

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

All the easy jobs are done

Years ago, I was approached by a long-term employee who was frustrated by the blocks and complications they faced while trying to complete a project for the co-op. After all, there were a multitude of benefits to the project, but the complexity and steps involved were almost overwhelming. My answer was simple: All the easy jobs are done and, if it were simple, it would have been completed years ago.

In all seriousness, your cooperative invests hours and, many times, years of human capital in projects to improve your electric service reliability. A good example of this is our investment in rebuilding the Arlington Substation. HWE's 2023 capital budget included \$2.5 million to replace an obsolete substation, which previously had been upgraded in 1977. So, how do we go about replacing a substation that requires being out of service for six months, and still provide our members with electric service?



In August, our contract crew, Vaughn Industries, began to tear down the old substation. This substation serves approximately 600 members in the Arlington area.



Columns were poured in September. The total project cost is about \$2.5 million and will take approximately six months to complete.

The story started in 2001, when Hancock-Wood submitted a construction work plan to the United States Department of Agriculture for funding through the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) program. The dollars from this plan allowed the operations group to begin rebuilding the overhead power lines that connect Arlington to the other substations with larger wires. The rebuilding of three-phase overhead lines continued until 2016 and allows the co-op to provide electric service for our Arlington members from other substations. Simultaneously, the engineering group was working on a design for a new substation when it became apparent a larger site was required. Thankfully, a long-time member of the co-op agreed to sell additional land around Arlington substation in 2016 to assist with the rebuilding plan.

The design of the project continued and, like most detailed projects, hit several roadblocks and snags

along the way. American Electric Power notified Hancock-Wood a new transmission line was being designed with a higher voltage and from a different route.

The new transmission line would result in the substation construction schedule being pushed back several years and would require different equipment. Borrowing funds from RUS requires the co-op to undertake a lengthy environmental assessment review and the funds are not available until we complete the project. The accounting group needed to ensure the co-op could cash flow the project until the project is complete for at least three months. Supply chain disruptions required the board to approve the purchasing of equipment two years in advance of the beginning of construction.

Some of the substation's unique features include a concrete pad with oil containment to ensure an oil leak will not contaminate groundwater. Also included is a substation building designed to serve as a storm shelter for our line crews during potential severe weather incidents.

This substation rebuild design also includes fully automated equipment that can be monitored and controlled from our office and excess electrical capacity to not only serve future needs, but also to provide backup service for our members in the Bluffton, Blanchard, and southern Findlay areas.

I'm thankful that the co-op has a group of dedicated, ambitious, and hardworking employees. And yes, all the easy jobs do seem to be done, but our employees and trustees are always willing to tackle the next challenge.



Bill Barnhart
PRESIDENT & CEO



The next phase of the rebuild project began in October. This project is being conducted in conjunction with AEP's line conversion project.



The final stage of the project, which is estimated to be completed by the end of January.

Welcome **TO THE TEAM**



Zapata hired as groundman

Isaiah Zapata has accepted the groundman position at Hancock-Wood Electric. He comes to us from Port Clinton and recently worked at a water district. Zapata will train as a groundman/apprentice lineworker and, after successfully completing his training, will be promoted to the line crew.



Martens hired as lineworker

Chase Martens has been hired as a lineworker. He previously worked for Vaughn Industries. He is married to Samantha and together they have a cat named Leo. In his spare time, he enjoys golf, running, and cooking. He's a football fan and spends the weekends cheering for the Ohio State Buckeyes and Cincinnati Bengals. Welcome, Chase!

Wishing you a **HAPPY RETIREMENT**



Wishing Danita a happy retirement

Hancock-Wood's board of trustees and employees would like to wish Danita Higgins a happy retirement. Danita held positions in the member service area and, more recently, worked as the distribution scheduler. She has been with Hancock-Wood Electric for 23 years.

Seniors can apply for our 2024 Scholarship Program



2023 Hancock-Wood Electric Cooperative scholarship recipients and Youth Tour delegates.

The Children of Members Scholarship program is available to any seniors whose parents are current Hancock-Wood Electric members. The following awards will be granted for the 2024 program:

1st place: \$3,500
2nd place: \$3,000
Five honorable mentions:
\$2,000 each



To apply, visit our website www.hwe.coop or call our office for more information.
Deadline to apply is Feb. 9, 2024, by 4:30 p.m.

HANCOCK-WOOD ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Think Energy \$mart *with Bruce*

During these coldest months of the year, we do everything we can (within reason) to stay warm. The most important consideration when using any heating source is how to operate the appliance safely. Any home with a fossil fuel-burning appliance should have a carbon monoxide detector installed on each floor of the main living area. This is especially important if a vent-free gas heater or fireplace is being used anywhere in a home, including the garage. A vent-free heater is considered very efficient because it does not allow any combustion gases to leave the structure. The drawback is those gases can contain harmful and deadly compounds. Also, be sure to comply with all the required clearances for your heater and make others in your home aware of them as well.

Secondary heaters are commonly used this time of year to help maintain comfort in problem areas of a home, and to keep water from freezing in other areas. To control the operating cost of these devices, be sure the target area

is well-insulated and use a reliable thermostat to accurately control the temperature. Inspect the heater cord to verify it is in good condition. Using extension cords to operate heaters is not recommended. If an extension cord is necessary, be sure the cord is appropriate to handle the heater's electric load.

For more tips on keeping warm and energy efficient this winter visit www.hwe.coop/save-energy/saving-energy-links/ or contact the office 800-445-4840 to schedule an audit with me.



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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Our office will be
closed Jan. 1 to
observe the holiday.

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online, dropbox, office, by phone, or
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HAVE A STORY SUGGESTION?

Email your ideas to:
leslie.guisinger@hwe.coop

Members First! 
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