

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Claverack REC

570-265-2167

1-800-326-9799

Email: mail@claverack.com

Website: <http://www.claverack.com>

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Charles R. Bullock, Zone 7
Chairman

570-280-8470

Dr. Robert R. Faux, Zone 2
Vice Chairman

570-574-3531

Danise C. Fairchild, Zone 1
Secretary/Treasurer

570-265-3599

Charles R. McNamara, Zone 8
Vice Secretary/Treasurer

570-553-4385

Angela S. Joines, Zone 3
570-756-4979

Gary L. Hennip, Zone 4
570-247-7233

Robert Fearnley, Zone 5
570-278-2288

Vacant, Zone 6

Anthony J. Ventello, Zone 9
570-364-5562

Bobbi Kilmer
President & CEO

Staff

Annette Bender, Executive Assistant

Steve Allabaugh, Director, Engineering

Doug Nichols, Director, Operations

Shelley Young, Director, Financial Services

Brian Zeidner, Director, Member Services

Office Hours

Monday through Friday

7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Jeff Fetzer, CCC, Local Pages Editor

From the President & CEO



A great day for member dialogue

By Bobbi Kilmer

THANKS to all who ventured to Elk Lake High School on one of the most beautiful evenings of the summer for our 82nd annual meeting in July.

What a great day it was for visiting with members and seeing the many positive interactions they had with our employees and board directors throughout the evening. Membership interactions with one of our employees, in fact, turned out to be one of the highlights of the event.

For those who missed it, the buzz following this year's annual meeting was regarding the great job our new right-of-way program manager, Joshua Baublitz, did in fielding a slew of questions from the stage related to invasive insects and related tree concerns.

As the co-op's first inhouse utility forester, Josh was invited to introduce himself to the membership during the business portion of the annual meeting and to provide a brief overview of our right-of-way program activities and goals.


He delivered an informative presentation that apparently left the audience wanting more. I say this because when it came time for the question-and-answer session that concludes every annual meeting, I had to bring Josh back to the stage to address the many great questions members were asking about, well, bugs mostly. An invasive insect called the spotted lantern fly has been ravaging a wide range of tree species in southeastern Pennsylvania the last few years, and during his talk, Josh warned members that it would likely make its way north to our area at some point in the future.

That generated a lively round of member questions concerning the spotted lantern fly and pointed to the need for us to educate members about this potential threat to our trees and related right-of-way issues in coming years.

Josh also capably handled members' questions about ash tree die-off due to the emerald ash borer and the co-op's right-of-way management plan to address that, as well as concerns one member had about our herbicide spray program.

This was the first time Josh had ever attended a co-op meeting, so he learned right out of the gate what a truly engaged, intelligent and thoughtful membership he will be working with and for during his career with Claverack.

While there is much to like about a co-op annual meeting — from the terrific barbecued chicken dinners and fellowship with friends and neighbors to musical entertainment and informative speakers — in my opinion, providing members with the ability to share their concerns and have direct conversations with staff and board directors throughout the evening is truly what makes our yearly gathering special.

Of course, director elections are always another important component of annual meetings, and I would like to congratulate Chuck Bullock and Charlie McNamara on their re-election to the board and welcome our newest director, Tony Ventello, to the Claverack board. I'd also like to thank outgoing director Steve Sliwinski for his 39 years of valuable service to your electric cooperative. 

More than 800 turn out for 82nd Claverack Annual Meeting

By Jeff Fetzer

MORE than 800 co-op members and guests turned out for Claverack's 82nd annual meeting July 9 at Elk Lake High School, where they enjoyed barbecued chicken dinners, learned director election results and heard speakers hold forth on a range of issues, from insects and anthracite to cybersecurity and employee safety.

Members learned during the business portion of the meeting that Anthony "Tony" Ventello of Towanda captured the Zone 9 director seat on the board, narrowly defeating Frank Bertrand of Towanda in a two-way race for the post.

The Zone 9 seat had been held by longtime director Steve Sliwinski, who opted not to seek re-election to another three-year term on the board.

In addition to Ventello, two incumbent directors, Charles R. Bullock of Meshoppen and Charles R. McNamara of Friendsville, were re-elected to the co-op board of directors, representing Zones 7 and 8, respectively. Both ran unopposed.

Directors acknowledged

Bullock, serving as acting chairman of the board for the annual meeting, thanked Sliwinski for 39 years of



ELECTION RESULTS: Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative President & CEO Bobbi Kilmer congratulates members elected to the board of directors at the co-op's 82nd annual meeting. Pictured are, from left, Kilmer and directors Charles McNamara of Friendsville, Tony Ventello of Towanda, and Charles Bullock of Meshoppen.

dedicated service to the board. He also acknowledged the contributions to the cooperative made by longtime Zone 6 director James E. Luce of Meshoppen, who passed away in April following a brief illness. Luce joined the board in 2003 and had served as board chairman since July 2016.

Bullock proclaimed the cooperative to be in excellent financial shape during his chairman's report.

"We are working hard to keep it that way," he said, touting accomplishments including nine consecutive years in which the cooperative has returned a total of nearly \$11 million in capital credits to members.

During her address to members, Claverack President & CEO Bobbi Kilmer highlighted the co-op's commitment to working safely, maintaining strong financials, operating efficiently, and improving reliability and service to members.

"Working safely is our No. 1 priority," she said, adding that the cooperative did not experience any lost-time accidents in 2018.

She also emphasized the cooperative's commitment to cybersecurity and protecting members' personal information.

"We go to great lengths to secure our systems and your information," she said. "We have network security at all locations; we routinely conduct security training with our employees, and we only work with trusted vendors."

Kilmer told members that one of the co-op's most significant priorities is to improve reliability.

Ongoing maintenance efforts, system improvement projects, and annual line and pole inspections are all important components of keeping the power flowing to members' homes, but, she said, the co-op's best means of reducing outages and blinks is through aggressive right-of-way clearing and spraying.

What's bugging us?

To bolster the co-op's right-of-way maintenance program, Claverack hired a full-time utility forester, Joshua Baublitz, last year.



VEGETATION MATTERS: Claverack's right-of-way program manager, Joshua Baublitz, left, explains his approach to vegetation management to members Bob Chiarella and Matt Fischer, right, both of Hallstead, during the co-op annual meeting at Elk Lake High School July 9.

Baublitz also addressed the annual meeting crowd, providing an overview of the co-op's systematic approach to right-of-way management.

One of the biggest challenges in recent years, he said, has been the death of thousands of ash trees along co-op lines caused by an invasion of an exotic forest pest called the emerald ash borer.

"We have removed almost 2,500 hazardous trees from our circuits since I started here almost a year ago," Baublitz told the crowd. "Roughly 1,500 of those trees were in a single 60-mile circuit. If you do the math, that's 25 trees per mile of line."

To illustrate the scope of the ash tree issue, he noted that if there were



MMM GOOD: Co-op consumer-members line up for their barbecued chicken dinners during the 2019 annual meeting. Staff with the Elk Lake School District and the Susquehanna County Career & Technology Center served approximately 830 dinners.



DISPLAYS: Claverack member Jeff Armstrong, left, of Milk Can Corners, chats with co-op management in the display area prior to the start of the annual meeting.

a similar distribution of hazard trees along the cooperative's 2,700 miles of electric lines, that would translate to 67,500 trees that could potentially impact the system.

"Hazard trees are by far the biggest visible issue and one of the costliest that we face," he said. "We must tackle this problem while simultaneously balancing it against our annual trimming, mowing and spray treatments."

Unfortunately, Baublitz said, even more difficult days may be ahead for the region's trees and the co-op's right-of-way maintenance efforts. He explained that another invasive insect, the spotted lantern fly, has begun devastating a wide variety of trees in southeastern Pennsylvania.

"It will feed on over 70 different plants that include many agriculture products and hardwood species found in our service territory," he said. "While it is not here yet, I am a realist and believe in five to 10 years, we will see the spotted lantern fly enter our system."

Baublitz said the co-op is assessing its right-of-way specifications to determine how the system can be hardened against the spotted lantern fly's arrival.

Members had numerous questions for Baublitz, mostly about the spotted lantern fly, during the question-and-answer session held at the conclusion of the business meeting. A future article in *Penn Lines* will address this forest pest in more detail.

Rural voices

Guest speaker Van Wagner, a musical historian from Danville, regaled the crowd with a presentation centered on the region's coal mining history, adding that anthracite coal had been mined in



MEET THE EMPLOYEES: Lou Santamour, left, a Claverack member from West Nicholson who has been coming to the co-op annual meeting every year for 42 years, shares a laugh with Director of Member Services Brian Zeidner. "I wouldn't miss it," Santamour said of the annual meeting. "I like everything about it, especially the food!"

the Forest City area of Susquehanna County beginning around 1889.

Wagner, who teaches environmental science at Lewisburg High School, detailed the difficult life and many perils facing Pennsylvania's early coal miners and noted he had spent time working in the anthracite mines of Schuylkill County early in his career.

"Coal miners have an unbelievable amount of grit," he said. "I wouldn't have traded my times in the mines for



MAPS: Claverack's field services supervisor, Nathan Stoddard, shows member Jim James of Hop Bottom, left, a map of his property using the co-op's GIS mapping system.

anything else in the world — it made me one of the happiest teachers you'll ever meet!"

During a reorganizational meeting immediately following the annual meeting, Bullock was elected board chairman, Dr. Robert R. Faux of Tunkhannock was elected vice chairman, Danise C. Fairchild of Wyalusing was elected board secretary/treasurer, and McNamara was elected vice secretary/treasurer. 🌟

Install a heat pump, receive a rebate

IF YOU are planning to build a new home or replace your existing heating system, Claverack encourages you to consider installing one of the most energy-efficient heating and cooling systems on the market: heat pumps.

In addition to saving money on heating bills, members who install either a ground-source or air-source heat pump in their homes are eligible

for a rebate from Claverack.

Rebates are based on the type of heat pump you install. Claverack offers a \$100-per-ton rebate for air-source heat pump installations, and \$150-per-ton rebate for ground-source heat pumps. The maximum rebate amount is \$900. Only heat pumps installed within the past 12 months are eligible for rebates.

Additional information about heating and cooling is available on Claverack's website, claverack.com.

The co-op can also direct members to local mechanical contractors who sell, install and service heat pumps. Please call the Claverack office at 1-800-326-9799 for more information about these installers or our rebate program. 🔍

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Cookware Tip: Copper-bottomed pans heat faster on the stove. In the oven, ceramic and glass dishes are better than metal. With ceramic and glass dishes, you can turn the oven down about 25 degrees, and your meal will cook just as quickly.

Source: energy.gov



Even out your payments with Levelized Billing

You can avoid large fluctuations in your electric bill from month to month by participating in Claverack's Levelized Billing plan.

The program allows you to level out your monthly payments throughout the year.

Levelized Billing is available to members with at least one year of electric use, provided they have fewer than two late payments in the prior 12 months.

This plan is particularly helpful to members with electric heating or central air conditioning systems, since their electric bills tend to increase significantly during the heating and cooling seasons. It's also convenient for those on fixed incomes.

If you are interested in a Levelized Billing plan, please call the financial services department at 1-800-326-9799.

SmartHub: Manage your account from anywhere

SmartHub, Claverack's online bill payment and account management program, lets you manage all aspects of your account online or with your mobile device.

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