

Rachel Johnson (00:07):

[inaudible]

Rachel Johnson (00:07):

Welcome to Co-op Energy Talk. I'm Rachel Johnson, the member relations manager here at Cherryland electric cooperative. I am still recording the podcast in my basement. So coming to you from my house and actually I would be remiss if I didn't make a shout out to Mr. Rachel Johnson who helped, uh, make this possible by setting up a podcast recording studio in our basement. But that doesn't mean I don't miss my, my most trusted podcast companions, Tony and Rob. So I look forward to the day when we were back together in the office. But for now I wanted to take a moment to update our listeners on some changes we've had to make to our governance practices. We're all having to adjust and do things a little differently these days. Uh, the same is true of our most sacred co-op governance processes. Uh, before I get into that, let me just remind you, I know you all know this, but co-ops are a little bit different.

Rachel Johnson (01:00):

We're owned and operated, I'm sorry, owned and governed by the people we serve. The people who take electricity from us are our members and our owners. That has been true for Cherryland for 82 years this June. Uh, and what that means is that our board of directors is, consists of Cherryland members who are elected by Cherryland members. So let me tell you a little bit about what the board of directors has been up to. Your board continues to meet monthly remotely, but now they're using online video software as opposed to coming to our office for their meeting. They're still carefully reviewing our financials and what impact this will have on our members co-op. Certainly our co-op is not immune to the financial pressures of the, um, shut down related to the covert 19 crisis. Your board is making sure that we're doing everything we can to help our members and our community survive this challenging time.

Rachel Johnson (01:51):

We're looking at things like, uh, we've suspended disconnects, we've waived late fees. Your board has been a part of that. All along. They're doing what they always do, representing the members who vote, you know, re representing the members they were elected to, um, to represent and making sure that we stay true to our values and do the right things for our membership. They're just doing it in a slightly different way because they're doing it online. Uh, some of you have in the past attended our member input sessions and that is an opportunity for members to come and give the board feedback in meetings to attend physically meetings. Obviously we're not able to accommodate that right now, but no worries. Uh, you can still give member our board members input lots of different ways, including, uh, I would point to point out to you that their emails are available on our website.

Rachel Johnson (02:36):

So if you go to the governance section of our website, you will find email addresses for every board member on our board. And I'll have Rob put the link to the governance page in our website, in the description of the podcast. So speaking of the board and given the important work they do. Uh, it's important to note that we are moving into board election season. It's uh, it's kind of an essential part of our business model. You, our members have the chance to vote for who represents you on your board of directors. Our election opens May 1st and uh, as has been true for many, many years, we allow members to vote in advance of the annual meeting. We've been allowing members to vote via paper

ballot for well over a decade. Uh, we added online recently, but just so you know, your paper ballot will be mailed to you and every other Cherryland member in the may issue of country lines, which you should be receiving some time between May 1st and the fourth or fifth or so.

Rachel Johnson ([03:31](#)):

Uh, in addition, you can vote online and you can vote online using the credentials which will be printed for you on the may issue of your magazine. They will also be emailed to you on May 1st by our online voting vendor, which is called survey and ballot systems. And if neither of those options work for you, you can also log into your smart hub account online. So you go to our website and say, log into my account, log into your account, and that will, uh, you'll find a link in there that says vote. Now, click on that link. It will automatically credential you to go in and cast your vote in our board elections right now as of uh, April state today, April 28 ish. Uh, it is our intention to offer in-person voting at our annual business meeting on June 11th, but we cannot guarantee we will be able to do that because we don't know what restrictions on gatherings will exist at that time.

Rachel Johnson ([04:22](#)):

So we really, really want to encourage our members not to wait. Please, please, please take advantage of the early voting opportunities made available to you by voting using the paper ballot that you're going to receive in the magazine or voting online by logging into your account. Uh, we don't want anyone to miss the opportunity to vote. So while we hope to offer in person voting, we strongly encourage our members to take advantage of those online options. So speaking of the annual meeting, which is our kind of premier co-op governance event, every year we, we love annual meeting, we hold it at incredible most. We turn it into a big party, we get well over a thousand people and it's just a really amazing event. Um, we know our members love it too. However, this year we've decided to pair that event down and offer a simple business meeting that will be live stream to our members from our office in Groton.

Rachel Johnson ([05:12](#)):

There are several reasons we've made this change and it was not an easy one. And we know that, that that might be disappointing news to some of our members. But the biggest reason we made this change is because we don't know right now what the rules are going to be on June 11th. We don't know. Uh, um, what limits might be on the number of people who can attend an event. And, um, certainly there's just a lot of uncertainty that made it hard for planning. So it made sense to do that and make sure that we still are going to have a robust way for all members who want to, to participate in the annual meeting by making sure that it's available virtually in live-streamed. The other reason we made that decision is because of cost. Um, again, I kind of said this earlier, like every business, our business has been impacted.

Rachel Johnson ([05:56](#)):

Many our largest users of electricity are shut down right now and that has a revenue impact for the cooperative. And we thought that the prudent thing to do for our members was to cut the, some of the expenses associated with the annual meeting and at the same time still have the business meeting, which is necessary and important for our business model. Uh, so let me tell you just a little bit about the live stream. We will be streaming live on Facebook and YouTube at five 30 starting at 5:30 PM on June 11th. That is a Thursday. Uh, both of the feeds for that will be are you'll see them in the may issue of

country lines. We will reiterate them in June and the June issue of country lines. Um, and what you can expect out of the annual meeting is what we do at every annual meeting.

Rachel Johnson ([06:41](#)):

You'll get updates from your board of directors, from our general manager, Tony Anderson, you'll hear the results of the election. Um, so it's a really good opportunity, a good quick snapshot of what's going on with the co-op. We also offer members the opportunity to ask questions at the annual meeting. Traditionally this has happened live from people who are attending this year. You'll be able to ask questions by commenting on either the YouTube or Facebook feeds. We're also going to create a unique email address that members can email their questions in advance to, and you'll find the details of that, uh, both in the June issue of country lines and also on both of the live feeds. So, uh, now that I've talked about it for the better part of seven minutes, I know you probably don't think governance is the most exciting topic for a podcast, but I thank you for taking the time to listen because our governance model is one of the most important assets we have.

Rachel Johnson ([07:34](#)):

It's what has helped us offer affordable, reliable energy to our community for over eight decades now. It's what led us to be the first utility in Michigan to offer things like community, solar and rebates for electric vehicles. It's the fact that we are owned and governed by those we serve that allows us to be responsive to their needs and we are responsive to your needs because you participate and because you take the opportunity to engage and let us know what you want out of your cooperative. So while the way we engage with you has clearly changed dramatically over the last few months and may continue to do so for the next few months, uh, that governance model is still really important and sacred to us and to the members we serve. Uh, we hope that some of our new governance formats will actually provide an opportunity for members who haven't traditionally participated to engage with their co-op.

Rachel Johnson ([08:22](#)):

So, you know, busy dad out there waiting for ballet practice to get over. I'm looking at you. You can easily just jump in on our annual meeting, on your phone or Graham at home, rehabilitating from a surgery just happened on your laptop. We will be there at five 30 on Thursday, June 11th, and you can watch us on Facebook and on YouTube, whatever your circumstances. Uh, if you cannot join us for the annual meeting, please, please, please do plan to vote in advance. And if you can join us, uh, we look forward to seeing on June 11th. Um, and no matter what your circumstances, we hope that you take comfort in knowing that our governance is as strong as it's ever been, even if we're having to make some slight adjustments in how interacting engaged with our members.

Rachel Johnson ([09:12](#)):

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