



Cover Photo: Renae Giese, April Calendar Photo Contest Winner

Agralite Electric Cooperative NEWSLETTER

April 2021

Director Nominations Now Open For Districts 1 & 2

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 1 and 2.

District 1 includes the townships of: Almond, Upper Prior, Lower Prior, Malta, Otrey, Big Stone, Upper Odessa, Lower Odessa and Ortonville.

District 2 includes the township of: Donnelly, Rendsville, Swan Lake, Pepperton, Morris, Framnas, Baker, Scott, Everglade, Eldorado, Graceville, and Moonshine.

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 takes place at the Annual Meeting on June 21, 2021.

Please call 320-843-4150 or stop by our office if you have questions on the nominating process or about becoming a director, and to pick up a petition for nomination. Petitions are due to the office by 4:30 pm on Wednesday, May 12th, 2021.

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 co-op; and
3. The household income of the customer is less than 50% of the state median income, as documented by the customer to the co-op; 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

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Agralite Electric Cooperative


We're member-owned!

320 US-12, Benson, MN

(320) 843-4150

1-800-950-8375

www.agralite.coop

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Touchstone Energy®

Agralite is a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative.



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

If your account number (as it appears on your monthly electric bill) is one of the [four account numbers](#) hidden in this issue, give our office a call by the end of the month and you will receive a \$100 bill credit. If more than one member finds their account number in a single issue, \$100 will be split equally amongst them.

Energy Saving Tip:



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

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.

Manager's Article by Kory Johnson, General Manager

During the January meeting of the Agralite Board of Directors, Don Wilcox, legal counsel for the cooperative, reviewed some recommended changes in the cooperative bylaws. Following a discussion of the revisions to the bylaws of the cooperative, the Board of Directors moved to recommend to the membership approval of these changes. The changes to the bylaws will be voted on by the membership at the upcoming annual meeting of the cooperative. A ballot for the bylaw changes and also for the districts affected by a director election will be included in the Notice of Annual Meeting. The Notice of Annual Meeting, along with a ballot for the bylaw revision and the director election, will be arriving in early June this year.

At the February board meeting of the cooperative, the Board of Directors set the date for the 2021 Annual Meeting of the cooperative. The date selected will be June 21st. The time and exact location of the meeting will be announced at a later date following what state-imposed limits on gatherings will be at that time.

I have included a copy of the changes that have been recommended to the bylaws of the cooperative. The changes and additions are shown in red.

The change in **Article II, Section 1, Annual Meeting** - would allow the board to hold the annual meeting in an electronic, virtual, or other format that would allow the membership to hear or receive information and the participation in these formats would constitute attendance at the meeting. This change is being recommended as a result of the restrictions that were imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Article II, Section 5, Quorum – clarifies that for a ballot issued before the membership, voting by mail or persons present in person would count towards a quorum. 1325200

The board is also recommending adding **Article X** to the bylaws entitled **Arbitration**. Arbitration, a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), is a way to resolve disputes outside the judiciary courts. The dispute will be decided by one neutral arbitrator for amounts estimated to be less than \$250,000 and three neutral arbitrators for amounts estimated to be greater than \$250,000. An arbitration decision or award is legally binding on both sides and enforceable in the courts.

Please feel free to contact myself or any of the Board of Directors if you have questions concerning these bylaw revisions. As I mentioned earlier, all members of the cooperative will receive a mail-in ballot to vote.

RECOMMENDED BYLAW CHANGES

Annual Meeting

ARTICLE II

SECTION 1. Annual Meeting. *The annual meeting of the members shall be held each year on a date determined by the Board of Directors, at a suitable place located in any County within the service area of the Cooperative as determined by the Board of Directors for the purpose of passing upon reports covering the previous fiscal year and transacting such other business as may come before the meeting. Failure to hold the annual meeting at the designated time shall not work a forfeiture or dissolution of the Association. In the event of inclement weather or the occurrence of a catastrophic event, including, but not limited to, the declaration by the Governor of the State of Minnesota of a peacetime emergency, the Board may elect to hold any annual meeting electronically, virtually, or in any format it deems appropriate in which a member participating can hear or receive the information disseminated at the meeting. Such participation shall constitute attendance and presence of the member, in person, at the meeting. Notice of any change of format of any annual meeting shall, if made after the Notice of Members' Meeting sent to the members pursuant to Section 2 of this Article II, be given in any media of general circulation or broadcast serving the area.*

SECTION 5. Quorum. As long as the total number of members does not exceed five hundred (500), ten percent (10%) of the total number of members, present in person, shall constitute a quorum. In case the total number of members shall exceed five hundred (500), fifty (50) members, present in person shall constitute a quorum, for the transaction of business at all meetings of the members. *In determining a quorum at any meeting, on a question submitted to a vote by mail, members present in person or represented by mail vote shall be counted.* If an insufficient number of members is present to constitute a quorum, a majority of the members present may adjourn the meeting from time to time without further notice.

Arbitration

ARTICLE X

SECTION 10. Arbitration of Disputes. Any dispute (a "Dispute") between the Cooperative and a member or members with respect to membership in the Cooperative and/or performance under the terms of any contract between the Cooperative and the member or members shall be resolved through binding arbitration as provided in this Section 10. A party may demand arbitration of a Dispute by written notice to the other party. Any Dispute with respect to which arbitration has not been commenced within two (2) years after the alleged claim or alleged cause of action has accrued shall be deemed waived. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Section 10, the Cooperative shall have the option, in any Dispute, to decline the use of arbitration and instead have the Dispute determined through judicial means in a court of competent jurisdiction.

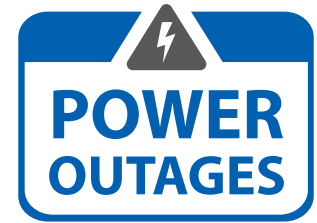
(a) **Selection of Arbitrators.** Within ten (10) days after a written demand to arbitrate a Dispute is received by either party to the Dispute, the parties shall agree on a single, neutral arbitrator if the Dispute involves damages, restitution or other financial relief estimated to be in the amount of \$250,000.00 or less and agree on three neutral arbitrators if the Dispute involves damages, restitution or other financial relief estimate to be in an amount greater than \$250,000.00. In the event that the parties cannot agree on such arbitrator or arbitrators in that time period, the parties agree that the American Arbitration Association ("AAA") shall select such arbitrator or arbitrators within thirty (30) days after being asked to do so by one of the parties to the Dispute.

(b) **Arbitration Procedures.** The arbitrator or arbitrators shall follow substantive rules of law and Minnesota Rules of Evidence; allow for the parties to request discovery pursuant to the rules then in effect under the Minnesota Rules of Civil Procedure for a period not to exceed sixty (60) days; require the testimony to be transcribed; and issue an award that is accompanied by findings of fact and a statement of reasons for the decision. Neither the Cooperative nor any members shall be liable for any punitive or exemplary damages. Each Dispute shall be determined upon its own facts and circumstances, and no procedure in the nature of a class action, and no joinder or consolidation of one-person's claim with the claim of any other person, shall be permitted in an arbitration.

(c) **Costs.** All costs and expenses, including attorney's fees, of all parties incurred in any Dispute which is resolved by arbitration pursuant to this Section shall be borne by the party or parties determined to be liable in respect of such Dispute provided, however, that if complete liability is not assessed against only one party, the parties shall share the total costs in proportion to their respective amounts of liability so assessed.

(d) **Continued Performance.** Except where clearly prevented by the area in Dispute, both parties agree to continue performing their respective obligations while the Dispute is being resolved.

(e) **Binding Effect.** The decision and award determined through arbitration shall be final and binding upon the parties; provided that the courts shall have jurisdiction to review alleged errors of law based upon a review of the arbitration record and the evidence. Any arbitration award or decision that does not have errors of law may be confirmed in State of Minnesota District Court, Eight Judicial District, Swift County, Minnesota.



**Call Day or Night
1.888.884.3887**

Do not call the office for outages

March Energy Payment
is due April 20.*

*We accept Visa, Discover &
Mastercard.

Save The Date!

2021
ANNUAL
MEETING

June 21st, 2021

2021 Agralite Scholarship *Qualify? Please Apply!*

Attention college students! Agralite Electric Cooperative will again this year award scholarships to area students enrolled in secondary education. This year, the cooperative will award two \$2,500 scholarships, two \$1,000 scholarships, and three \$500 scholarships. The cooperative reserves one of the \$2,500 scholarships for an individual pursuing a degree as an electric line worker or an electrician. The application for the Agralite scholarships is available on our website or at the office. 1593200

The application is due into the Agralite office by April 16th, 2021.

Scholarship applications can be found on the Agralite website at <https://agralite.coop/content/scholarships>.



Jeff Hufford, Board Nominee

19876 480th Ave., Morris, MN 56267
Phone: 320-808-5069

1. Please tell Agralite Members a little bit about yourself.

I was born and raised in Morris. Other than college (NDSU), I have lived my entire life in the Morris area. I have one son, a daughter-in-law, and two grandsons who I enjoy very much! My brother and his family, my son, and I crop farm, and feed hogs and cattle. I like to travel, read, cook on my smokers, and watch ballgames of most any kind.

2. Are you active in any community activities?

I just completed my third term on the Stevens FSA County Committee, where I served as Chair. I am Clerk for Morris Township. I am also on the Agralite Electric Cooperative Operation Roundup Board, and am active in the West Central Cattleman's Association.

3. How long have you been an Agralite Member?

Since 1987, I think.

4. Why do you want to be a Director?

I've been a Director since 2012 and enjoy being involved with Agralite. I've learned, and am still learning, much about the Electric Power Industry. I've met many good people, and am fortunate to work with a really great staff and my fellow Directors for our members. 1627800

5. What does the role of Director mean to you?

To do right by the membership, staff and employees of Agralite by continuing to educate myself about the Electric

Power Industry, and to do my best to help promote growth and development in Western Minnesota.

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

To listen to, and try to address the needs of the Cooperative and its members. To assist in community development and speak with Legislators on behalf of membership.

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

To keep learning as much as possible about a rapidly changing industry. As the industry looks to transition to more renewable and less carbon-based generation, it will be important that it be balanced, affordable, secure and reliable. Our power has to be there all day, everyday.

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

The Ag industry of course! I worked in Crop Insurance for 4 years, which was valuable in learning communication skills. I have served on several boards, and coached Youth Baseball for many years. I hope the kids learned as much from me, as I from them.

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

To keep Western Minnesota growing, and a place where people want to be. If we are to transition to more renewable generation and electric vehicles etc., the power grid will need to grow as well. It will still need to be reliable and affordable, as well as safe and secure. We will need to keep learning, and be open-minded.



Kathy Draeger, Board Nominee

33626 660th Ave., Clinton, MN 56225
Phone: 320-273-2437
Email: Draeg001@umn.edu

1. Please tell Agralite Members a little bit about yourself.

My family includes husband Mike Jorgenson, and children Alma, Jens and Lake. We live on and farm 317 acres in Malta Township, Big Stone County and our two youngest kids attend Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley school. We raise Lowline Angus beef, small grains, alfalfa/hay, and poultry. We were very proud to be named the Big Stone County Farm Family of the year in 2014 and also named Big Stone Conservation Farm of the Year in 2014. I work for U of M Extension as the statewide director of a program that works with communities throughout greater Minnesota.

2. Are you active in any community activities?

We are members of Trinity Lutheran in Clinton, MN. I helped start and served on the board of the Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley School Foundation that is associated with the Southwest Initiative Foundation. We are active members of Big Stone County Farmers Union and the Sustainable Farming Association and members of Farm Bureau. Our two youngest kids are in 4H and active in school sports and activities.

3. How long have you been an Agralite Member?

My husband's grandfather, Spurgeon Jorgenson, who first purchased our farm, was a founding member of Agralite. I have been an Agralite Member since 2008, when we purchased the family farm in Malta Township, Big Stone County.

2021 Board Nominees Q&A continues on page 5

4. Why do you want to be a Director?

I believe in the Cooperative business model and would like to better serve the people in our area by serving on the Agralite board. Energy issues are an important issue of our time and will always be critical to the well-being of Agralite members.

5. What does the role of Director mean to you?

Agralite Directors play an important role in bringing the concerns and needs of the co-op members to the board. In addition, board members serve the role of bringing Agralite's activities and opportunities back to the members. Board members are tasked with serving as both an advisory and governing role for the member based co-op. The energy world is changing rapidly with new technology changing how power is generated and distributed and even used! It is an exciting time to be a part of rural energy issues and I want to contribute to Agralite continuing to be strategic in making decision of how our co-op will thrive going forward.

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

The Agralite board has the serious responsibility to ensure its members have access to affordable and reliable electricity. The Agralite board has the responsibility to take a long term view of the well-being of the co-op so as to provide benefits to the members, both now and into the future. Agralite is an important and critical part of the infrastructure of our area, with over 2,400 miles of electric lines and nearly 3,700 co-op members. Providing safe, affordable, and reliable electricity is undoubtedly one of the most important and critical parts of our rural infrastructure.

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

The board needs to be aware of macro trends in the power industry and consider those in the context of local decision making. The board is responsible for making sure that Agralite Co-op members have affordable access

to electricity and that the co-op is making a positive contribution to the quality of life in its service area. The future is changing rapidly with technology like electric vehicles and battery storage becoming modern realities. The board of directors needs to strategically consider the wide range of opportunities that the future holds.

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

Locally, I served on our church council board for six years and founded and served as board president of a community foundation. Professionally, I served for 8 years on the Great Plains Institute board, which works with multiple states on a road map for best practices for energy innovation. I have been with U of M Extension for 15 years and work with communities around the state of Minnesota. My role on our farm is to find markets for our crops and I have an entrepreneurial background having founded two successful S-Corporations that did agricultural and environmental research and development, one of which was sold to an engineering firm. Because of my business background, I continue to look for future opportunities for our co-op and our members.

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

Agralite both maintains the miles of power lines and is responsible for providing power to the members of the co-op. There are changes occurring in the national conversation surrounding power generation and energy usage and Agralite needs to be aware of and prepared for how those changes could impact members. Even more, Agralite has an opportunity to understand how those possible changes could be used to leverage benefit to members and mitigate market risk factors. While there may be some business opportunities in renewable energy (like the community solar garden that Agralite features in its newsletter), Agralite has the responsibility to make sure that affordable energy is available to all of the membership.

APRIL 12TH

LINEWORKER APPRECIATION DAY

Remember to
#ThankALineworker



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

MINUTES OF MEETING BOARD OF DIRECTORS February 2021

Board Chairman Orvin Gronseth called a meeting of the Board of Directors of Agralite Electric Cooperative to order at 8:30 a.m., February 25, 2021. All members of the Board were present via Zoom. The agenda, minutes of the last meeting, the monthly disbursements, and payment of capital credits of deceased members were approved.

Kory Johnson reported on activities of the Member Services department for the month. He discussed load management, the rolling blackouts, and the Brigg's generator program. There was a discussion about renewable energy.

Jenny Stryhn, Manager of Finance, discussed Agralite's margins for the month of January. She discussed an ACH billing promotion. She received the final loan security and supplemental mortgage agreement with CoBank and the Board approved it. She discussed MN Workers Compensation Retention Group margins and refunds. She discussed Preferred One premiums and a refund for 2020 due to a surplus and the Board approved a refund to current employees for their portion of premium contributions. Jenny brought forth Work Order #506, Work Order #507, and Special Equipment January 2021 and the Board approved them.

The financials were given by Jenny with a PowerPoint presentation.

Tom Hoffman, Manager of Engineering & Operations, reported on activities of his department for the month. He discussed line crew projects and recent outages. He brought forth 2021 Substation Maintenance, 2021 Pole Inspections, and 2021 Pad-Mount Inspection contracts with STAR Energy Services; 2021 Underground

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.

2-3

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

Know What's Below: Steps For Safe Digging

Spring is just around the corner, and there's never been a better time to get outside and enjoy the fresh air. Perhaps you're making plans for a new garden or a lawn makeover. However if you're planning to revamp your backyard oasis, remember to keep safety in mind for all projects—especially those that require digging near underground utility lines.

Most of us never think about the electric, gas, water and other utility lines buried below the ground, but hitting one of these lines while digging is not the reminder you'll want—trust us! Agralite Electric Cooperative reminds all members who are planning a digging project to call 811 at least three business days before you start. Or you can submit a request online by visiting www.call811.com/811-In-Your-State.

Here's how the process works:

After you call 811 or submit your request online, all affected utilities will be notified of your intent to dig. It may take the utilities a few days to get to your request, so please be patient. The affected utilities will send someone out to mark the buried lines with paint or flags. Before you break ground, confirm that all the utilities have responded to your request. If you placed your request by phone, use the process explained by your 811 call center representative. If you submitted your request online, refer to your 811 center ticket to confirm everything.

By taking this important step before you break ground on your project, you can help protect not only yourself but our community. Disrupting an underground utility line can interrupt service, cause injuries and cost money to repair, so remember to call 811 first and know what's below.

Construction contract with Integrity Construction; 2021 Right of Way Clearing contract with Tree Story; and 2021 Foliar Spraying contract with Carr's Tree Service and the Board approved them.

Tom gave the safety report. 1568300

Kory Johnson, General Manager, reviewed his report to the board. He discussed meetings he attended and the WAPA/Southwest Power Pool rolling blackouts and related outages. He stated he has a video conference scheduled with Congresswoman Fischbach's office.

Don Wilcox, Agralite's Attorney, joined the meeting via Zoom.

An executive session was held.

The Board approved a motion to allow staff to select a law firm to represent the four fixing members of GRE in the event of legal action taken against the cooperatives regarding their Wholesale Power Contracts.

The 2021 Annual Meeting was set for June 21, 2021.

Aaron Clayton, with Eide Bailly, joined the meeting via Zoom to present the 2020 Audit Report and the Board approved it.

Director Gronseth reported on the East River Energize Forum.

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

Director Rau will be the GRE voting delegate.

A donation to the Hancock Child Care Center/Event Center project was discussed.

A donation to the Swift County Fair building project was discussed.

Marissa Chevalier showed the Board the new Agralite website that will go live this spring.

The March board meeting was set for the 25th via Zoom.

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