



November 2024



Wheat Belt Board of Directors: Monthly Meetings Open to Public Participation and Insight

BY: **LACEY GULBRANSON** *General Manager/CEO*

The Wheat Belt Board of Directors meets at the main office (11306 Rd 32 Sidney, NE 69162) on the fourth Friday of each month beginning at 8:30 a.m. The meetings are open to the public and subject to the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. Per Wheat Belt's Board Policies, the duties of the board are as follows:

1. To direct the conduct of the District business as trustees of the District, while ensuring compliance with all the appropriate legal and other applicable requirements.
2. The Board is responsible for the selection, employment and annual evaluation of the General Manager, to establish the compensation of employees, and to delegate to the General Manager appropriate authority to manage the day-to-day affairs of the District.
3. To review studies, conducted by staff and/or outside consultants, regarding systems, work plans, power requirements, trends, etc. and develop long range plans or goals.
4. Establish procedures that can be used in appraising the effectiveness of the operations to achieve the District's goals, predict trends, determine remedial actions, and measure performance against plans and policies.
5. Review the annual financial audit, with the auditor present, either in person or via teleconference and direct any necessary remedial action.
6. Approve general investment policies, review and approve major contracts (established as those exceeding \$100,000), loan agreements, wholesale contracts, and legal/consulting services.

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LUCKY DRAWING

Congratulations to Kevin and Amy Henke our September "Lucky Draw Winner"!

The Henke's live in the Dalton area on their family farm. Kevin is a salesman at Titan Machinery in Sidney, and Amy is a RN at the Scottsbluff Surgery Center. Their daughter, Destinee (Kalob) Green, lives in Central City, Nebraska and sells Snap-On tools. Their son, Zackry, lives in Dalton and farms.

In their spare time, Kevin enjoys spending time with his family while farming, at the lake or just chillin' at home. Amy enjoys helping on the family farm, gardening, the lake and any animal she can befriend. But most of all they both just enjoy time with the family.

Kevin and Amy received a \$50 credit on their account for their prompt payment. If you would like to be included in our next drawing, and avoid a \$5 delinquent fee, please send your payment before the 16th of the month.

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7. Develop and approve the Board's annual budget and review and approve operating budgets and work plans developed by the staff and manager.
8. Conduct at the February Board meeting of even numbered years, an appraisal of the Board of Directors, and guide the development of board members so they can more effectively carry out their major functions. The Board appraisal shall be based on the Board approved appraisal form as reviewed bi-annually by the Board. The Board Secretary shall be responsible to administer the Board Evaluation process.

How can you get involved? You can attend a board meeting to learn about how the Board influences the organization. During the public comment period you can address the Board by communicating support or raising an issue. You can also contact your board member individually to learn more about a specific topic or to discuss an issue.

Local Control and Accountability in Nebraska Public Power Districts

BY: **KELLI CHAON** *Customer Engagement Manager*

In last month's Wheat Belt Connection, we talked about Understanding Public Power in Nebraska and the benefits of the model. This month we will dive into a little more detail about Local Control and Accountability of the districts and their boards.

In Nebraska, public power districts (PPDs) play a crucial role in delivering electricity to communities, and the governance of these entities is marked by a commitment to local control and accountability. Unlike many states that rely heavily on investor-owned utilities, Nebraska's public power system is primarily locally managed, allowing communities to have a direct say in their energy services.

Nebraska's PPDs are established under state law and are

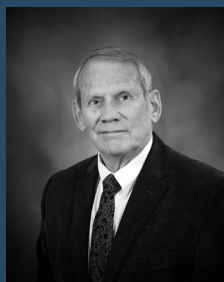
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Meet Your Wheat Belt PPD Board of Directors

South District



Brian Zimmerman
President



Stuart Morgan
Vice President



Jennifer Eckhardt
Director



Collin Anderson
Director

North District



Marcus Milanuk
Treasurer



Toni Blomenkamp
Asst. Secretary



Moe Moffat
Secretary



governed by boards of directors elected by the constituents they serve. This structure promotes local governance, ensuring that decisions reflect the specific needs and values of residents. Each board is responsible for setting policies, managing budgets, and overseeing operational activities, all while prioritizing transparency and community engagement.

Accountability is a cornerstone of Nebraska's public power model. Boards of

directors are held responsible for their decisions through regular audits, public meetings, and community forums. These mechanisms allow residents to voice their concerns and provide feedback on energy policies and initiatives. Additionally, the open nature of these boards fosters trust and promotes a sense of ownership among residents.

The local control inherent in Nebraska's public power districts offers several advantages:

1. **Tailored Solutions:** Boards can develop energy solutions that cater to the unique needs of their communities, whether through renewable energy initiatives or economic development projects.
2. **Cost Efficiency:** By operating on a not-for-profit basis, PPDs often provide electricity at lower rates than investor-owned utilities, allowing communities to allocate resources more effectively.
3. **Community Engagement:** Local governance encourages community involvement in decision-making processes, leading to policies that better reflect residents' priorities.

The local control and accountability of Nebraska's public power districts exemplify a governance model that prioritizes community needs and transparency. As these districts continue to evolve, they remain a vital part of Nebraska's energy landscape, committed to serving the interests of their residents while addressing the challenges of a changing energy environment.

SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING UPDATE



- General Manager, Lacey Gulbranson, gave an update on the April Storm restoration efforts and post storm assessment that have been performed. The current estimated expenses for this storm are just over \$4.9M.
- Discussion was held regarding Nebraska State Statute 70-1012(b) and the North American Electric Reliability Corporation critical infrastructure protection requirements. This influences our current and future inventory and construction projects.
- Cyber security was discussed with a focus on board and employee training as well as password management.
- The board was presented with Wheat Belt's current equity position along with the long-term financial forecast and budget assumptions for the upcoming budget sessions. In October, the board will review the large item budget and in November they will review the complete 2025 budget.
- Director Stuart Morgan gave an update on the power supply reports from Tri-State and the upcoming budget. He reported at this time there is no projected rate increase for 2025.
- Legal Counsel, Kendra Strommen, reported on the legal seminar she attended in Lincoln and importance of transparency by the board and Wheat Belt.

Tips for a Safe and Efficient Holiday Season

This holiday season, keep energy savings and electrical safety in mind.

SAVE ENERGY

- Use smaller appliances like slow cookers instead of the oven.
- Lower the thermostat when hosting friends and family.
- Decorate with energy-saving LED lights.

PRIORITIZE SAFETY

- Never leave unattended candles burning.
- Ensure all smoke alarms are working.
- When decorating, inspect all light strands and cords for damage.

BE AN ENERGY EFFICIENCY MVP

Do you have what it takes to be the energy efficiency MVP (most valuable player) in your home? When you take proactive steps to save energy at home, you can help your family save on monthly energy bills and help the environment—that's a win-win!

Read the sentences below and unscramble the bolded letters to complete the energy efficiency tips. Check your work in the answer key.



1. Turn off **glihsit** when you leave a room.

2. Unplug smaller electronic devices like phone **reahgcsr** when you're not using them.

3. Reduce your **nesecr** time to save energy and spend more time outdoors.

4. Turn off the **reatw** while brushing your teeth.

5. Keep doors and **swdwnio** closed when your home's heating/cooling system is running.

6. When it's cold, wear an extra layer of **tohgncl** inside instead of adjusting the thermostat.

Answer Key: 1. lights 2. chargers 3. screen 4. water 5. windows 6. clothing

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you're heading out of town during the holiday season, remember to set your home to vacation mode. You can save energy while you're away by lowering your thermostat a few degrees or creating an "away" schedule with a smart or programmable thermostat. Newer water heaters include a vacation mode setting to help you save on water heating costs, or you can simply lower the temperature manually.

Small actions can also stack up to energy savings. Unplug devices that consume energy when they're not in use, including phone chargers, toothbrush chargers, TVs and gaming consoles.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Brian Zimmerman, *Big Springs*

VICE PRESIDENT

Stuart Morgan, *Dalton*

SECRETARY

Brian "Moe" Moffat, *Oshkosh*

TREASURER

Marcus Milanuk, *Oshkosh*

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Toni Blomenkamp, *Broadwater*

DIRECTOR

Jennifer Eckhardt, *Dalton*

DIRECTOR

Collin Anderson, *Dalton*

MANAGERS

GENERAL MANAGER / CEO

Lacey Gulbranson

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES MANAGER

Tim Jones

OPERATIONS MANAGER

Rollie Waite

FIELD ENGINEER

Mark Cape

MANAGER OF TECHNOLOGIES

Jim Weeda

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

Kelli Chaon

OFFICE HOURS:

7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

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Our Mission

Deliver electricity safely, reliably and efficiently.