



# Bluestem NEWS

## Bluestem Electric Cooperative

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*Manager of Line Operations*

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*Manager of Member Services*

### Contact Us

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## FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

# It's a Matter of (Co-op!) Principles



Mike Morton

ACE Hardware, State Farm, REI, Land O'Lakes and Bluestem Electric all share something in common: We're all cooperatives.

We may be in different industries, but

we all share a passion for serving our members and helping our communities to thrive. In fact, all cooperatives adhere to the same set of seven principles that reflect our core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater community good. October is National Co-op Month, so this is the perfect time to reflect on these principles that have stood the test

of time but also provide a framework for the future. Let's take a look at the first three cooperative principles.

### Voluntary and Open Membership

Just like all co-ops, Bluestem Electric was created out of necessity — to meet a need that would have been otherwise unmet in our community. So in 1938 a group of neighbors banded together and organized our electric co-op so everyone in our community could benefit. For a modest membership fee to the co-op, any farmer could get electricity brought to his farm. Neighbors came together to tackle a problem that they all had but couldn't solve alone. They worked



**VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP**

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**Community born.  
Community led.  
Focused on YOU.**

October is  
**National Co-op Month!**

# Bluestem Electric Cooperative to Invest in Kansas-Based Solar Project



Bluestem Electric board of trustees, staff and legal counsel hold a groundbreaking ceremony at their St. George Sun Power Solar project.

Twelve Kansas Electric Cooperatives are investing in 20 megawatts (MW) of solar power to be deployed across 800 miles of the state, and provide power to 80,000 homes in rural Kansas.

Bluestem Electric Cooperative has joined 11 other rural electric cooperatives in Kansas in deploying sun farms.

Bluestem Electric's portion of the project consists of two solar arrays sized at 1 MW and 750kW each. Preliminary work has already started on the two tracts of land acquired for the project by Bluestem Electric. Construction of the project should be completed by June 2022.

Bluestem Electric's 1-MW array will be located near their St. George Substation west of the Flush Road in Pottawatomie County. The second 750kW array is located south of Bluestem's Leonardville Substation located at Highway 24 and US 82 Highway west of Leonardville in Riley County.

Today's Power Inc. (TPI), a North Little Rock-based company created by rural electric cooperatives in Arkansas, will develop and own the two Bluestem Electric solar arrays, and the 19 other arrays in Kansas. Over the past five years in Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Tennessee, Today's Power Inc. has successfully installed more than 25 solar projects totaling more than 40 megawatts. A solar power service agreement (SPSA) with Today's Power Inc. has been signed by Bluestem to purchase the solar energy generated by the two arrays for the next 25 years. This type of agreement ensures that the cooperative is not at risk or liable for ongoing costs associated with the solar system's maintenance and operation.

All of the participating Kansas rural electric cooperatives were able to negotiate very favorable long-term rates by working together in the Kansas

Cooperative Sun Power Program. In addition, in the design process, the solar arrays will be customized to optimize production during the peak demand hours of the cooperative, when electricity is most costly. These variables would all assist Bluestem to stabilize the cost of electricity and keep power affordable for those served at the 7,300 meters of the cooperative.

"Like our members, Bluestem strives to be a good steward of all available resources," said Bluestem General Manager Michael Morton. "Investing in these two solar arrays will help us continue to provide affordable power to our rural members during high-usage "peak" times when the cost of power is the most expensive."

"The progressive strategic actions of Bluestem Electric Board of Directors and management team to serve its members with sustainable energy at a time proceeding the significant switch to electric transportation is very impressive. Recognizing dynamic change and then acting on it is difficult for companies who have deployed different technologies over the past 75-80 years. Adopting this new technology is truly impressive," said Michael Henderson, president of Today's Power, Inc.

Morton added, "Utility-scale solar is the most cost-effective way to benefit all Bluestem members, while also capitalizing on a clean and renewable source of generation right here in our own community."

"We have a commitment to our community and we strive to promote quality of life in rural Kansas with every business decision we make."

## It's a Matter of (Co-op!) Principles Continued from page 16A

together for the benefit of the whole community, and the newly established electric lines helped power economic opportunity in our community.

While this history may be forgotten, key parts of that heritage remain — the focus on our mission and serving the greater good. We call on everyone to improve the quality of life and economic opportunity for the entire community. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender, language, political perspective or socioeconomic status.

### Democratic Member Control

Our co-op is well suited to meet the needs of our members because we are locally governed. Each member gets a voice and a vote in how the co-op is run, and each voice and vote are equal. Bluestem's leadership team and employees live right here in the community. Our board of trustees, who help set long-term priorities for the co-op, also live locally on co-op lines. These board members have been elected by neighbors just like you. We know our members have a valuable perspective, and that's why we are continually seeking your input and encourage you to weigh in on important co-op issues and participate in co-op elections.

Our close connection to this community ensures we get a first-hand perspective on members' priorities, thereby



**DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL**

enabling us to make more informed decisions on long-term investments, such as community solar programs, equipment and technology upgrades, electric vehicles and other programs for the good of the cooperative.

### Members' Economic Participation

As a utility, our mission is to provide safe and reliable electric energy and other services to our consumers as efficiently and economically as possible. But as a co-op, we are also motivated by service to the community, rather than profits. Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of Bluestem Electric. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for co-op programs, initiatives, capital investments and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

Because we are guided by Seven Cooperative Principles, it's not just about dollars — it's about opportunity for all and being fair when engaging with our members. The cooperative way is a values-based business model.

Bluestem Electric is a reflection of our local community and its evolving needs. We view our role as a catalyst for good and making our corner of the world a better place. This sums up the Seventh Co-op Principle, Concern for Community, which our cooperative routinely celebrates.



**MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION**

## Cold Weather Rule

Effective Nov. 1-March 31

Bluestem Electric Cooperative members who are unable to pay their electric service bills during the cold weather period may qualify for this program. The requirements members must meet to qualify are summarized below:

- ▶ **MEMBERS MUST NOTIFY** Bluestem Electric of their inability to pay their bill in full.
- ▶ **MEMBERS MUST APPLY** to federal, state, local, or other financial assistance programs for which they may be eligible to receive aid in paying utility bills.
- ▶ **MEMBERS AND BLUESTEM ELECTRIC WILL REACH** a mutually agreeable payment arrangement.

Please note that failure to follow the above requirements, illegally diverting utility service, receiving service by tampering, or defaulting on a payment agreement will disqualify the member from receiving benefits under the Cold Weather Rule.

Bluestem Electric will: Send one written notice mailed first class at least five days prior to termination of service. A member may not be disconnected until a recognized regional weather forecasting agency predicts a 24-hour forecast above the activating temperature.

The co-op shall make at least one telephone call attempt and a personal contact attempt with the member of record on the day of termination of service prior to termination of service.

In no event will Bluestem Electric disconnect service if the temperature is forecast to fall below 35 degrees Fahrenheit within 24-hours following the time of disconnection.

The Cold Weather Rule is to ensure that human health and safety are not unreasonably endangered during the cold weather months.

The Cold Weather Rule does not apply to prepay meter accounts.



# Bluestem Nomination, Election Process

## Excerpt from the Bluestem Electric Cooperative 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 Trustee 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.

These bylaws are under review by the Bluestem Electric Board of Trustees following the consolidation of offices in Feb. 2021.

### PASSWORD DO'S AND DON'TS

A strong password can make all the difference in protecting your personal information.

Follow these tips for stronger passwords.



#### DO

- ▶ Change the manufacturer's Wi-Fi password on your router.
- ▶ Use two-factor authentication.
- ▶ Use unique phrases (like lyrics to your favorite song) to remember passwords.

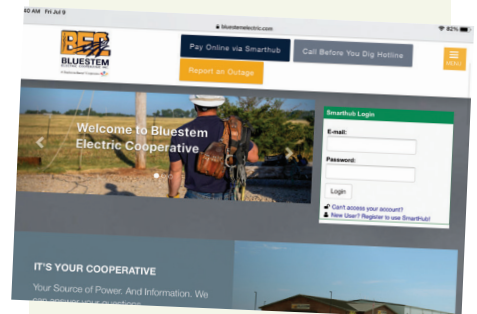
#### DON'T

- ▶ Don't use common words or numbers like "password" or "1234."
- ▶ Don't use personal details like your date of birth in a password.
- ▶ Don't use the same password for multiple accounts.

**October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month.**

Do Your Part. #BeCyberSmart

### Beware of Third Party Bill Payment Services



Bluestem Electric DOES NOT charge members to make payments on our cooperative website ([www.bluestemelectric.com](http://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.

Be sure that you see the BEC logo and use the Bluestem Electric website [www.bluestemelectric.com](http://www.bluestemelectric.com).