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Bluestem NEWS

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Contact Us

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Clay Center

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FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Electricity Brings Everyday Value

Even though I work in the energy industry, like most people, I don't think much about the electricity I use. I expect the lights to turn on when I flip the switch and the coffee maker to work each morning. Because electricity is so abundant, we don't think much about it. Since many of us have been spending more time at home over the past few months, we have likely been using more energy. And yet, we still expect an endless supply of power with uninterrupted service 24/7. The only time we really think about electricity is when the power goes out or perhaps when the monthly bill arrives.

Given how electricity powers our modern lifestyle every day, it's a great value, especially when compared to other common services and expenses. For example, think back to the cost of a gallon of gasoline 20 years ago. Consider the cost of groceries or a cup of your favorite specialty coffee from a few years back. In comparison, the cost of electricity has remained largely flat, unlike most consumer goods.

Like many of you, I have a cell phone to stay connected, and I subscribe to cable channels so I can enjoy more viewing options. Many of us consider these necessities for modern-day life. We can see what we're getting for our money, and we pay the price for those services. In contrast, when we use electricity, we don't necessarily "see" all that we're getting for our money.

But considering what electricity does for us, it's a tremendous value for our quality of life as well as our budgets. For comparison, consider that the average rent increase was nearly 4% from 2014-2019, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI). The cost of medical care increased 3% during this time, and education was not too far behind at 2.6%. So, where did electricity rank? According to the CPI, electricity increased by less than half a percentage point, 0.4%.

The bottom line: electricity brings

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Mike Morton

Happy Labor Day

In observance of Labor Day,
our office will be closed on Monday, Sept. 7.



Electricity Brings Everyday Value *Continued from page 16A* ▶

everyday value. Also, Bluestem members experience reliable service. Over the past five years, each of our 5,400 plus members experienced an average of only 182 minutes of interrupted service per year. Considering that electricity is something we all use around the clock, I'm very proud of our track record. At the same time, we are striving to increase our service reliability, reduce those brief interruptions and reduce costs. We are continually working to improve our operations to ensure a smarter grid and exploring more renewable energy options where possible.

Bluestem Electric provides the reliable service you expect and deserve as valued members of the co-op. And as your trusted energy adviser, we want to help you save energy and money.

We recognize that the past few months have been challenging for many of our members and we're here to help. If you have questions about your account or are looking for ways to save energy at home, please call us. Bluestem Electric is your electric co-op and our sole purpose is to serve you and the needs of our community. That's everyday value.

Sign Up for Auto Pay on SmartHub

Save time and pay your monthly electric bill automatically by bank draft. No need to find a postage stamp or worry if your payment will reach us on time. Contact Bluestem Electric for more information and request an application or you can find it online at www.bluestemelectric.com.

To sign up, you will need to provide the following information: your name, bank name, phone number, checking account number, routing number (ABA No.), bank address and Bluestem account number(s).

You can also pay your bill online at www.bluestemelectric.com using your bank account or credit card. Click on the SmartHub Pay Online button. It's safe and secure!

Bluestem Nomination and Election Process

Excerpt from the Bluestem Electric Co-op Bylaws. **SECTION 4.05 NOMINATION OF TRUSTEES.** The Board shall appoint a nominating committee, on or before the first of October of each year, consisting of not less than one, nor more than five members from each district for whom a Trustee is to be elected. Board members may not serve on the nominating committee.

Only committee members from each district will nominate their own candidate. Committee members from districts one and two will meet together at Clay Center and committee members from districts three and four will meet together at Wamego. Nominating committees shall meet during the month of October. On or before the first day of November, the nominating committee shall prepare and post a list of nominations for Trustees at the Wamego office if a Trustee is to be elected from districts three or four and at the Clay Center office if a Trustee is to be elected from districts one or two. The committee shall nominate one or more candidates for each position. Nominations may be made by petition, filed on or before the close of business, November 30, at the Wamego office for Trustees to be elected from districts three and four, and at the Clay Center office for Trustees to be elected from districts one or two. The petition must be signed by no less than 5% of the membership of the district

for whom the Trustee is to be elected. The secretary shall immediately post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations by the committee is posted. Nominations made by the petition shall appear on the ballot in the order received

SECTION 4.06 ELECTION OF TRUSTEES. The election of Trustees shall be by mail ballot. Only those nominees selected by the nominating committee or nominated by petition shall appear on the ballot. There may be write-in votes for a qualified member not named on the ballot. The ballot shall first list the name(s) nominated by the committee, then the name(s) nominated by petition in the order received and, at the end, a place to write in a name. Failure of strict compliance with provisions of this section shall not affect the validity of any election of Trustees.

The secretary shall mail the ballots to the respective members by the 10th day of December of each year. Ballots must be postmarked or received at the Wamego office or the Clay Center office on or before the first day of January of each year.

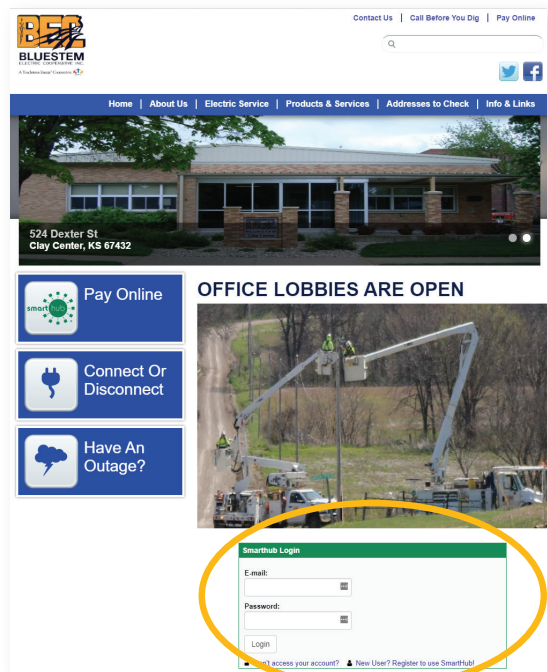
Those members who have been appointed to serve on each district's respective Nominating Committee will be listed here in next month's *Kansas Country Living* magazine.

Be Wary of Third-Party Bill Payment Services

Bluestem Electric **DOES NOT** charge members to make payments on our website, www.bluestemelectric.com, through the SmartHub app or by phone. Third-party payment locations and websites are **NOT** affiliated with Bluestem Electric, and payments made through these sources cannot be guaranteed.

If you have any questions regarding making a payment, please call 785-456-2212 (Wamego) or 785-632-3111 (Clay Center).

Go to bluestemelectric.com and use the SmartHub login to make a payment.



Bluestem and CoBank Provide Funding to Three Area Nonprofit Organizations

Bluestem Electric Cooperative, Inc., in Wamego and Clay Center, has partnered with CoBank to provide \$6,000 to three local charitable organizations: **THE WASHINGTON COUNTY FOOD BANK** in Washington; **SHEPHERD'S CROSSING** in Manhattan; and **THE CARING COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, Inc.** in Onaga.

The donations were a part of CoBank's "Sharing Success" Charitable Contribution Program for 2020. CoBank, headquartered outside of Denver, Colorado, is a cooperative bank serving agribusinesses and rural infrastructure providers such as Bluestem Electric and Farm Credit Associations throughout the United States.

The "Sharing Success" program was developed by CoBank and was first launched in 2012 to celebrate the United Nations' International Year of the Cooperative. Sharing Success



Caring Community Foundation Executive Director Susie Kufahl (left) and the Foundation's Board Chair Jay Rezac hold the Sharing Success contributions.

has matched contributions to hundreds of charitable organizations in all 50 states over the past five years. Together, CoBank and its customers have contributed more than \$3 million to support the efforts of these organizations, the majority of which are located in rural communities.

Bluestem committed and provided a \$1,000 donation each to the Washington County Food Bank, Shepherd's Crossing and The Caring Community Foundation, Inc. Each donation was then matched by CoBank. Throughout rural America, cooperatives are

working to improve the quality of life in their communities.

Bluestem is excited and proud to be able to assist with this funding so that these organizations can continue their success helping those in need in the Pottawatomie, Riley, Washington and surrounding counties.

Explanation of Demand (kW) and Energy (kWh)

Electricity usage is measured in two ways:

- Demand (kW-kilowatts): the rate at which energy is used.
- Energy (kWh-kilowatt-hours): the amount of energy used

Demand Charge (expressed as kW or kilowatts)

Demand is defined to be the rate at which a member uses electricity during a specified time period. kW demand is measured by the highest rate at which a member uses electricity during a 60-minute time period during the billing period, and billed accordingly.

Energy Charge (expressed as kWh or kilowatt-hours)

Energy charges are based on the amount of electricity a member uses during the billing

period, which is expressed as kWh. Think of it in terms of your car's speedometer:

- If your car travels at a rate of speed of 100 mph for 1 hour, the miles driven is only 100 miles.
- If your car travels at a rate of speed of 10 mph for 10 hours, the miles driven is 100 miles, but it takes a much more capable and expensive engine to power the car at 100 mph than it does to power the car going only 10 mph.

In Terms of Electricity

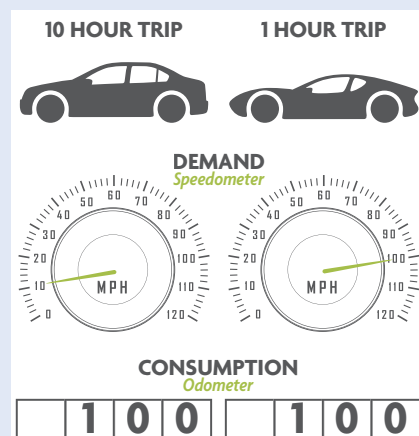
If a member's rate of consumption is 100 kW for 1 hour, the kWh consumed is 100 kWh.

Large power accounts are billed for both the rate of energy consumed (kW) and the energy consumed (kWh).

Demand can be thought of as the

speedometer reading in your car. It is the rate at which energy is being consumed.

Energy Use is like the miles driven on your odometer.



Before You Say Yes to Solar

If you are considering a photovoltaic "solar system" for your home, there is more to consider than promised monthly savings. Please contact us with questions about solar versus traditional electric energy transmission and delivery, as well as connection to the power grid. Here are some of the many aspects to consider:



- ▶ **KNOW ALL THE COSTS** beyond equipment and installation including "soft costs" that can cost more than the system, according to Energy.gov. Soft costs include permit acquisition, financing charges and "pass-along" marketing and research costs.
- ▶ **INVESTIGATE THE COMPANY** Is it backed by the Better Business Bureau? Is it contracted to do business in Kansas?
- ▶ **COLLECT OBJECTIVE OPINIONS** about the pros and cons of solar.
- ▶ **CLOUDY DAYS?** Ask how they impact energy supply?
- ▶ **ARE INSTALLERS SPECIALLY TRAINED AND CERTIFIED** to install solar?
- ▶ **IS THE WORK SUPERVISED** by a master electrician?
- ▶ **WHO MAINTAINS THE EQUIPMENT** and how much does that cost?
- ▶ **DOES THE COMPANY CARRY MAJOR INSURANCE** for individuals working on my property?
- ▶ **HOW DOES THE SYSTEM INTERFACE** with my electric utility?
- ▶ **SHOULD I BUY OR LEASE** the system and what happens if I move?
- ▶ **WHAT ARE THE SAFETY ISSUES** surrounding solar?
- ▶ **HOW IS THE POWER SAFELY DISCONNECTED** if needed?
- ▶ **DOES MY UTILITY REQUIRE** me to carry special insurance?

Double-Check Your Solar Checklist

Considering purchasing a photovoltaic (PV)/solar power system to help supply your home's energy needs?

Just as you would for any major home improvement project, doing your own research and finding the right contractor is key to a successful outcome. Will the end product be of high quality and will it perform as it should? What, exactly, is the company promising and has it proven to be true with past clients?

Beyond those obvious questions, here are some other aspects to consider before signing on the dotted line:

- ▶ Know all the costs, not just those for equipment and installation. There are also "soft costs," which can set you back for more than the system itself according to Energy.gov. Those soft costs include permitting, financing, and "pass along" costs for marketing, advertising and research.
- ▶ What are the pros and cons of solar versus electric energy?
- ▶ Thoroughly research the solar installation company you are considering. Is it a local company? Is it backed by the Better Business Bureau? How long has it been in business? Is it contracted to do business in Kansas?
- ▶ Are the people installing the system employees or subcontractors? Have they been properly trained and are they certified in solar installation?
- ▶ Does the company hold at least a \$1 million general insurance policy for possible workers' compensation and liability claims, among other types?
- ▶ Is the company skilled at and does it have a solid track record of advising the appropriate/most advantageous type and size of system needed?
- ▶ If there are incentives, who completes the paperwork for the potential tax credits, rebates and other incentives? What are the tax credit requirements?
- ▶ How much energy will the system provide and is it enough? Too much?
- ▶ Is there a master electrician on-site?
- ▶ How will the installer consult staff from my electric cooperative? Does the installer have experience coordinating/integrating solar systems with the electric grid?
- ▶ What does the bid include, exactly? Is it just for equipment? Does it include labor and installation? What about other costs?
- ▶ Does the bid and contract include breakdown costs for every component/part, as well as labor and other fees, and projected start and end dates?
- ▶ What are the complete short- and long-term costs and what will it save in the long run?
- ▶ What do objective reviewers say about their experience with the company?
- ▶ What happens to my power supply when it's cloudy?
- ▶ Do savings vary depending on geographic location?
- ▶ Does the company promise savings that sound too good to be true?
- ▶ Who maintains the equipment and how much does that cost?
- ▶ What are the safety issues surrounding solar? How is the power safely disconnected if needed?
- ▶ Should I buy or lease the system and what is the difference?
- ▶ What happens if I move?
- ▶ Does your electric utility require any additional insurance for operating a solar array?
- ▶ What happens with the renewable energy credits produced from your solar array?

These are only some of the details to consider. Be sure to do your homework before agreeing to any major home project, including a solar/PV system installation.

Please contact us prior to signing up for solar installation so we can coordinate energy grid hookup and answer any questions you may have.