

# Clay ELECTRIC News

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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## From the Manager

**T**he weather is starting to warm up and with more sun in the sky, the prospect of using some of that energy comes to mind. Clay Electric Co-operative is your trusted energy partner and it's our business to help you find the best energy solution for your situation.

There have been extensions to some programs incentivizing solar panel installations. Some tax credits have been extended and programs to provide Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) are still available. We hope that our members who pursue solar power benefit as much as possible from these programs.

Unfortunately, when money is involved, there will always be bad actors. Responses to the reality of solar generation among our membership has been mixed. Ultimately, how beneficial solar is for a member will vary greatly on their usage profile and location. There are many variables that need to be considered when looking into a solar solution, and we are here to help.

To protect yourself while in the market for a solar system, keep in mind that prices between vendors can vary drastically. Get multiple quotes from different companies to ensure you get a good price for your system. When modeling the Return

On Investment (ROI), it's important to consider not only your savings over the life of the system, but monthly as well. It isn't doing you much good to save \$100 on your electric bill if your system is financed for \$200 a month.

Reputable solar providers will model the expected savings over the life of the system and will project an estimate on when your savings will offset the installation cost. To come up with a good model, it's important they receive the most accurate information. Most solar installers will ask a customer to provide two years of usage data. Clay Electric Co-operative is happy to provide this data to our members as well as a detailed rate explanation. Knowing how much you use and how our rates work will let your solar installer model the size and cost benefit of a solar system as accurately as possible.

A solar company that wants to see only one bill or does not inquire about the details of our rate structures cannot model accurately. Be wary of promises like, "You'll have \$0 utility bills!" or "They'll cut you a check every month!" Remember the old adage, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is." Always do your due diligence.

It's important to know how a potential solar installer plans to assist you in getting the solar incentives that are available. There are many

programs currently on the books that incentivize green energy installations. Does your installer intend to fill out the paperwork for you? Is it included in the price already? Do you need to apply yourself? These are all important questions to have answered before signing any contract.

Clay Electric Co-operative is dedicated to our members and helping them find their best energy solution. As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, we have no incentive to try and promote or dissuade you from pursuing green energy. What we do care about is keeping our members in power and knowledgeable about how a construction project might or might not be in their best interest financially.

If you are considering member side generation, please contact us so we can help you understand the benefits and potential pitfalls of a construction project. Our goal is to protect our members' interests. We are your trusted energy partner and finding the best solution for your unique situation is our job. **9602-001**

As always, keep a lookout for your member number in the center section of this magazine. There are three member numbers hidden in Clay Electric News. If you find your number and give us a call you win \$5 off your next bill!



Luke  
Johnson  
CEO

# Beautify your yard, not utility equipment

**G**reen or grey utility boxes, known as pad-mounted or padmount transformers, are part of the supply chain that helps provide power to your neighborhood. Those boxes sit on an easement, which allows us access to them.

What are the green boxes for? Their job is to step down high-voltage electricity to a lower voltage needed for the underground wires supplying power to the lights and appliances in homes.

Please do not paint, enhance, block or otherwise obstruct padmount transformers. By respecting all utility equipment, including meters and transformers, you can help keep the power on and your local utility workers safe.

As you beautify your yard this spring and summer, Clay Electric Co-operative and Safe Electricity remind you of these safety tips:

- Do not plant shrubs and trees close to padmount transformers or other utility equipment. Limiting or restricting access to the box in your yard could delay restoration work during an outage and create a serious safety hazard. We need at least 10 feet of clearance in front of the transformer (the side that is padlocked), as well as four feet of clearance on the other three sides. Do not place any items on or hang any items from utility equipment,

this goes for padmount transformers and utility poles too!

- Contact us with questions about landscaping around or installing fencing near a padmount transformer (or any other changes) to learn what is allowable.
- Contact us if the transformer becomes unlocked or if it or any other type of utility equipment appears to be damaged.
- Call 811 prior to digging around a transformer and respect the clearance requirements noted above. If you dig near a transformer (even if it is beyond the clearance requirements), you could inadvertently hit a live underground cable. Always call 811 prior to any digging.
- Keep a clear path to the transformer. The transformer is on an easement and our workers need clear access to it to maintain equipment and keep power running smoothly. **4081-001**

Contact us with any questions or concerns about the safety of padmount transformers. Always teach children that they should not sit on, open or play around the padmount transformers. For more about electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).



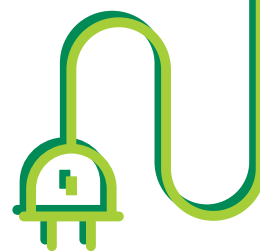
*Do not plant shrubs close to padmount transformers or other utility equipment. We need at least 10 feet of clearance in front of the transformer.*

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Some manufacturers set water heater thermostats at 140 degrees, but most households usually only require them to be set at 120 degrees.

Consider lowering your water heater's temperature to save energy and slow mineral buildup in the heater and pipes.

Source:  
[www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)



# Planning a yard project? Don't just dig in

**A**pril is National Safe Digging Month. It reminds us all that as we begin beautifying our yards, we shouldn't just dig in. According to 811, the "Call Before You Dig" national hotline, an underground utility is damaged **every nine minutes** because someone didn't call before digging.

Whether it is a do-it-yourself project or you are hiring a professional, call 811 two to three days prior to starting any digging project to request that all underground utilities be marked. The service is free.

You may think it won't hurt anything to dig in an unmarked yard when landscaping, installing a fence, deck or mailbox, or even just planting a small flower bed or bush, but damaging an underground cable can have serious consequences.

Hitting a line could result in serious injuries and disrupted service for you and your neighbors. It could also make a dent in your wallet for repair fees or other fines.

The 811 hotline points out that there is more than one football field's length of buried utilities for every man, woman and child in the U.S. Before digging:

- **Notify** the one-call center by calling 811 or making an online request 2-3 days before work begins.
- **Wait** the required amount of time for affected utility operators to respond to your request.
- **Confirm** that all affected utility operators have responded to your request and marked underground utilities.
- **Dig Carefully** around the marks with care. **14883-001**

Remember that **privately owned underground lines** will NOT be marked by location flaggers. Examples of private lines/equipment include well and septic, underground sprinkler systems, invisible fencing, gas or electric lines that serve a detached building, as well as any lines (electric, water, sewer) from the meter to your home. More information on how to be safe around electricity can be found at [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

## 5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Careless digging poses a threat to people, pipelines and underground facilities. Always call 8-1-1 first. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:



### 1. NOTIFY

Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before your work begins. The operator will notify the utilities affected by your project.

### 2. WAIT

Wait two to three days for affected utilities to respond to your request. They will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines.



### 3. CONFIRM

Confirm that all affected utilities have responded to your request by comparing the marks to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified.



### 4. RESPECT

Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. The markers are your guide for the duration of your project.



### 5. DIG CAREFULLY

If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project location.



Source: [call811.com](http://call811.com)

# Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting

## February 22, 2021

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc. (CECI) was held at the Clay Electric Co-operative Headquarters, Flora, Illinois beginning at 12:55 o'clock p.m. on Monday, Feb. 22, 2021.

Trustees present were: Kevin Logan, Bob Pierson, Bill Croy, Neil Gould, Richard Rudolphi, Frank Czyzewski, Danny Schnepfer and Evan Smith. Also present were: Luke Johnson, CEO and Tyra Cycholl, Attorney for the Board. Frank Herman was present via conference call. The meeting was opened by Bob Pierson, who presided and Neil Gould, acted as secretary thereof.

The invocation was given by Neil Gould, and was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

The following proceedings were had [all action being first duly moved and seconded and all action taken being upon the unanimous vote of the Board or without dissenting vote of abstention unless otherwise stated]:

**APPROVED**, the Suggested Agenda.

**HEARD**, a Financial update regarding the loan portfolio, sources of revenue and Form 7 comparisons.

**APPROVED**, the Consent Agenda including the following:

- **APPROVED**, the prior meeting minutes.
- **APPROVED**, (a) to admit to membership those 11 applicants connected for service since the last such review by the board, and (b) cancel those 7 former members shown on the Manager's Report since the last such review by the Board, said members no longer taking service;
- **APPROVED**, the Work Orders;
- **DISCUSSED**, then **APPROVED**, the Disbursements;
- **DISCUSSED**, then **APPROVED**, the Credit Card Statements;
- **REVIEWED**, the Attorney Retainer;
- **REVIEWED**, the Account Summary Report;

■ **REVIEWED**, the Federated Report from the Board.

**APPROVED**, the Purchase Power Agreements as presented.

**APPROVED**, the Clay Farming Contract.

**REVIEWED**, the CFC quarterly loan payment.

**WERE REMINDED**, the NRECA Annual Meeting is being held virtually.

**HEARD**, a report by Luke Johnson regarding the SIPC Meeting.

**HEARD**, a report by Kevin Logan regarding the AIEC Meeting.

**WERE REMINDED**, the Federated Annual Meeting and CFC Forum will be June 14-16 in San Antonio, Texas.

**WERE REMINDED**, the Legislative Conference will be online April 19-23.

AT 1:55 p.m. **APPROVED**, entering into Executive Session.

AT 2:20 p.m. **APPROVED**, exiting Executive Session.

**HEARD** and **APPROVED**, a financial report by Luke Johnson as to the following:

- January 2021 Form 7;
- January 2021 Balance Sheet;
- PCA Approval;
- January 2021 Cash Flow;
- SIPC Power Delivered in January 2021;
- December Line Loss;
- Monthly Reconciliation.

**APPROVED**, giving CEO Luke Johnson the authority to do a Power Cost Adder.

**HEARD**, a Safety Report for the month.

**REVIEWED**, the Monday morning Safety meeting held Feb. 16, 2021.

**REVIEWED**, the Federated Workers Compensation Experience Mod Summary Report.

**HEARD** and **APPROVED**, the Manager's report by Luke Johnson on the following topics.

- Operations Report;
- Communications Report;
- Upcoming meetings.

**REVIEWED**, the Operations Report.

**REVIEWED**, the Communications Report.


**WERE REMINDED**, of upcoming meetings on, March 22, 2021 at 1 p.m. and April 26, 2021 and May 24, 2021 at 7 p.m. in the Clay Board Room.

There being no further business to come before the Board, said meeting was declared adjourned at 3:05 p.m.



Every month we will have three member numbers hidden throughout Clay Electric News. If you find your member number that corresponds to the one found on the upper right corner of your bill, call our office and identify your number and the page it's on. If correct, you will win a \$5 credit on your next electric bill.

## Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc.

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