

Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association

# SPARKS

December 2020

Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative 



*Point Paradise Stables*

# SPARKS

Red River Valley Co-op Power is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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[www.rrvcoop.com](http://www.rrvcoop.com)

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Rich Whitcomb, Editor  
Mary Merrill, Graphic Artist

December 2020  
Volume 64, No. 9

Halstad, Minnesota (USPS 509-300)

## OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

- Roger Krostue ..... Fisher  
*Chairman*
- Marvis Thompson ..... Perley  
*Vice Chairman*
- Trevor Sorby ..... Glyndon  
*Secretary-Treasurer*
- Bob Kinkade ..... Ada
- Sarah Tommerdahl ..... Hendrum
- Neil Wieser ..... Moorhead
- Rich Whitcomb  
*Chief Executive Officer*

### Scheduled Board Meeting

Board meetings are held in Halstad at the cooperative office starting at 8:30 a.m. on the next-to-last Monday of each month.

**Outages: 800-788-7784**

**On the Cover:** (Left to right) Kristen and Clayton Vetter, along with friend, Jeff Kinney, enjoy a sleigh ride in Grand Forks. The Vettters, Red River Valley Co-op Power members, operate Point Paradise Stables near East Grand Forks. *Story on page 4.*  
*Photo by Bobby Dusso.*



Rich Whitcomb  
CEO

## THE CEO'S REPORT

# No rate increase planned for 2021

At its November board meeting, your Board of directors approved the 2021 budget with no planned rate increase, barring anything unforeseen. Your cooperative last raised rates in January of 2017.

The 2021 budget continues to invest in reliability through maintenance such as tree trimming, brushing and pole replacements at various points in the service territory. Next year also represents the last year of our four-year work plan. Projects slated to be completed include conversion of 9 miles of overhead to underground power line in Polk and Clay counties, plus nonspecific site projects like new services and upgrades. Engineering will soon begin planning the next four-year improvement cycle for the years 2022-2025.

The bottom line is that your cooperative remains on track to finish 2020 in solid standing and is poised for that to continue into 2021 as well. Wild cards that could change that include the usual suspects like weather and severe storm events, but also the pandemic.

### “Minnkota Energy Surcharge” rolled into regular rate

Since late 2009, all members have noticed a ½ cent per kWh surcharge on their bill. That surcharge originally was meant as a direct reflection of Minnkota (where we get our wholesale power) selling excess wind energy into a soft wholesale power market after the Great Recession of 2008-09.

Market and social dynamics have really changed in those 10-plus years. Large-scale renewable energy is here to stay and the reason for keeping that ½ cent separate on the bill no longer exists. That surcharge has a direct link to cover wholesale power costs and the revenue is still needed. Therefore, directors approved rolling the surcharge into

the regular rate to simplify the bill.

Again, this is simply a change in billing presentation and is revenue neutral to both you and your cooperative. We anticipate the billing presentation change to occur on your February statements for January usage.

### Distributed Generation Grid Access Charge approved

At the meeting, directors also approved adding a grid access charge to members who interconnect new distributed generation (primarily solar and wind) of less than 40 kilowatts or add capacity to existing systems to the cooperative's distribution lines beginning Jan. 1, 2021, and thereafter.

This monthly grid access fee will help Red River Valley Co-op Power recover lost revenue from these systems that otherwise would have gone toward helping maintain the reliability of the distribution system. The co-op has the means to do this via its democratically elected board of directors and state statute 216B.164, which recognizes this right to help ensure grid reliability.

There is no charge on the first 3.5 kW of single-phase distributed generation. After that, a charge of \$3.64 per kW will be added up to the maximum of 39.999 kW. The grid access charge for single-phase service shall not exceed \$39 per month.

For three-phase interconnects, a charge of \$3.48 per kW will be added up to the maximum of 39.999 kW. The grid access charge for three-phase service shall not exceed \$81 per month.

\* \* \*

With all the upheaval and uncertainty in 2020, my sincere hope is for you and your family to be able to find peace as this year ends and another begins.

# 2021 Director Elections

## 2021 director elections

Red River Valley Co-op Power members in District 1 and 3 can now submit nominations to compete for a seat on the board of directors.

As a cooperative, Red River Valley Co-op Power is owned by its members. Members elect a board of directors to represent them at the cooperative. Two directors will be elected at the 2021 Annual Meeting on March 18. Due to the ongoing pandemic, it has yet to be determined if the annual meeting will be held via the mail-in/virtual meeting hybrid method that occurred last year, or the traditional in-person meeting in Halstad. Your cooperative's bylaws allow for both methods.

Directors whose terms expire in 2021 are:

*District 1 (three-year term):* **Bob Kinkade**

*District 3 (three-year term):* **Neil Wieser**

## How to run

To run for a director position, interested members in the above-mentioned districts (see map) must request to have the material mailed to them or arrange a time to pick up the packet at the office in Halstad. Per the bylaws, any 15 or more members who reside in District 1 or 3 may nominate an eligible member for a director position in that specific district.

No member may be elected to a director position unless nominated in this manner. No write-in ballots will be accepted. The cooperative must receive the completed petitions and forms from the packet no later than 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2021. Please see below for the section of the bylaws pertaining to nominations and qualifications. Please call with questions.

## Director Districts

### District 1 Townships

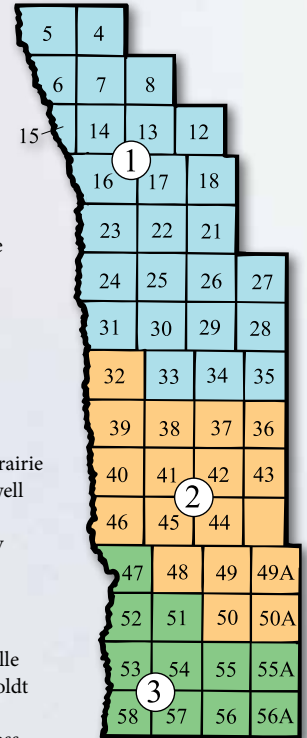
- 4 - Nesbit
- 5 - Huntsville
- 6 - Bygland
- 7 - Fisher
- 8 - Lowell
- 12 - Fairfax
- 13 - Andover
- 14 - Roome
- 15 - Tynsid
- 16 - Vineland
- 17 - Hammond
- 18 - Russia
- 21 - Reis
- 22 - Scandia
- 23 - Hubbard & Rhinehart
- 24 - Shelly
- 25 - Good Hope
- 26 - Lockhart
- 27 - Spring Creek
- 28 - Green Meadow
- 29 - Pleasant View
- 30 - Anthony
- 31 - Halstad
- 33 - Hegne
- 34 - McDonaldsville
- 35 - Lake Ida

### District 2 Townships

- 32 - Hendrum
- 36 - Rockwell
- 37 - Winchester
- 38 - Mary
- 39 - Lee
- 40 - Georgetown
- 41 - Vidling
- 42 - Felton
- 43 - Hagen
- 44 - Flowing
- 45 - Morken
- 46 - Kragnes
- 48 - Moland
- 49 - Spring Prairie
- 49A - Cromwell
- 50 - Riverton
- 50A - Hawley

### District 3 Townships

- 47 - Oakport
- 51 - Glyndon
- 52 - Moorhead
- 53 - Kurtz
- 54 - Elmwood
- 55 - Elkton
- 55A - Skree
- 56 - Barnesville
- 56A - Humboldt
- 57 - Alliance
- 58 - Holy Cross



## Petition for Nomination

The following members wish to nominate [insert name] \_\_\_\_\_, for the three-year [insert "District 1"] or for the three-year [insert "District 3"] \_\_\_\_\_ director position, and to place such name on the ballot for the March 18, 2021, election at the annual meeting of the Cooperative, in accordance with Article III, Section 4, of the bylaws.

	NAME	ADDRESS	ACCOUNT NO.
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			
16.			
17.			
18.			
19.			
20.			

The Cooperative must receive the completed petition no later than 4:30 p.m., February 16, 2021. At the annual meeting scheduled for March 18, 2021, elections will be held for a three-year term each for one director in District 1 and one director in District 3.

The directors whose terms expire in 2021 are as follows:

DISTRICT 1	DISTRICT 3
3-year term	3-year term
Bob Kinkade	Neil Wieser

1. Any 15 or more members who reside in District 1 or 3 may nominate an eligible member for a director position in that district. No member may be elected to a director position unless nominated in this manner. In the event of joint membership, only the signature of one joint member shall be acceptable.

## Red River Valley Cooperative Power Association Bylaws

### ARTICLE III - DIRECTORS

#### Section 4. Nominations.

- (a) Any fifteen (15) or more members who reside in any one district may nominate an eligible member for a director position in that district. Such nomination shall be in writing and signed by said fifteen (15) members, or more, and delivered to the Secretary at least thirty (30) days before the members' meeting.
- (b) No member may be elected to a director position unless nominated in the manner provided by this section. No write-in ballots shall be accepted.
- (c) The members may, at any meeting at which a director or directors shall be removed, as heretofore provided, elect a successor or successors thereto without compliance with the provisions herein with respect to nominations.

*continued on page 5*



## Family activities and horse-drawn wagon rides the draw at Point Paradise Stables

In many homes, paintings of idyllic fall and winter scenes hang above the fireplace or in the middle of the family room. Artists like Terry Redlin portrayed a life that many wish to experience or remember. Christmas at Grandma's in the woods or a horse-drawn sleigh ride through a fluffy white countryside are timeless scenes.

Clayton and Kristen Vetter and their family business, Point Paradise Stables near East Grand Forks, bring these scenes to life with horse-drawn wagon rides for many occasions. The couple's love of horses and living on the farm where Kristen grew up pulled them toward starting this business 11 years ago. Both have full-time jobs in addition to Point Paradise Stables.

"We live this life from sunup to sundown, our whole family (the couple has two young daughters). Our horses are not simply business tools; they are also our family and they enjoy having a purpose in their lives," Kristen said.

Point Paradise Stables offers horse-drawn carriage and wagon rides year-round at various community events, and individuals can rent these services out as well for weddings, family gatherings, celebrations and more. The family also has a fall festival at the farm with a pumpkin

patch (70,000 lbs.) and many games and animal attractions for families.

The stars of the business are the Vettters' two teams of Shire horses, one grey/white pair and one black pair. Shires are a large, uncommon British breed known for their distinctive look that were originally used in agriculture. Their stature makes them perfect for pulling wagons. Shires weigh between 2,000-2,400 pounds. Kristen said they are often mistaken for Clydesdales.

Every year, Point Paradise Stables tries to add more activities and events to their family-orientated business such as magic shows, goat yoga and horse drill-team performances to name a few. They even have tentative plans for a small zipline someday.

"We live in an amazing community that is so supportive of us. We started this as something we could do together, for and with the community. Offering services and our animals to the public, so that they can enjoy and experience them, is a huge joy for us," Kristen said.

For more information, go to [www.point-paradisestables.com](http://www.point-paradisestables.com) or search on Facebook for events where horse-drawn wagon rides are available.

- (d) If a member is absent from any meeting, the member may vote by mail for the election of directors as provided in these Bylaws, or as may be permitted by law.

Failure to comply with any of the provisions of this section shall not affect in any manner whatsoever validity of any election of directors.

## **Section 2. Qualifications.**

Persons eligible to become or remain a director of the Cooperative shall:

- (a) be a member in good standing receiving electric service;
- (b) have voting rights within the district from which the director is to be elected;
- (c) not be employed by, materially affiliated with, or have a material financial interest in, any individual or entity which either is:
  - (1) directly or substantially competing with the Cooperative; or
  - (2) selling goods and services in substantial quantity to the Cooperative; or
  - (3) possessing a substantial conflict of interest with the Cooperative;

For purposes of this section, the terms “material” or “substantially” shall be interpreted as constituting a minimum of 5% of a member’s total hours of employment, sales or income on an annual basis;

- (d) not be an employee or not have been an employee of the Cooperative within the last three (3) years;
- (e) not be a close relative of an employee, or of a director, unless the close relative is a candidate for the director’s seat, where as found in these Bylaws “close relative” means any individ-

ual who is, either by blood, law, or marriage, including half, step, foster, and adoptive relations, a spouse, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, or sibling, or principally resides in the same residence;

- (f) be only one (1), and not more than one (1), member of a joint membership, provided, however, that none shall be eligible to become or remain a director or to hold a position of trust in the Cooperative unless all shall meet the qualifications herein set forth;
- (g) if a member of the Cooperative is not a natural person, i.e. a corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or similar, then the member may appoint or elect one (1) duly authorized natural person, residing within the external boundaries of the district from which (s)he is nominated, to be eligible for election as a director to the Board of Directors;
- (h) never have been convicted of a felony;
- (i) agree, upon election, to regularly attend all Board, regular and special members’ meetings; and
- (j) not become physically or mentally unable with reasonable accommodation to perform substantially all of the duties of Director, and the condition that creates such inability is reasonably expected to last six (6) months or more.

**Exception.** In regard to the restrictive provisions of this section that are based upon close relative relationships, no incumbent director shall lose eligibility to remain a director or to be re-elected a director if, during a director’s incumbency, a director becomes a first kindred relative of another incumbent director or of a Cooperative employee because of a marriage or an adoption to which the director was not a part.

Nothing contained in this section shall, or be construed to, affect in any manner whatsoever the validity of any action taken at any meeting of the Board of Directors.

# Seasons Greetings

*from all of us at Red River Valley Co-op Power*

**Our offices will be closed Thursday at noon, Dec. 24, and all day Friday, Dec. 25, for Christmas.**

**We will also be closed Friday, Jan. 1, for the New Year’s holiday.**

**If you experience a power outage on those days, you may reach the lineworkers on call by phoning dispatch at (800) 788-7784.**

## Around our co-op



Susie Purrington

### Purrington retires after 11 years

Susie Purrington, Halstad, is set to retire in early January after an 11-year career as a receptionist with Red River Valley Co-op Power. By now, thousands have heard her welcoming voice at the other end of the phone when they called the co-op.



Heather Brommenschenkel

### Brommenschenkel hired as receptionist

Heather Brommenschenkel, Ada, has been hired full-time as the cooperative's receptionist beginning in January. She has been working part-time for Red River Valley Co-op Power since last December.



## Facilities renovation study continues

In August, the membership was notified that an overall facilities study was underway as your cooperative plans for future needs and the proper facilities to continue serving members at a high level.

Planning and research continues on both the central headquarters and south service location. The overarching concepts as this study continues are to ensure that facilities are safe, secure, efficient and provide a pleasant environment for employees to serve members.

Currently, the focus is now on refining a rebuild/renovation option for the Halstad location and identifying the proper current/future needs of the small south shop location. The main office was built in 1949 with an addition in 1987. Many maintenance issues are coming due in the 71-year-old portion. The south location is a small shop that houses four lineworkers.

As a refresher, Red River Valley Co-op Power's service territory is 126 miles long and serves areas of Clay, Norman and Polk counties. The central Halstad location effectively serves the middle

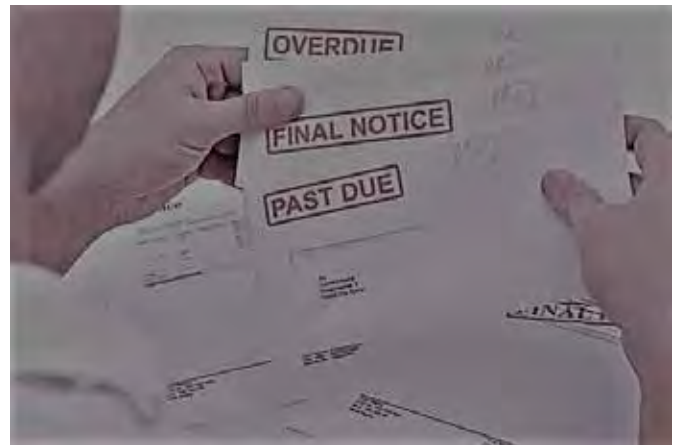
and north areas, plus logistically as a hub to house poles, wires and transformers. These are the materials essential to build and maintain more than 1,800 miles of line that stretch from East Grand Forks to Barnesville. The south shop just north of Moorhead/Dilworth allows us to respond efficiently to areas of Clay County. The general location is appropriate to provide the co-op efficiency in transportation and services.

In fact, 89% of all member-accounts are within 25 miles of both locations. This means we are able to effectively respond to any outages or member needs. More information will be available in future issues of Sparks as the study continues.



# Are you behind on rent and/or utilities?

If you are currently behind on rent and/or utilities due to COVID-19, CAPLP may be able to help! Funds are available to assist individuals and families in Minnesota to prevent homelessness and help maintain housing during the public health-related emergency. CAPLP can assist households that have been impacted by COVID-19 through unemployment, illness or other COVID-19-related circumstances.



## COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program

### Eligibility

- MN resident
- Be a current renter or homeowner
- Eligible bills unable to be paid due to COVID-19, incurred after March 1, 2020, such as:
  - Rent
  - Mortgage
  - Utilities
  - Renter/homeowner insurance
  - Lot rent/trailer fees
  - Late fees due to nonpayment
- Income qualifications below 300% poverty guidelines (*see chart*)

Household Size	Income
1	\$ 38,280
2	\$ 51,720
3	\$ 65,160
4	\$ 78,600
5	\$ 92,040
6	\$105,480
7	\$118,920
8	\$132,360
For each additional member	\$ 13,440

### Before you apply

Before you begin the application process, gather:

- Documentation supporting bills owed:
  - Rent, utilities or other bills dated after March 1, 2020
- Proof of income/proof supporting lack of income

### How to apply

There are three easy ways to apply:

- Via website: [211unitedway.org](http://211unitedway.org)
- Dial 211
- Text MNRENT or MHOME to 898-211

Eliminate Poverty • Empower Families • Engage Communities



**RED RIVER VALLEY  
CO-OP POWER**

# *Save money and energy in 2021 with energy efficiency rebates!*



## **Sample 2021 Electric Rebates for Members**

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Specifications</b>	<b>Rebate</b>
Air-source heat pump	≥16 SEER	\$500/ton*
Ground-source heat pump	Energy Star-rated	\$500/ton*
Electric water heater	Min. 80-gallon capacity. Must be on load management program.	\$300-\$650 per unit
Off-peak electric heat (plenum, baseboard, hanging heater, etc.)	Must be resistance electric on off-peak program.	\$25/kW*
Electric boiler, brick storage, slab storage	Must be on off-peak program.	\$45/kW*
Electric vehicle (EV) charger	240V-rated Level 2 charger on load control	\$50/kW/limit \$500 per account
LED business lighting (retrofit only)	<40 watts (high-bay and wall pack applications)	\$4 per fixture
LED business lighting (retrofit only)	≥40 watts (high-bay and wall pack applications)	\$6 per fixture
LED tube lighting (retrofit only)	4-ft. linear lengths	\$2 per tube

**Energy efficiency rebates for members remain in effect for 2021. Please see the chart for a *sample* of incentives.**

All incentives, criteria and guidelines for resident and business members can be found at

**[www.rrvcoop.com](http://www.rrvcoop.com)**

or by calling

**800-788-7784**

**All criteria are listed on the rebate form.**

Every install must be new equipment and provide proof of purchase unless site verification is approved.

\*These amounts include a rebate from Minnkota Power Cooperative, which has a capped rebate, so call for details.