



# Attend your District Meetings in February!

More info on page 3 »

# NEWSLINE

January 2024

REA District Meetings pg 3 • Operation Round Up pg 4

## Sign Up for Paperless Billing for a Chance to Win a 50" Vizio Smart TV!

Sign up for paperless billing through your SmartHub online account by January 31, 2024, for a chance to win one of three 50" Vizio smart TVs. (Just in time for the big game!) Your membership will be automatically entered if you've already signed up for paperless billing. This paperless billing promotion runs until January 31, 2024, and winners will be notified on February 1, 2024.

### What is paperless billing?

When you opt into paperless billing, you will receive your bill electronically to your email rather than a paper bill in the mail.

Scan Me!



Scan the QR code or visit [runestoneelectric.com](http://runestoneelectric.com) for contest details, and to log into your SmartHub account today!

## How to Go Paperless

Do you have a SmartHub online account?

Yes

No

Follow the instructions to the right to sign up for an online account.

How will you be accessing your SmartHub account?

Mobile App

Desktop Computer, SmartHub App on a Tablet, or an Internet Browser

Sign In

Sign In

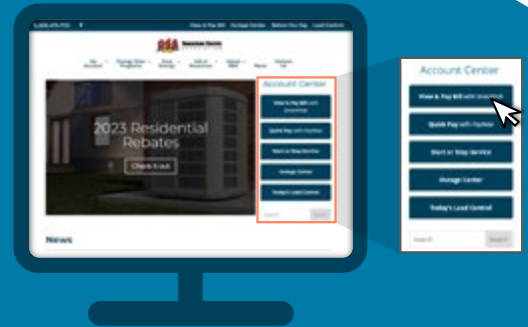
Go to the "more" tab and press "settings"

Go to "Settings" and click "Paperless Billing"

Click "paperless billing" and use the slider to sign up for paperless

Click the slider to the on position to sign up for paperless billing

## 3 Easy Steps to Sign up for SmartHub



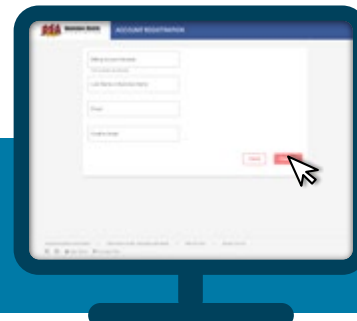
### Step 1:

Go to [runestoneelectric.com](http://runestoneelectric.com) and click on the "View & Pay Bill with SmartHub" under Account Center



### Step 2:

On the SmartHub login page, you will click on "Register Now" that's located right next to "Don't Have an account?".



### Step 3:

Fill in the required information and click continue.

### HELPFUL HINT!

You will need your account number and an email address to create an account

**If you need help, we're happy to assist!**  
Contact us: 800-473-1722 or 320-762-1121



**Al Haman**  
CEO

# Highlights of the 2024 Budget

## Inflation leads to 3% monthly fixed charge increase Feb 1st

In 2024, we plan for significant transportation expenditures. The last several years have been difficult to get heavy truck chassis. We hope two will be delivered in 2024 and two more in 2025. Once we take delivery, the chassis will be delivered to another vendor

who installs the aerial devices. Unfortunately, this means we likely won't get new units until 2025! We are faced with extending the useful life of two trucks that should have left the fleet in 2022 and 2023.

We will continue the PCB transformer change-out program. Underground cable replows are budgeted to be \$550,000. The Lake Mary Substation, scheduled for construction in 2022-2023 but delayed due to challenges acquiring transmission line right of way, is now back on track for completion in 2024. Inflation has driven the estimated cost up to \$1,900,000, an increase of roughly 60%. After so many delays, we plan to energize the new transformer in April 2024. The existing Lake Mary Substation will be retired, with the power transformer being moved to the Holmes City Substation to replace a unit that will be retired due to age. Approximately 11 miles of new & rebuilt three-phase underground lines are included in the 2024 budget. The budget also includes \$95,000 to straighten poles, which is a focused project for this year.

New Aquanta water heater controls and Aclara Demand Response Units (DRUs) total \$670,000. This project, too, has suffered delivery issues and is beginning to push the budget higher. We must complete this project by January 2026 due to Great River Energy shutting down the existing load control system due to age. Because of delivery issues and project delays, we are forced to roll even more costs into 2024 and find ways to shorten the replacement schedule.

Inflation continues to push our wholesale power costs higher. We are hopeful Great River Energy's

projections for wholesale power costs are high, and the actual power market prices come in lower. The 2024 budget will use a wholesale power cost adjustment (WPCA) to compensate. A WPCA allows us to pass through differences in projected costs to actual costs on a monthly basis.

We plan to offer member engagement events, such as educational programs on the funding available to our members through the Inflation Reduction Act. We hope to host in-person and electronic informational sessions as program details are defined.

We forecast our Times Interest Earned Ratio (TIER) to be 1.68 and Debt Service Coverage (DSC) to be 1.83. TIER measures a company's ability to meet its debt obligations based on its current income, and DSC measures the cooperative's available cash flow to pay current debt obligations. Both of those statistics easily meet our borrower obligations.

To cover overall cost increases, the Board has approved a 3% monthly fixed charge increase to all rates, effective February 1, 2024. Most members will see an increase of \$1.50 to the monthly fixed charge. Unfortunately, cost increases on all fronts continue to plague REA.



**The bucket truck plays a crucial roll in restoring power quickly and safely as well as routine maintenance of our system. Today, due to supply chain issues and inflation, it's taking two - three years for delivery of a bucket truck and over \$300,000. REA has seven bucket trucks.**

## REA Board of Director Meeting Highlights - November 2023

- » Reviewed the Financial Report for October 2023. The REA margin through October is ahead of budget but is expected to be close to budget at year end.
- » Approved the resolution as presented in support of the amendments to GRE Articles and Bylaws.
- » President Anderson and Director Hjelle reviewed the Cooperative Network Annual Meeting and watched the video of the award ceremony in which Audrey Hjelle was presented the 2023 Cooperative Builder Award.
- » Directed Attorney Sugden to work with management to update Board Policy BD-11 Rules Governing the Election of Directors. The policy will be included as part of the director candidate packet following Board approval.
- » Reviewed the 2024 draft budget. Rising inflation and extended wait times for materials and vehicles made for a difficult budget season. The goal for the 2024 budget is a margin of \$1.4 million.
- » **The regular January Board Meeting will be Tuesday, January 30, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.**

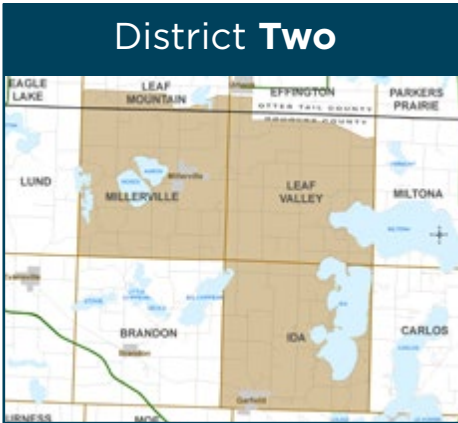
# Attend Your District Meeting in February

## Districts 2 and 5 Elect Directors in 2024

### Enjoy a meal, nominate directors, and visit with neighbors!

District Meetings offer REA members an opportunity to have a light meal, nominate one or more candidates for the office of director, learn more about their electric cooperative, talk with their elected representatives, and visit with neighbors. In addition, all members in attendance will have their name entered in a drawing to win door prizes. We look forward to seeing you!

Please RSVP by calling REA at 800-473-1722, emailing [rea@runestoneelectric.com](mailto:rea@runestoneelectric.com), or on our Facebook event.



### District Two Meeting

Tuesday, February 13, 2024

#### Leaf Valley Townhall

15240 Co Rd 6 NW, Garfield

5:30 p.m. Light Meal

6:00 p.m. Meeting



### District Five

### District Five Meeting

Thursday, February 15, 2024

#### Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

2702 Hwy. 29 N Alexandria

5:30 p.m. Light Meal

6:00 p.m. Meeting

### What is required to be a REA Director?

REA Bylaws Article III, Section 7. Director Qualifications.

#### No person shall be eligible to become or remain a director of the Cooperative who:

- (a) is not a bona fide member of the Cooperative receiving electric service from the Cooperative in the district that the director represents or would represent if elected;
- (b) is not a bona fide resident of the district from which he or she is elected or for which he or she is a candidate; (bona fide resident shall be defined as occupying and continuously and materially purchasing electric service at a location within any director district from which the director is elected or for which he or she is a candidate for at least nine (9) months each calendar year);
- (c) is in any way employed by or substantially financially interested in an enterprise substantially competing with the Cooperative or any Cooperative-affiliated business;
- (d) within five (5) years preceding a director candidate's nomination was or during service on the Board of Directors is adjudged to be guilty of a felony;
- (e) within five (5) years preceding a director candidate's nomination was a full-time employee of the Cooperative;
- (f) within five (5) years preceding a director candidate's nomination was an employee of a statewide association of electric cooperatives, an electric generation and transmission cooperative, or any other entity in which an electric cooperative is a member.
- (g) within five (5) years preceding a director candidate's nomination or during his or her term if elected was or becomes employed by a labor union which represents, has represented, or has endeavored to represent any employee of the cooperative;
- (h) is a close relative\* of an incumbent who is not up for reelection at that time;
- (i) is a close relative\* of an employee of the Cooperative;
- (j) is or becomes the full-time employee or agent or, who is or becomes the full-time employer or principal of, another director;
- (k) does not have the capacity to enter legally binding contracts;
- (l) is absent from three or more regular meetings ("Unexcused Absences") of the Board of Directors during any consecutive twelve month period, unless excused for good cause (an "Excused Absence") by the Board. If a director participates in more than one regular meeting during any consecutive twelve month period by electronic communication, that director shall be considered absent from that meeting for purposes of determining the number of the director's Unexcused Absences, unless the attendance by electronic communication is approved for good cause by the Board.

\*A "close relative" is a person who is by blood, law, or marriage (including half, step, foster, and adoptive relations) a child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, or sibling); or is a spouse or resides in the same residence.

A member that is an authorized farm corporation or family farm corporation may select an individual member residing on or actively operating the farm to be eligible for election to the board.

### Apply for one of 24 \$1,000 scholarships available through a random drawing

Scholarship applicants must be a graduating high school senior whose parents or legal guardians are members of REA. Students attending public, private, parochial or home school are eligible to apply. The deadline to apply for the REA scholarships is March 1, 2024. Winners will be announced at the Annual Meeting on April 25, 2024.

Scholarship applications can be filled out online at [www.runestoneelectric.com](http://www.runestoneelectric.com). If you're unable to fill out the application online, call REA for an application at 800-473-1722.







# Making a Difference with REA's Operation Round Up®

**Thumbs up to REA members who allow their bills to be rounded up to the next dollar!** A record-setting 35 guests gathered at REA in early December to receive an Operation Round Up® grant for their organization. The average contribution in 2023 was \$5.91 for the year, with 65% of REA members participating. The next application deadline is February 12, 2024.

Through the contributions of Runestone Electric Association's participating members, the Operation Round Up® Trust Board recently approved \$14,800 to assist local community programs during its quarterly meeting.

REA's Operation Round Up Trust Board, a voluntary board of seven REA members, reviewed and considered 46 grant applications and distributed funds to 32 projects and programs this past quarter. Community-based projects and programs have received over \$1.2 million since the program's inception in 2003.

## Fire Departments & First Responders:

- » Garfield Fire Department (\$500)
- » Forada Emergency Responders (\$500)
- » Lowry Fire Department (\$500)
- » Villard First Responders (\$250)
- » Villard Fire Department (\$500)

## Food Shelf:

- » Outreach Food Shelf (\$1,000)

## Youth:

- » Lakes Area Alpine Ski Team (\$300)
- » Toys for Kids (\$1000)
- » Alexandria MN Youth Football (\$300)
- » RUSC Kinship (\$250)

## Seniors:

- » Central MN Elder Network (\$500)

## Community:

- » Central Lakes Concert Association (\$300)
- » Aeneas Cemetery Association (\$250)
- » Car Care Program (\$1,000)
- » Bit of Grace (\$500)
- » Honor Quilts (\$1,000)
- » Evansville Community Club (\$250)
- » VFW Post 936 (\$450)
- » Lands Cemetery Association (\$250)
- » Lake Amelia Cemetery (\$250)
- » Kensington Area Heritage Society (\$500)
- » Jingle Bells Foundation (\$750)
- » Radiothon to Prevent Child Abuse (\$500)
- » Rose Hill-Trinity Cemetery Association (\$250)
- » Central Lakes Search & Rescue (\$500)
- » True Friends (\$500)
- » Lakes Area Pride (\$300)
- » Wendell Merchants Santa Day (\$250)
- » Central Square, Inc. (\$150)
- » Lakes Area Archers (\$250)
- » United Way of Douglas & Pope Counties (\$500)
- » Tail-Wind Direction (\$500)

## NEWSLINE

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### Office Hours:

7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mon- Fri.

### Board of Directors

- District 1: Gary (Andy) Anderson, President
- District 2: Barbara Johnson, Director
- District 3: Audrey Hjelle, Director
- District 4: Dave Staples, Secretary
- District 5: Mike Loken, Vice President
- District 6: Joel Seela, Director
- District 7: Matthew Mattson, Treasurer

### Editorial Staff

Al Haman, CEO

Sue Lundeen, Editor

Ally Koudela, Communications Specialist

### In Case of a Power Outage

- » Please call 800-473-1722 for 24-hour service. Please report any tree branches in lines, twisted wires, broken poles and if your neighbors are also out of power.
- » Be sure to have a corded phone or a charged cell phone in the house, because cordless phones won't work when the power is out.
- » Program the number above into your cell phone for easy access.
- » Never assume we know you are without power. Always call to report an outage.

*REA will use reasonable diligence to furnish adequate and dependable electric service, but it cannot and does not guaranty continuous and uninterrupted service.*

**This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer**

## Let it GLOW Christmas Light Contest Winners

### Best Large Display:

Paulzine's Winter Wonderland

### Best Small Display:

Let it Shine on 29

### Most Creative Display:

South 29 Shine

Thank you to all the entries for spreading the Christmas spirit with your beautiful lights and displays. Watch for details in the fall for the 2024 contest.

**The deadline to apply for the next round of funding is February 12, 2024.**

Apply at [RunestoneElectric.com](http://RunestoneElectric.com).