

November 13, 2020



CONDENSER

Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association Newsletter

WECA Holds Hybrid 84th Annual Meeting



The Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association shifted to a hybrid format for the 84th Annual Meeting, with limited staff and some WECA board members in attendance at the Clarion Hotel and Conference Center in Baraboo, and other members and staff joining virtually. In addition to the pandemic, which is hitting record numbers in Wisconsin, a winter storm also complicated travel for those traveling from the northern part of the state. The event was largely scaled back from the typical event, which draws more than one hundred electric cooperative leaders from across the state.



The virtual election for a director-director seat on the WECA board for District 3 posed an unexpected challenge when no nominations were made. The seat is currently held by Diane Zimmerman, who has reached her term limit on the board. WECA president and CEO Steve Freese said WECA staff will work with the board to recruit and appoint a member to represent the district, which includes East Central Energy, Bayfield, Polk Burnett, Barron, Jump River, and Chippewa Valley Electric Cooperatives. The appointee will serve a one-year term.



Current WECA board member David Hischke was the sole nominee for his director-director seat representing District 4, and he was re-elected. The elections took place on the afternoon of Wednesday, November 11, via WebEx. Hischke will continue to represent the district that includes Washington Island, Oconto, Central Wisconsin, Taylor, Price, and Clark Electric Cooperatives.

The WECA Annual Meeting held Thursday, November 12 was a business meeting only, again with most members joining virtually via WebEx or Facebook Live.

Board President Diane Zimmerman called the meeting to order and delivered the board report. In the Treasurer's Report, Judi Anibas told attendees the pandemic has had a significant effect on the statewide's budget. Expenses came in under budget, due largely to the cancellation of travel and many programs. WECA ended the year with a margin of \$304,000.

In the President and CEO's report, Stephen Freese detailed all of the work done on behalf of members during the year and specifically related to the pandemic including:

- Navigated a strategy where co-ops voluntarily stopped disconnections to avoid unnecessary regulation during the Safer at Home order
- Advocated on behalf of members for support in the CARES Act to ensure essential work continues
- Facilitated legal services related to security interest in member capital credits
- Provided legal insight and alternative options to in-person annual meetings
- Created and disseminated Small Business Administration program summaries, and information about federal and state policies and programs to help co-ops and their members

Proposed resolutions, which largely consisted of clean-up and consolidation of existing resolutions passed unanimously. The annual meeting wrapped up just over an hour after it began with the screening of the "Year in Review". Watch the video [here](#).

The board's reorganizational meeting was held immediately following the annual meeting, with the following persons selected for leadership positions:

- Chairperson – Judi Anibas
- Vice Chair – Roger Wiff
- Secretary/Treasurer – David Hischke
- Executive Committee – Mike Wade and Jerry Sorenson

Freese presented outgoing WECA Board Chairperson Diane Zimmerman with the Director's Award and thanked her for her service following two terms (six years) on the board.

The Federated Youth Foundation (FYF) held its annual meeting prior to the WECA Annual Meeting. Executive Director Ethan Giebel announce positive financial news, including a record \$901,317 in scholarships and charitable giving, in addition to \$310,000 returned to co-op members.

Biden Announces Energy, Environment Transition Team

President Donald Trump has yet to concede the presidential election, but projected winner Joe Biden is putting his transition team in place, including the leadership team in the areas of energy and the environment.

The team members will brief Biden on key issues at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Environmental Protection Agency, and other energy-focused agencies.

Those selected include:

- Arun Majumdar, co-director of Stanford University's Precourt Institute for Energy and founding director of the DOE's Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy.
- Jonathan Elkind, a senior research scholar at Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy. Elkind worked for the DOE under the Obama administration, focusing on climate and energy programs with other nations.
- Noah Deich, executive director of the nonprofit Carbon180, which is seeking to transform carbon into an asset.
- Brad Markell, executive director of the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Council and chair of the AFL-CIO energy task force. Prior to joining the AFL-CIO, Markell was a union representative in Detroit who was "deeply involved in the negotiations leading to the historic tailpipe emissions standards for light-duty vehicles," according to a biography from the National Academy of Engineering.
- Patrice Simms, vice president for healthy communities at the environmental law and advocacy group Earthjustice. Simms was deputy assistant attorney general in the U.S. Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division during the Obama administration.
- Joe Goffman, executive director of Harvard's Environmental and Energy Law Program, previously worked as general counsel in the Obama EPA's Office of Air and Radiation where he helped write the Clean Power Plan, which set the first federal greenhouse gas emission standards for fossil fuel-fired power plants—a rule that has since been repealed and replaced by the Trump administration.
- Cynthia Giles, guest fellow at Harvard's Environmental and Energy Law Program. Giles analyzed EPA enforcement data for the first two years of the Trump administration and found a dramatic decline in civil penalties for polluters.

Biden also tapped Ron Klain to be his incoming chief of staff. Klain is one of Biden's most trusted campaign advisers. He previously served as chief of staff to Vice President Al Gore during the Clinton administration and also to Vice President Biden during the Obama administration. Klain is vocal about climate change, and a longtime ally of progressive environmental groups.

Trump Demotes Neil Chatterjee from FERC Chairman Position

Amid his efforts to prove that voter fraud is the reason Joe Biden is the projected winner of the presidential race, President Donald Trump took a minute to oust FERC Chairman, and former NRECA lobbyist, Neil Chatterjee from his post as chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

Chatterjee was a senior aide to Republican Senator Mitch McConnell when he was tapped to serve on the commission. As acting chair in 2017, Chatterjee was dubbed McConnell's "coal guy" for comments on a proposal that some called a bailout for the coal industry. In a few short years, however, Chatterjee would find himself at odds with many in the GOP, NRECA, and clean energy advocates as well for various reasons.

Chatterjee has spent much of this year defending his deciding vote in support of a controversial order to expand the Minimum Offer Price Rule (MOPR), which would effectively raise the floor price for all new resources receiving a state subsidy in the PJM Interconnection wholesale power market.

Several groups, including the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and the American Public Power Association (APPA), are challenging the order, saying it undermines their members. Some states in the PJM market (Wisconsin is not) are threatening to leave it altogether. Clean energy advocates say it will stifle efforts to combat climate change.

"FERC has definitely gone off the deep end on this. It feels like a devastating, existential threat" to municipal utilities, said Delia Patterson, acting CEO of APPA, said in December of 2019.

Democratic FERC Commissioner Richard Glick also slammed the FERC order at the time, saying it "blows up the entire business model" of co-ops and municipal power providers. APPA and NRECA agreed that the order could jeopardize the financial outlook for many utilities.

"We make decisions based on what is right, not on what may be considered politically favorable or expedient," Chatterjee said at the time. "My former employer (NRECA) may not be happy with the Commission's actions, but I did what I thought was right... Make decisions based on the law—not on past work experience or personal relationships."

The issues that likely prompted the White House to remove Chatterjee from his post, however, are likely his more recent pursuit of a carbon pricing posture, and his support for Order 2222—a rule that reduces barriers to distributed energy resources.

This week President Trump appointed Commissioner James Danly to replace Chatterjee as FERC chair. Danly dissented on Order 2222, and FERC's proposed carbon pricing statement. Should Joe Biden become the next president as expected, he is expected to appoint Chairman Richard Glick to chair the commission. Glick would likely prioritize reversing MOPR, take on transmission policy, and incorporate greenhouse gases into project certifications, among other climate change policy actions.

In spite of being removed as chairman, Chatterjee says he will stay on as a FERC commissioner for the remainder of his term, which ends in June.

Strong Turnout at October Member Appreciation Events



Forced to think outside the box due to the pandemic, Wisconsin's electric cooperatives got creative finding ways to show their appreciation to members with a variety of events in October for National Cooperatives Month.

Central Wisconsin Serves up more than 400 meals "to-go"

The Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative hosted a drive-thru Member Appreciation Breakfast on October 31, serving up 438 meals "to-go".

"Despite COVID-19, we felt it was important to show our appreciation to our members for allowing us to serve them," said Mike Wade, president and CEO of Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative. "The virus has caused us all to be more creative in how we operate our cooperatives."

For the safety of members and to abide by social distancing guidelines to avoid large gatherings, the co-op instead set up the breakfast in the co-op garage, so members could enter in one side and exit out the other. Members were given pre-packaged breakfasts with pancakes, sausage, syrup, and cookies in a to-go container, as well as a carton of milk and Halloween candy for kids.

In addition, stations were set up for members to donate food items for local food pantries, and toys for local children through the CWEC Toys for Tots Toy Drive, which was launched at the breakfast. Members showed their generosity by donating 443 food pantry items. The Toys for Tots Toy Drive received donations of 90 toys, 22 stocking stuffers, and two books.

"The turnout of our members and outpouring of donations went far beyond our expectations," Wade said. "The employees did a wonderful job of efficiently moving the vehicles through our shop between the donation stations. I am very proud of each and every one of them."

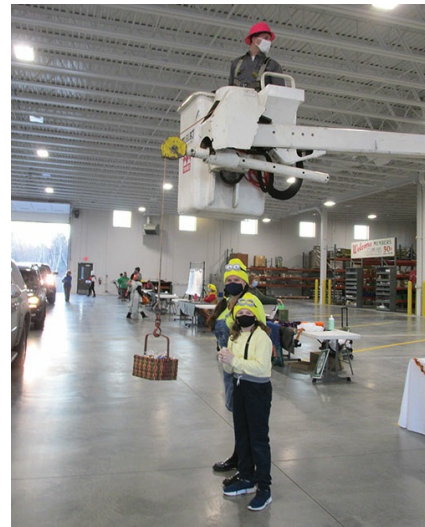
No tricks, just treats at Jump River

Jump River Electric Cooperative made sure kids in the area didn't miss out on the Halloween fun this year by hosting a very successful drive-thru trick-or-treat event at the co-op shop. Community members and co-op employees dressed up and handed out goody bags to kids.

"If smiling faces is the gauge for success, then this one was most definitely successful," said General Manager/CEO Jim Anderson. "The number of cars and trucks were tremendous, and the smiles could be seen on every face that came through during our three-hour event."

Jump River partnered with area Girl Scouts, Ladysmith Jaycees, Northwoods Dentistry, Rusk Area Chamber of Commerce, Rusk County Dairy Promoters, and Security Financial Bank to make the community event a success.

Jump River held a similar drive-thru event for June Dairy Days.



Concern for community is clear at Pierce Pepin

Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services also hosted a drive-thru event to support the community and show appreciation for members.

The co-op organized a food drive for the local food pantry, a children's winter clothing drive, and a best face mask contest. About 110 vehicles drove through the garages in both of the co-op's buildings.

In the spirit of the seventh cooperative principle, concern for community, members donated 206 pounds of non-perishable food and \$279 dollars for the Pierce County Food Shelf. They also donated winter clothing and \$275 for Basics for Local Kids.

Co-op staff said the fantastic masks worn by members was a highlight of the event. Members received a small gift and picnic supper.

Cold weather, warm reception Price Electric event

Price Electric Cooperative did not let the pandemic, or a dusting of snow and temperatures in the 20s, stop them from showing appreciation to members. The co-op held its first-ever drive-thru version of Price Electric's Breakfast on October 16.



More than 200 members received a delicious “to-go” breakfast prepared by a local restaurant—Marie’s on Fayette. The breakfast boxes included a breakfast wrap, hash brown patty, juice and sides. Members also received a goodie bag with a Price Electric 80th anniversary can koozie, face mask, and sanitizing wipes, as well as one of the co-op’s new \$mart \$ense energy efficiency packs containing LED lightbulbs, flow restrictors, and other items to improve home energy efficiency.

The members’ response to the revamped drive-thru breakfast was overwhelmingly positive, with several members referring others to stop by during the event.

WECA Urges Priority for the Utility Workforce in State’s Covid-19 Vaccination Plan

Pfizer this week released positive data about its Covid-19 vaccine, which is pending approval by the Food and Drug Administration. According to Pfizer, clinical trials show the drug is 90 percent effective in preventing infection, higher than the expected 60 to 70 percent success rate. Still, it could be several months or more before the drug reaches the general population

The Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association submitted public comments to the State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee, Vaccine Subcommittee, which is developing the state’s COVID-19 Vaccination Plan to determine how to prioritize disbursement of the vaccine, once it is available.

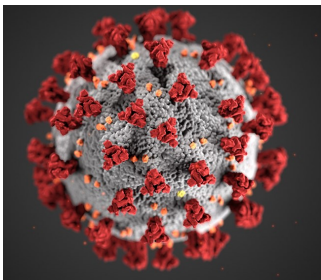
In the written remarks, WECA President and CEO Steve Freese noted that Wisconsin electric cooperatives provide service to 587,000 persons in the state, as well as power many health care clinics, care facilities, communications providers, first response centers, and many other critical service entities.

Freese requested the committee include the electric cooperative workforce, which is deemed essential by the Department of Homeland Security, in the priority phase Phase 1B tier of the Covid-19 vaccination program.

Freese writes: *Electricity is essential for every industry that provides critical services recognized by the Department of Homeland Security. While steps have been implemented to reduce interactions with the general public, many of our personnel must engage with the public to do their work. Disease spread and absenteeism within Wisconsin’s electric utilities has reduced the size of workforce at times, and could become a critical concern if the current trend continues or during a large power outage event...*

...Electric utility workers are critical to maintaining essential functions of society. In their absence comes a public welfare risk when power is lost, especially when temperatures fall. The state should classify electric workers as Tier 1-B in its COVID-19 Vaccination Plan.

The subcommittee meets again today, November 13, at 7 a.m.



Covid-19 Watch: “This is Serious!”

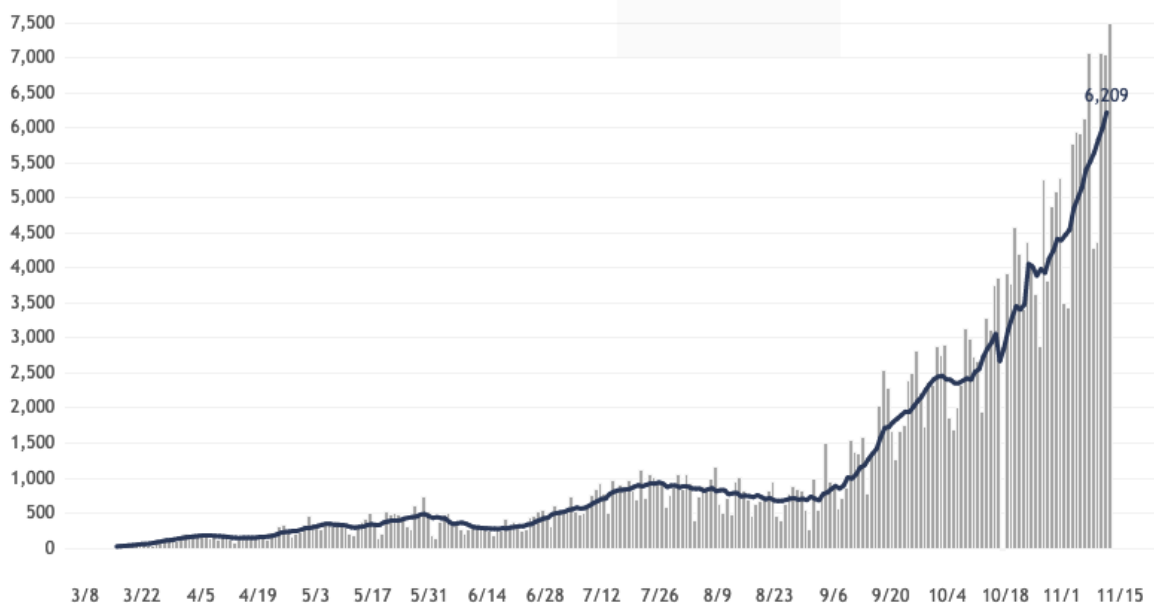
In a virtual address this week, Governor Tony Evers urged Wisconsinites to stay home whenever possible and wear a mask if you leave your home. “Folks, this is serious!” Evers said, as the state marked a week with several days reaching extreme numbers of new illnesses. At least three days in the past week marked days of 7,000 or more new confirmed cases of Covid-19.

The infection causes flu-like symptoms in varying degrees among infected persons, with the most severe cases among older people, and people with underlying health conditions. Almost 2,500 people have died in the state since the pandemic reached Wisconsin in March. Of those who died, 77 percent are people aged 70 or older, even though that age group only makes up 9 percent of total coronavirus cases.

In his address, Evers urged people not to have large gatherings for the upcoming Thanksgiving Day holiday, and instead said to visit with loved ones virtually.

New confirmed COVID-19 cases by date confirmed, and 7-day average

Updated: 11/12/2020



Number of reported confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases by date of symptom onset or diagnosis:

Wisconsin

Updated: 11/12/2020 (Total: 309,572)

Select County:

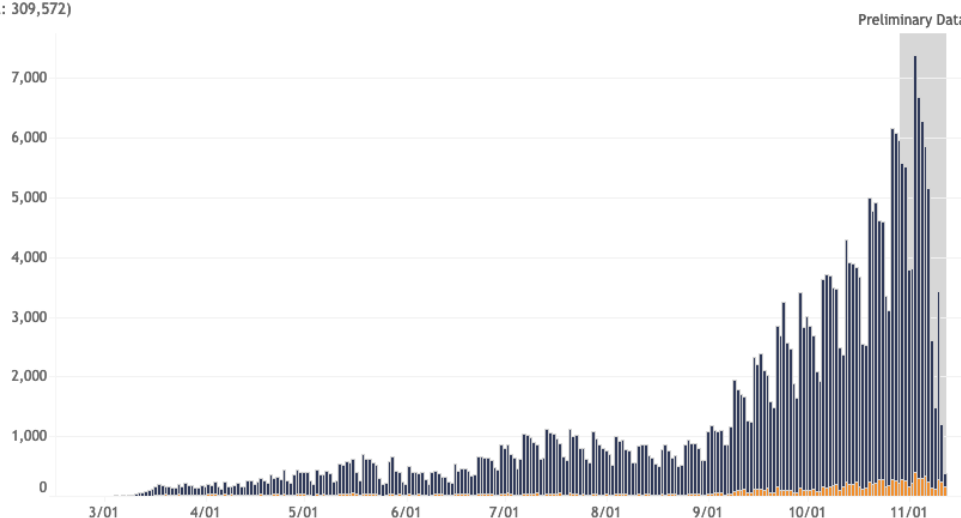
Wisconsin

Select Case Status:

- ☐ Confirmed
☐ Probable
☒ Confirmed and Probable

Confirmed cases

Probable cases



The “epi-curve” above shows the overall activity of the virus by identifying cases by date of symptom onset, when possible. [Click here](#) to filter the data by county.

PSC Seeks Applicants for \$7 Million in Energy Grants

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) this week announced it is seeking applications for \$7 million in energy innovation grants. Businesses, schools, governments, manufacturers, hospitals and nonprofit organizations as well as schools, public utilities, municipal and tribal governments, and other organizations are eligible to apply for the grant money to fund energy-related projects.

The commission created the grant program several years ago using funds from the 2009 federal recovery act. The program is intended to incentivize projects that reduce energy consumption, increase the use of clean energy or alternative transportation technologies, or increase energy resilience.

The PSC’s goal in creating the program is to support innovative energy technologies that could serve as models for emerging trends.

“Too many of our local businesses, governments, and organizations lack the financial resources to turn their innovative energy solutions into reality,” PSC Chair Rebecca Valcq said in a statement. “As we have seen in the past, when we invest in energy innovation, Wisconsin residents benefit the most, whether through paying less in taxes, creating jobs or benefitting from cleaner energy.”

In 2018 the commission received 100 requests for grants totaling more than \$31 million and awarded \$4.9 million to 31 projects. The commission voted this spring to allocate \$7 million for the second round of grants.

The PSC will host a webinar on Nov. 19 at 9:30 a.m. to provide more information on the grant program. [Application instructions](#) are available at the Office of Energy Innovation.

Now Hiring: Chief Executive Officer

Bayfield Electric Cooperative, Iron River, Wis. (HQ)—A Region 5 REA cooperative.

Bayfield Electric Cooperative is now accepting resumes from qualified candidates for the position of Chief Executive Officer. It is anticipated that based upon the retirement of the current Chief Executive Officer, the position will be available May 1, 2021.

Bayfield Electric Cooperative is seeking candidates who have a strong background in finance and utilities, preferably with a REA cooperative. Resumes are to be submitted prior to **November 30, 2020** to the attention of Bayfield Electric Cooperative's legal counsel, whose contact information is as follows:

Gill & Gill, S.C.
Attn: Gregory B. Gill, Sr.
501 S. Nicolet Rd.
Appleton, WI 54914
Telephone: (920) 739-1107
Email: gillsr@gillandgillsc.com

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The Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association would like to recognize all of our sponsors and associate members for supporting our efforts on behalf of the state's electric cooperatives, so they may continue to supply safe, reliable, and affordable electricity to members. Please join us in supporting these partners of the electric cooperative community.

This week we would like to highlight:



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