



Cover Photo: Jan Nieland, March Calendar Photo Contest Winner

Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

March 2020

EMPOWERING

communities with
innovative, sustainable
energy solutions

FOR OVER

75

YEARS

Director Nominations Now Open for Districts 5, 6, and 7

Would you like to serve as a director on the Agralite Electric Cooperative Board for your district?

Agralite Electric Cooperative is governed by a seven-member board of directors elected by our membership. The cooperative's service territory is divided into seven districts with each district represented by a director who resides in that district. Directors elected serve a three-year term.

This year, we will have an election for directors for Districts 5, 6, and 7.

District 5: Includes the townships of Camp Lake, Kerkhoven, Kildare, Hayes, Cashel, Dublin, Pillsbury, and Lake Johanna

District 6: Includes the township of Tara, Clontarf, Benson, Marysland, Six Mile Grove, Torning, and Swenoda

District 7: Includes the townships of Hegbert, Fairfield, Shible, Moyer, Appleton, Edison, West Bank, Artichoke, Upper Akron, Lower Akron, Stevens, and Synnes

As per the Bylaw changes in 2016, any member meeting the qualifications as specified in the Bylaws of Agralite Electric Cooperative may become a candidate for election to the Board by submitting a written petition for nomination with the signatures of no less than 15 members who are residents of the district for which the election is being held. All voting will be done by mail. Ballots will be mailed to all Agralite voting members on record in these districts before the Annual Meeting. The election will take place at the Annual Meeting on May 18, 2020, at the Benson High School.

For questions about the nominating process and becoming a director or to pick up a petition for nomination, please call 320-843-4150 or stop by our office.

Petitions are due to the office by 4:30 pm on Wednesday, April 8th, 2020.

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Insert, Side 1 ► Manager's Article: Stray Voltage

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We are closed Friday, April 10, for Good Friday.

Agralite Electric Co-op

We're member-owned!

320 US-12, Benson, MN
(320) 843-4150
1-800-950-8375
www.agralite.coop
8:00am - 4:30pm M-F



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Follow us on Twitter

CURRENT AGRALITE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kathy Draeger, Clinton
District 1

Jeff Hufford, Morris
District 2 - Secretary/Treasurer

Bennett Zierke, Hancock
District 3

Steve Nelson, Starbuck
District 4

Orvin Gronseth, Murdock
District 5 - President

Andrea Thomson, Benson
District 6

Warren Rau, Appleton
District 7 - Vice President



Touchstone Energy®

Agralite is a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative.



Andrea Thomson

athomson@agralite.com

Please tell Agralite Members a little bit about yourself.

I was born and raised in Benson, MN. I have been married to my wonderful husband Phil for 35 years. We traveled the country as an Air Force family for 12 years and returned to Swift County with our family. We have 4 children, 3 in-law children, and 5 beautiful grandchildren.

Are you active in any community activities?

I am involved with the Lake Hazel Association, which works to preserve our church and cemetery. I have served on other community boards, which promote the improvement and development of the community. I am an active supporter of our local hospital and church. I enjoy participating in local activities.

How long have you been an Agralite Member?

Our Agralite Electric Co-op membership began with our return to Swift County in 1997.

Why do you want to be a Director?

I am currently running for my 3rd term as Director on the Board. I have learned so much about the electric power industry and co-op world. This is knowledge that will serve me in my role as a director.

What does the role of Director mean to you?

Our co-op makes a big difference to our members and the

community. We help with community development. It is very exciting to be apart of the improvement of our area. It is also very exciting to be involved in the evolution of the renewable energy and the role it will play in member's lives.

Please characterize what you see as the role of Agralite's board?

As a director of the co-op, my job is to represent our members. The Agralite board assists in making decisions that best serve our members.

What aspects of the director's job do you consider the most crucial?

The power industry is changing and facing many challenges. In the director's role we have access to information provided not just by local experts but experts from across the nation and beyond. These resources are critical to doing the director's job of making informative decisions for our co-op members, and preparing for the future of our co-op.

What work experience or other board experience do you have that will help you be an effective Director?

I have been employed with Edward Jones for 15 years as a financial advisor. I have served on the Benson Area Community Foundation, which is very involved in community development.

What challenges do you see for Agralite Electric Cooperative in the future and how does the cooperative meet these challenges?

Upcoming legislation for renewable energy will be a big challenge. We continue to educate the board to help make important decisions. Continuing to provide safe, reliable, and affordable energy to our members will be our biggest challenge.

What does the role of Director mean to you?

Representing the coop and its member owners to work for the continued health of the coop to better serve the membership.

Please characterize what you see as the role of Agralite's board?

I feel our job, as board members, is to maintain the financial health of the coop while still suppling reliable and affordable electricity to our membership.

What aspects of the director's job do you consider the most crucial?

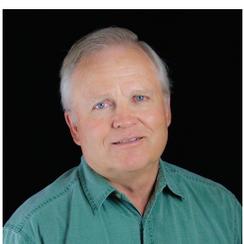
Keeping pace with the transition to more green energy and home-produced energy in an affordable and equitable manner.

What work experience or other board experience do you have that will help you be an effective Director?

I'm involved on several boards as listed earlier.

What challenges do you see for Agralite Electric Cooperative in the future and how does the cooperative meet these challenges?

Working with state and federal legislators in setting policy that we in rural Minnesota can live with both financially and responsibly.



Warren Rau

320.394.2332 or 320.808.7921

Please tell Agralite Members a little bit about yourself.

I am a lifetime resident of Hegbert Township, Swift County, where I farmed with my wife Elaine until two years ago when I retired. I have several outside interests in the community and hope to remain actively involved in these organizations.

Are you active in any community activities?

I am an active member of the Appleton Ambulance Service. I also serve on the Appleton Hospital Board, the Hegbert Township Board, as well as the Upper MN Valley Reginal Development Committee. I also sit on the Minnesota Rural Electric Association statewide board.

How long have you been an Agralite Member?

We have been Agralite members since my wife and I took over my family farm in 1974.

Why do you want to be a Director?

I feel I have good insight and common sense that can serve the coop well.

BOARD DIRECTOR CANDIDATES Q & A



Orvin Gronseth

320.368.0441

Please tell Agralite Members a little bit about yourself.

I am the senior member of our Board of Directors. I have been President of the board for the past three years.

Interestingly, I am the only Veteran at the present time. When I was first elected there were four veterans from four different military organizations.

Are you active in any community activities?

Presently Treasurer of Swift County Conservation District, Treasurer of Post 0062 American Legion in Benson, and Vice President of Sunburg Trolls Car Club in Sunburg.

How long have you been an Agralite Member?

Resident of Kerkhoven township, Swift County, with 50+ years on Agralite lines with my wife, Donna.

Why do you want to be a Director?

I was an electrical contractor in the late 60's, 70's, and early 80's along with always being a farmer and rancher. I have been in some sort of electrical business since my U.S. Navy days in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii as a submarine repair electrician. My knowledge and experience still serves me well.

What does the role of Director mean to you?

It's a leadership role, continuing to serve my electrical cooperative with the best decisions possible.

Please characterize what you see as the role of Agralite's board?

With the information and advice of our manager and staff, all issues concerning our cooperative are discussed by the board before making final decisions.

What aspects of the director's job do you consider the most crucial?

In this fast moving world of technology, we must keep up with education to always know what's really happening.

What work experience or other board experience do you have that will help you be an effective Director?

I serve on one county board and one Veteran board, along with two charitable organizations. Always surrounded by great people serving the public.

What challenges do you see for Agralite Electric Cooperative in the future and how does the cooperative meet these challenges?

Maintaining fair electric rates

Keeping some of our base load coal plants in Wyoming and North Dakota

Keeping up with education on new technology

Always looking for the best use and fit of solar, wind, and battery storage power in our future.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.



Find your account number and win a \$100 credit!

If you find your account number (as it appears on your monthly electric bill) hidden in this issue, give our office a call by the end of the month and you will receive a \$100 bill credit.

Happy Retirement
Steve **30 YEARS**

Agralite Lead Lineman Retiring After 30 Years

This past month, we said congratulations and good luck to another longtime employee at Agralite. One of our Lead Linemen, Steve Eix, has retired after 30 years with the cooperative. We will miss Steve and wish him all the best in the next phase of his life.

Steve, thank you for outstanding service and dedication over the last 30 years!



Call Day or Night
1.888.884.3887

Do not call the office for outages

February Energy Payment IS DUE March 20.*

*We accept Visa, Discover & Mastercard.



2020 Agralite Post-Secondary Education Scholarship Program

Agralite Electric Cooperative post-secondary education scholarship program is now accepting applications. This program is open to the four county region that Agralite provides electric service to: Big Stone, Pope, Stevens, and Swift counties. Agralite Electric Cooperative will award two \$2,500, two \$1,000, and three \$500 scholarships. One of the \$2,500 scholarship awards is intended for individuals interested in becoming an electrical line worker or electrician. These scholarship funds are made available in part from unclaimed capital credits and in part through administration proceeds from The Rural Economic Development Loan program.

Obtain forms and applications from your school counselor, the Agralite Electric Cooperative office, or www.agralite.coop.

The completed application and all other necessary information must be returned to Agralite Electric Cooperative no later than April 17, 2020.

Please call, click or visit Agralite Electric Cooperative for more information today. Applicants who applied for the Basin Electric scholarship may also apply for the Agralite scholarship.

NEW FARM ENERGY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Participate in a new energy efficiency management program designed to assist all types of agricultural producers by identifying and prioritizing energy efficiency opportunities. Receive an energy management plan, one-on-one technical assistance, personalized advice, and support to help you make the best energy efficiency decisions for your operations – AND rebates are now available through your co-op to assist with the cost of the energy audit.

YOUR FARM, YOUR ENERGY PLAN, AND YOUR FUTURE

Your operation is unique and requires targeted assistance. This program will take the guesswork out of where to spend your time, money, and efforts when it comes to energy management.

Get an evaluation of your operation, equipment, and energy use that will provide you with:

- Objective, third-party information on practical ways to save.
- Simple, no-cost operational changes that can save you money.
- An energy audit tailored to your agricultural operations.
- Analysis of your energy use, which equipment is using the largest amounts of energy, and what can be done to decrease your energy costs.
- As a Cooperative Member, you are only responsible for 25% of the cost of the audit, the remaining 75% of the cost is being paid for by a grant received from the Rural Energy for America (REAP).

For any questions, please contact Agralite for more information and assistance in getting these rebates and incentives to help improve your bottom line – today!

COLD WEATHER RULE

Minnesota residential cold weather law (MN Statute, Ch 235, sec.216B.097) provides that cooperative utilities cannot disconnect a residential consumer between October 15 and April 15, provided that certain conditions are met. These conditions include:

1. **The disconnection would affect the customer’s primary heat source; and**
2. **The customer has declared an inability to pay on forms provided by the coop; and**
3. **The household income of the customer is less than 50% of the state median income, as documented by the customer to the coop; and you have entered into a payment schedule and are reasonably current with your scheduled payments.**

It is important to remember that a customer must meet all of the above conditions in order to be covered by the law.

There are several agencies that provide financial assistance to qualifying households. We urge you to check with them for details on available programs. Contact your local health and human services department, or one of the community action councils listed below:

Prairie 5 CAC 320-269-7976

West Central CAC 800-492-4805

Heartland CAC 320-235-0850



These factors can contribute to neutral-to-earth voltage situations:

-  Deteriorated wiring, particularly if a circuit is overloaded
-  Inadequate or improper grounding of electrical equipment
-  Electrical shorts in equipment, or heating elements in livestock waterers
-  Unbalanced 120-volt loads on single-phase services
-  Undersized neutral wires or high resistance connections
-  Unbalanced three-phase loads on multiphase electric services
-  Improperly grounded equipment or electrical faults on a neighboring farm

Stray Voltage *by Manager Kory Johnson*

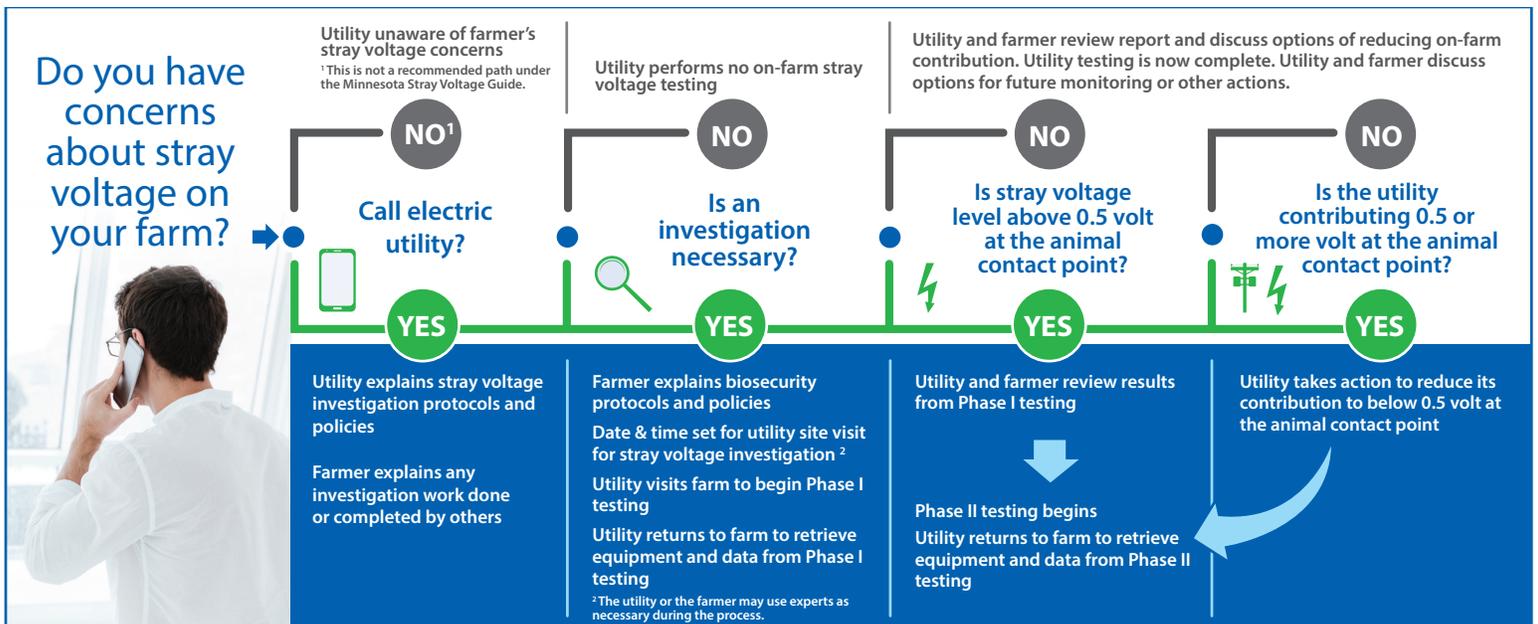
One often misunderstood aspect of electricity use on farms is the concept of “stray voltage” or “neutral-to-earth voltage”. This term is used to describe a very low-level electrical voltage between two objects that an animal or human can touch simultaneously. It is not what we normally think of as an electrical shock, the voltage levels and current flow are much lower. Humans rarely experience stray voltage. But for animals, much lower levels can be sensed due to the better electrical contact between their four feet and the wet concrete floor, or their wet nose and a waterer, metal feed bunk, or stanchion.

If farmers notice a change in production that seems to be associated with electrical equipment operation, or if animals exhibit extreme nervousness or a reluctance to eat or drink, neutral-to-earth voltage is one possible cause.

Voltage is the electrical pressure or force necessary to cause the flow of current. Just as pressure is needed to make water flow through a pipe, voltage must be present to cause electric current to flow through a wire. It is a normal and necessary

part of any electrical system. A problem may occur when there is a voltage difference between two animal contact points that is great enough to cause a flow of current. When this voltage difference becomes large enough, and the animal can simultaneously touch these two points, neutral-to-earth voltage may adversely affect the animal. Symptoms include a reluctance to drink from a livestock fountain, or touch metal objects. Dairy cows may exhibit slow milk “let down” or be excessively nervous when being milked.

If you have questions concerning stray voltage, contact Agralite Electric Cooperative. Also, in this newsletter is a guide and explanation of the process if you suspect stray voltage is an issue. A coop representative will help identify the source of the neutral to earth voltage. Sometimes it is easy to find the issue and sometimes it can be a time-consuming process that requires investigating many different possibilities. However, if an incident is reported, Agralite is committed to finding a solution.



MINUTES OF MEETING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

January 2020

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., January 30, 2020. All members of the Board were present except Director Draeger and Director Zierke. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, the monthly disbursements, and payment of capital credits of deceased members were approved.

Jonathan Messner, Manager of Member Services, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed load management for the month and 2019 year. He discussed the Landis & Gyr ALM project. He showed the updated Agralite Newsletter for February, and showed the electronic email that paperless users will receive.

Jenny Stryhn, Manager of Finance, discussed Agralite's preliminary margins for the month of December. She discussed year-end credits received. She stated that 2019 was the highest sales in the history of the cooperative. She stated the auditors from Eide Bailly were in the office January 27-29 for the 2019 audit. They will present the completed audited financials at the February board meeting. The medical alert program has been officially complete. Jenny brought forth Work Order #487 and Special Equipment WO December 2019 and the Board approved them.

The financials were given by Jenny with a PowerPoint presentation.

Kory Johnson reported on activities for the Engineering and Operations department for the month. He discussed line crew projects and recent outages. He discussed the Dublin Substation and the AMI project. He showed a report of the collectors and routers installed as of 1/23/20.

There was no safety report for December.

Jonathan showed graphs for the output of Agralite's Community Solar panels.

The 2020 Agralite Annual Meeting was set for May 18, 2020, at the Benson High School.

The Board reviewed the composition of the seven districts as per the Bylaws. The districts are all equal.

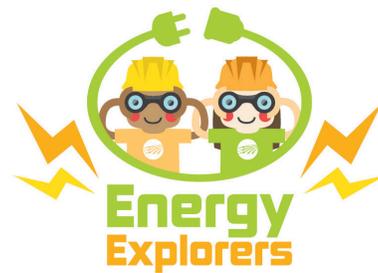
Kory Johnson, General Manager, reviewed his report to the board. He discussed recent meetings that he attended, energy sales and wholesale rates, and cooperative governance videos.

The February board meeting was set for the 27th.

Being no further business came before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.

SPRING EFFICIENCY QUIZ

Spring is just around the corner! Take this quiz to learn how you can help save energy around your home. Hint: Check your work in the answer key below.



1. Sealing air leaks around _____ saves energy and keeps your home comfortable.

A) doors B) windows C) both A and B

2. Unplug devices and electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use, like _____.

A) refrigerators B) cell phone chargers
C) dishwashers

3. Ceiling fans cool people, not rooms, so turn them off when you leave the room to save energy.

A) True B) False

4. LED bulbs typically use _____ less energy than incandescent light bulbs.

A) 25% B) 50% C) 75%

5. Planting _____ around your home can block unwanted heat from the sun.

A) flowers B) shade trees C) vegetables



Answer Key: 1.C 2.B 3.A 4.C 5.B

AMI Project

Our AMI project is nearing completion. Please see our website for updated information. For more information, visit our website: www.agralite.coop (AMI Metering Tab)



Energy Saving Tip:

Placing hot food in the refrigerator makes the appliance work harder than necessary, using more energy. Allow food to cool down before you place it in the fridge.

Source: energy.gov

