

Rachel Johnson (00:16):

Welcome back to Co-op Energy Talk. I'm your host, Rachel Johnson, and you are listening to the board meeting brief for our board meeting on Monday, June 24th. There are four items I wanted to discuss with you that our board handled this month. First and, uh, significantly, the board took the first step in giving us the go ahead to begin developing demand response programs. The way a demand response program works is basically the co-OP would offer us a program of some kind that members could enroll in that if they were to shift their demand off of our peak, we're able to save some money and pass some of those savings along to them. So this was a first step in that we're likely gonna start by developing programs that are aimed at our larger commercial and industrial members residential programs would follow that. So it might be a year or two before we have a residential program starting first with those CNI programs.

Rachel Johnson (01:02):

But the, again, the idea is just that these are programs that incentivize our members to move their electric usage off peak and we're able to then share some of those cost savings with them. And just to be very, very clear, these would be entirely voluntary programs. Members would choose to sign up for them. So the board went ahead and approved us starting to develop those programs. The second thing, uh, that the board got a special presentation on this month and approved, is updates to our billing rules. This is something we do just kind of regularly. It's been five years since we updated our billing rules last, so it was time to just, um, freshen 'em up and take a second look at them. The, the main, mostly small revisions, but the main changes, we change the amount of our deposits. Not all members pay a deposit.

Rachel Johnson (01:39):

It's based on payment history with the co-op and also their credit score with other utilities. But if there is a deposit warranted, those deposit numbers are gonna go up a little bit just to reflect the fact that our average bills have gone up a little bit. In addition to that, we've had policies in place for a long time about how we handle a location where there's a landlord, but we didn't have those details written into the billing rules. So we wrote 'em into the billing rules, not new policies for landlords, but just simply making sure that they're explained in our billing rules. And then finally, we updated our medical note policy. The way medical notes work is basically if there is a member who has some sort of a medical issue where they need access to electricity for, let's say a ventilator or something like that, they get a note from their doctor and we put that note on file and then we won't disconnect them as a result of having that note on file for up to one billing cycle.

Rachel Johnson (02:27):

So up to 21 days. This is just kind of extending that a little bit. So we're gonna allow members to use notes up to three billing cycles consecutively. Again, they still need that note to come from their doctor. If this applies to you and you have any questions, just give us a call on member services. We're happy to explain how it works. In addition to that, if you're uh, interested in our billing rules, you can find the most up-to-date version of them on our website. The third thing that the board was updated on that I just wanted to highlight is that we continue to have very, very high electric reliability. We've been bragging about this in terms of 2023 numbers and hitting four nines and so far year to date, we are still at four nines for 2024, which is great. We had a really, a banner month in May.

Rachel Johnson (03:08):

We were at nine, 9.996. I tried to convince them to flip that six round and give us five nines, but apparently that's not how it works. But still, um, just really doing very, very well in the realm of electric reliability for the year. And then the last thing that was a highlight in this month's board meeting was tied to the ME program, the Michigan Energy Assistance Program. Every single year, the co-OP has to decide whether we will opt in to that program and allow the state to assess a surcharge on our bill, which then

every member would pay on their monthly bill. And then we would collect that money and send it through to the state. And the state uses it to administer energy assistance. We have historically opted out of that program because the cost to opt in, it's cheaper for us to have write-offs than it is to pay into the funding program.

Rachel Johnson ([03:54](#)):

So that's what we've been doing for more than a decade. We made the recommendation just to continue with and stay the course. But what's interesting about this year that I wanted to talk about, we had this discussion as a board, but I'll keep talking to you also about it on the podcast, is that the state of Michigan is revising the legislation that kind of oversees that meat program. We're watching that really carefully expecting those changes to happen sometime in the next year, and that might influence our ability to continue to opt out. What seems most likely to happen is that participation would become mandatory for all utilities. The Michigan Public Service Commission every year would set what that funding factor was gonna be, and they would have a cap of up to \$2 per meter per month. We would have no say in that. So we would have to place whatever amount they decide on your bill.

Rachel Johnson ([04:39](#)):

We collect it, we send it onto the state, and then the state redistributes it in the form of energy assistance. So that's something we're watching really carefully and we'll keep you in the loop about. But for now, while the old bill or the old, excuse me, the old law is still in place, we are simply recommending that we continue to opt out. One of the consequences of opting out is that we do not disconnect members in the winter. So that means we're making a commitment to not disconnecting our members starting November 1st of this year through April 15th of next year. So again, nothing changing this year, but please do pay attention 'cause I suspect there will be significant changes in that in the coming, uh, two years. Those are the highlights from this month's board meeting. Don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions. Our next board meeting is Monday, July 22nd, and as always, we will start with member input at 9:00 AM So feel free to swing by the cooperative's office and ask to address the board. Join us next time for more co-OP Energy Talk.