

Rachel Johnson, Cherryland Electric Cooperative ([00:16](#)):

Welcome back to Co-op Energy Talk. I'm your host, Rachel Johnson, the member relations manager here at Cherry Land Electric Cooperative. And you are listening to the board meeting brief for our Monday November 28th board meeting. We discussed several really exciting things on the horizon for 2023. At that board meeting. First the board received an update on our upcoming rate change, which will go into effect in March. So the first big item of note from the board meeting, we continued our conversation with the board about our upcoming rate change. In particular, we talked to them about how we have already begun communicating with you and our plans going forward for communicating with you as the implementation date gets closer. And a few things I just wanted to put on your radar. The board, uh, has set the dates for informational sessions in January. So the first, the kind of the main informational session will be January 18th at 5:30 PM at our office here in Grand.

Rachel Johnson, Cherryland Electric Cooperative ([01:06](#)):

Anyone is welcome to come to that meeting. We'll have the board there and also members of senior staff. We'll talk through everything that is proposed in this rate change and be available to answer questions for you and help you understand how the rate change might impact you. The other in-person meeting that we will hold is prior to our January board meeting, January 23rd. That is a Monday at 9:00 AM again here at our office in Grand. And that is kind of a formal rate hearing before the board approves the rate change. So you're welcome to attend either of those meetings, but if neither of those dates or times works for you. Uh, two other resources I would just kind of point you toward one. If you go to our homepage, there's a banner right on the front page that will direct you to a rate change explainer page, I guess is the best way to describe it.

Rachel Johnson, Cherryland Electric Cooperative ([01:48](#)):

You can learn all about why all the details that went into this rate change. But in, in addition to that, there is a calculator on that page where you can input your kilowatt hour usage from your most recent bill and it will calculate for you what your bill would've been under the rate change. So just a really good way to kind of figure out how is this gonna impact me, which is usually the number one question people will have to ask. So you can go check that out. And then in addition to that, and we don't have this out yet, but we will be releasing a podcast specifically about the rate change. And you can expect to see that sometime end of December, early January. So lots of resources out there to help you understand how the rate change will impact you. And we took an opportunity at our board meeting on Monday to update the board on our plans for that.

Rachel Johnson, Cherryland Electric Cooperative ([02:24](#)):

The second thing that we discussed with the board is a multi-year plan to upgrade our metering system that will start next year. Our current metering system, which is known as an automated meter reading system or an AMR system, was installed in 2006 and it is outdated. In addition to that, they really no longer make power line carrier systems. So the way a power line carrier system works, the information the meter is transmitting is sent back and forth to our office over the power lines. That made a lot of sense when we installed it back in, you know, the early two thousands because we didn't have connectivity to every meter on our system system except for through our power lines. One of the limitations of that kind of system is that if the meter doesn't have power, it is unable to communicate with the office, which means meters can't let us know when the power goes out at the home.

Rachel Johnson, Cherryland Electric Cooperative ([03:11](#)):

So that's obviously a big limitation for us. We're also limited in terms of the amount of data the meter can transmit to us and how frequently it can transmit it to us. So there are a lot of limitations to the system. And then also this ongoing challenge of not having new powerline carrier systems being built. So what we will begin doing in 2023 is moving toward a more modern metering system that communicates via radio frequency. And that's basically just means that the, the meter is gonna communicate with our office via via radio frequency. So it can still communicate with us when it doesn't have power. And that means that you won't have to call us cuz the meter will, which is a really exciting functionality to add for our members. It will also have a lot of other benefits in terms of safety and reliability.

Rachel Johnson, Cherryland Electric Cooperative ([03:49](#)):

And I think that rather than go into all those details here, which the board got to hear about at their meeting on Monday, we'll just do a podcast specific to the new metering system. But I just wanted to let you know that they'd had that conversation and were able to kind of understand where, where we're going with our metering system. So the very beginning stages of that rollout will happen this coming spring with a pilot with just a few meters to make sure that the system functions the way we think it's going to. Assuming that pilot goes well, which we have confidence, it will, we will then begin deploying those meters across our entire system probably sometime next fall. The new metering system was a part of the capital budget that our board approved at this meeting, which is something we do every single November to make sure the board is aware of and has approved what we'll be doing in terms of investments in our system.

Rachel Johnson, Cherryland Electric Cooperative ([04:28](#)):

But a couple of high line items of note for you all the capital budget for 2023 includes about \$7 million in system upgrades in new construction. And I think that's just a really important number for our members to keep in mind because that's how much we're investing next year and almost every year to make sure that our system is as reliable and resilient as it can be for our members. And that's, um, not all utilities have that same proactive approach to maintaining their system. In addition to that, the capital and budget included \$3 million for the new metering system and again, more details on that later. And finally included about \$2 million towards buildings and grounds including a, a recent land purchase approved by the board. So overall, uh, you know, a really good discussion with them about our goals and how the investments that we're making in our system are gonna help ultimately do the one thing we're here to do, which is improve the service we provide to our members.

Rachel Johnson, Cherryland Electric Cooperative ([05:14](#)):

The other thing we had a discussion with with our board is cybersecurity. This is something we talked to them about every single month they get a report on all of the ways that we're making sure our system is secured against cyber risk, but they all recently went through a training with our national organization on cyber security. So it was just a really good chance for us to sit down with senior staff and the board and experts from our IT to talk through best practices in cyber security. And we left that meeting, uh, kind of setting a priority in early 2023 to update and bring them back a cybersecurity policy that they can put in place and also to just create a more detailed cyber crisis response plan. While we have a high degree of confidence in the preventative measures we put in place, we do wanna make sure we've also thought through how we would handle it if anything were to go wrong.

Rachel Johnson, Cherryland Electric Cooperative ([05:56](#)):

So those are some priorities we're gonna work on for the board in early 2023. And I'm sure again, continue to have updates here in the board meeting brief on that. And then the final thing, our HR director updated the board on several open positions we have here at Cherry Land right now, including a staking technician, a journeyman line worker, and <laugh> the director of human resources position because she is retiring next spring. So if you know anyone in any of those areas who might be a good fit for our culture and have a strong interest in serving our members, please do refer them to our website for more information on those positions. So that's the news of note from our board meeting this month. And just a reminder that our next meeting is Monday, December 19th. As always, we will have member input available at 9:00 AM. If you're interested in addressing the board, please come to our office at 9:00 AM and ask to speak to them. Join us next time for more co-op Energy Talk.