

Are members allowed to attend a board meeting?

Yes! Regular monthly meetings of the board are open to members; the schedule can be found on our website. We request a two-week notice so we have time to prepare for a healthy and informed dialogue.

If I live in District 3 or 6, how can I vote?

It's important to vote for your directors. Did you know only 15.2% of eligible members voted in last year's election? We need our members to be fully represented! We provide profiles of candidates and offer four ways to vote: via traditional mail-in paper ballot, online through our website, via smartphone by scanning a QR code, and online through SmartHub. Don't forget to attend the ECE Annual Meeting April 23, where director election results will be announced.

The ECE Board of Directors knows how important it is to keep members at the forefront of every decision. Directors are held to a high standard. Board meeting highlights are available on SmartHub.



Project GreenTouch

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, May 2, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Father Hennepin State Park, Isle, MN

Help us spruce up a beloved state park!

1.800.254.7944 **5**

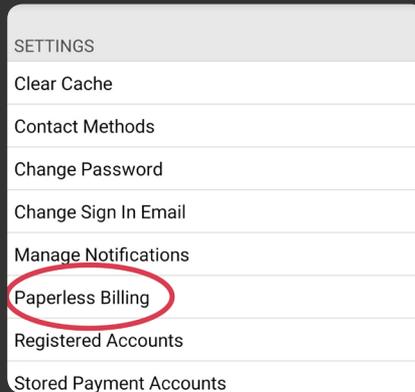
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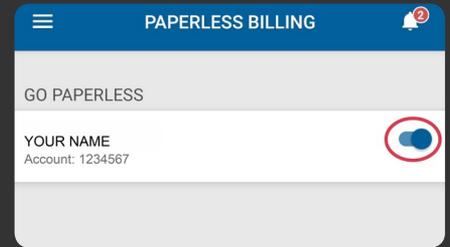
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It's easy and cost-effective to make your home more energy efficient. Combined with our low off-peak rates, rebates make electric heating and cooling affordable. Our incentives, current rates, criteria and guidelines for residential members can be found on our website or by calling us.

Air source heat pump rebate: up to \$1,250

An air source heat pump is not only a high efficiency air-conditioning unit, it can heat your home when outdoor temperatures are above 25°.

Ductless air source heat pump rebate: \$300

Older homes that lack a central heating system can benefit from this heating and cooling unit.

Storage water heater rebate: up to \$700

With storage water heating, a sufficient supply of water is heated during off-peak hours to meet your family's daily hot water needs. Zero-percent financing may be available on storage water heaters purchased from ECE.

Storage space heater rebate: \$100/kW

Storage space heating systems store heat during off-peak hours in specially designed electric thermal storage (ETS). Zero-percent financing may be available on storage space heaters purchased from ECE.



Ground source heat pump rebate: \$400/ton

A ground source heat pump uses the constant temperature of the earth to transfer heat to and from your home. It is a complete heating and cooling system.

STIHL® AK/AP series lawn tools rebate: up to \$200

Save on battery-powered equipment such as hedge trimmers, chainsaws, lawnmowers and more. (Offer good Apr. 1-Dec. 31, 2020 or until funds are exhausted.)

Electric vehicle charger rebate: \$1,000

Already own an electric vehicle? We offer a rebate to install a level 2 charger on either the time-of-use rate or off-peak storage rate.

Energy Star® refrigerator and freezer rebates: \$25

(with recycling of old unit)

Wi-Fi-Enabled Thermostat rebate: \$25

If you have a power concern, we want to know about it

Low levels of A/C (alternating current) voltage on the grounded conductors of an electrical wiring system are a normal and unavoidable consequence of operating electrical equipment. This voltage, sometimes called stray voltage, is referred to as neutral-to-earth voltage (NEV) when it can be measured between two objects which may be simultaneously contacted by livestock.

If you suspect NEV or other electricity related issues, such as low voltage, electromagnetic fields, or power

quality concerns, contact us. We have qualified employees who can answer your questions and investigate any suspected problems.

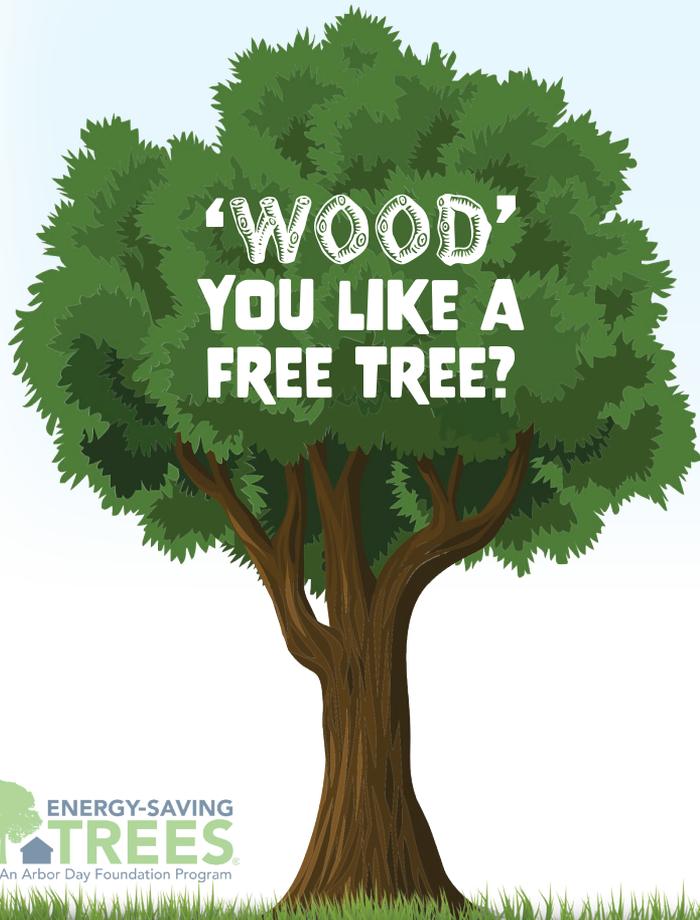
Please note: if a person feels an uncomfortable tingling sensation, the condition is probably not NEV but a serious problem with your wiring system or faulty equipment. This situation requires immediate attention and an electrician should be contacted to investigate and correct the problem.

Auto Pay WINNER



Congratulations
John Benzen,
Braham, MN

Visit our website
to learn more about
Auto Pay.



WE WANT YOU TO PLANT TREES —IN THE RIGHT PLACES

We're partnering with the Arbor Day Foundation's Energy-Saving Trees program to provide FREE trees to members. Trees are available on a first-come basis (one per member household) starting March 23. Supplies are limited.

The Arbor Day Foundation offers an interactive online mapping tool, helping you select a species and decide where to plant to optimize your home's energy efficiency. The tool also helps prevent future conflicts with overhead lines.

To order, visit arborday.org/eastcentralenergy. You will need your ECE account number to process your order.

Calls about the program should be directed to the Arbor Day Foundation at 1-855-234-3801.

KNOW WHAT'S BELOW

ALWAYS
CALL
BEFORE YOU
DIG





East Central Energy
P.O. Box 39
Braham, MN 55006

Service Center locations:
Braham, Milaca, and Finlayson
Monday-Friday
Hours vary by service center.

1.800.254.7944
General business calls are
answered from 7:30 a.m. to
6 p.m. Monday-Friday.

Emergency and outage calls
are answered 24 hours a day.

Email: info@ecemn.com

The ECE Board of Directors
meets monthly. Please call
Executive Administrator Julie
Johnson at 763-689-8046 to
confirm meeting information.
Monthly board meeting
highlights and board operating
policies can be found on
SmartHub.

The Co-op Advantage
newsletter is published by
East Central Energy, your
not-for-profit, member-owned,
local electric cooperative.

ECE is an equal opportunity
provider and employer.

Website:
eastcentralenergy.com



Watt's Cookin'

Congratulations to Cindy Hackler, a member from Braham, MN, for winning the Watt's Cookin' cabbage recipe contest. Cindy will receive a \$25 energy credit.

BEER-BRAISED CABBAGE

- 3 lb. cabbage, cut into wedges
- 1 large red onion, sliced 1/4" thick
- 1/2 tsp. celery seeds
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1 c. stout beer
- 1/4 c. melted butter
- 1 T. packed brown sugar (or more to taste)
- 6 slices bacon, cooked and cut into 1" pieces
- Cooked baby carrots (optional)



Preheat oven to 350°. In large roasting pan, combine cabbage, onion, celery seeds, salt and pepper. Separately, combine beer, butter, and brown sugar. Drizzle over cabbage. Cover tightly with foil. Bake on lower rack 90 minutes or until cabbage is tender. Add carrots 20 minutes before done. Sprinkle with bacon.

To enter our Watt's Cookin' contest, mail your **favorite vegetarian recipe** to Watt's Cookin', P.O. Box 39, Braham, MN 55006. Entries must include your name, address, telephone number, ECE account number, and be received **by April 14, 2020**. The winning recipe and the contributor's name and city will be featured in a future edition of the Co-op Advantage. Recipes can also be emailed to info@ecemn.com.

ECE will **NEVER** require our members to purchase prepaid debit cards or money orders to avoid immediate disconnection.

If you receive a call that sounds like it may be a scam, hang up and report the incident to ECE immediately!





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ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.