



(Cut Here)



Published bi-monthly and mailed to members of Okefenokee Rural Electric Membership Corporation Nabunta, Georgia 31553

Michele Hutchins, Editor

OFFICE HOURS 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Monday through Friday Speak to a Customer Service Representative by phone Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

CO-OP BUSINESS NUMBER Toll Free 1-800-262-5131

https://oremc.com

E-MAIL marketing@oremc.com

John Middleton General Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

R. Wayne Combs President

Steve E. Rawl 1st Vice President

Jimmy Woodard 2nd Vice President

Cristi Koncz Secretary/Treasurer

Terrell Brazell Jamie Giddens Joe Loomis Clyde Mizell Craig Morgan

"OWNED BY THOSE WE SERVE"

Nominations for OREMC Board Directors

The following bylaw pertains to the nomination of directors:

Article IV, Section 4.05. Nominations. It shall be the duty of the Board of Directors to appoint, not less than one hundred eighty (180) days prior to the date of a meeting of the members at which directors are to be elected, a Committee on Nominations, consisting of not less than five (5) nor more than eleven (11) members of the Cooperative who are not existing Cooperative employees, agents, officers, directors or known candidates for director, who are not close relatives (as hereinafter defined) or members of the same household thereof, and who are so selected as to give equitable representation thereon to the areas served by the Cooperative. The Committee shall prepare and post at the principal office of the Cooperative at least one hundred fifty (150) days before the meeting a list of nominations for directors to be elected. The Committee may include as many nominees for any director to be elected, as it deems desirable. Any fifty (50) or more members of the Cooperative, acting together, may make additional nominations in writing over their signatures, not less than one hundred twenty (120) days prior to the meeting, and the Secretary shall post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations made by the Committee is posted. The Secretary shall mail to the members with the notice of the meeting, or separately, but at least five (5) days prior to the date of the meeting, a statement of the names and addresses of all nominees, showing clearly those nominated by the Committee and those nominated by petition, if any. At the member meeting, no nominations may be made from the floor except that such nominations may be made and shall be allowed for any directorate to be filled for which there would not otherwise be any eligible nominee. Notwithstanding the provisions contained in this Section, failure to comply with any of such provisions shall not affect in any manner whatsoever the validity of any action taken by the Board of Directors after the election of directors.

Nominations and Election of OREMC Directors

Directors are nominated and elected from three of OREMC's districts each year at the annual meeting of the members to serve for a term of three years. Terms expiring this year are:

- District 1 - Baker County (Florida)
District 4 - Middle Brantley County (Georgia)
District 5 - West Brantley and Ware Counties (Georgia)

Okefenokee REMC's Board of Directors, in accordance with Bylaw Article IV, Section 4.05, has appointed the following members to the 2021 Nominating Committee:

Jerri F. Canaday 6066 Harry Rewis Rd. Macclenny, FL 32063

David Moody 1601 Saddle Club Rd. Hoboken, GA 31542

Donald R. Morrison 130 Morrison Ln. Folkston, GA 31537

Dorothy Ruis 4967 Bailey Haddock Ln. Hilliard, FL 32046-6317

Gaines Lee 2140 Mars Hill Rd. Hoboken, GA 31542-3656

Judie Woodcock 110 Denmarks Crossing Brunswick, GA 31525

Robert Edward Lee, Jr. 127 Bluffs Landing Waverly, GA 31565-2979

Timothy V. Cheek 211 Hickory Bluff Rd. Waverly, GA 31565-2606

Jacob R. Paulk 133 Paulk Place Woodbine, GA 31569

If you live in one of the three districts noted above that are up for election this year and wish to be considered for nomination to represent your district, you may contact a committee member. Nominations by petition will also be accepted (see bylaws, Article IV, Section 4.05 for details).

OREMC bylaws are available at any OREMC office and online at oremc.com/about. For suggested forms for nomination by petition contact Patrick Brooks at 912-496-3231.

According to OREMC bylaws, if any nominations are made by petition, petitions must be received in the Law Office of J. Patrick Brooks, P.C. at 3773 2nd Street S, Suite 102, Folkston, GA 31537, no later than Friday, May 14, 2021, at 5 p.m. (See By-law Section 4.05 for details concerning nominations by petition.)

Results of the Nominating Committee meeting and, if applicable, a listing of nominations made by petition, will be reported in OREMC's July/August 2021 member newsletter. Procedures for voting in the election will also be included in that newsletter.

A tentative date of Tuesday, April 13, 2021, at 4:30 p.m. has been set for the Nominating Committee to meet. The tentative location of the meeting is OREMC's headquarters office in Nahunta, GA. For confirmation of meeting date, time and location, you may contact Kimi Harris at 800-262-5131 ext. 1111.



VOLUME 73, NUMBER 2 • MAR/APR 2021

Reflections on Texas

Understanding the catastrophic failure of the state's electrical system

By John Middleton, OREMC General Manager

From mid-February to March 1, Texas dominated news headlines after Winter Storms Uri and Viola slowly pummeled the state with ice and snow. The extreme weather resulted in over four million Texans cold, without water and in the dark. There were power outages due to weather, then rolling blackouts because there wasn't enough electricity to meet demand when power was restored. Once everything was back online, Texans started receiving their electric bills—some as high as \$17,000.

This situation of course begs the question, "How did this happen?"

The truth is there is no single answer to the question. Rather, the situation in Texas is reflective of a complex set of issues that manifested a "perfect storm" of collapse set off by an extreme weather event:

- Weather vulnerabilities
Infrastructure vulnerabilities
Capacity issues
Power grid interconnection
Deregulation

Let's start with what made headlines: Texas experienced sustained temperatures 20-30 degrees below winter norms. Some utility-scale wind farms in Texas failed because they froze up in the extreme cold. Some natural gas and coal units were not adequately prepared for the severe cold. Among those natural gas plants that were operable, some could not get fuel because gas pipelines were frozen. As a result, when ERCOT, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, ramped up the call for power to meet the record high demand, there was not enough generation available. The result was days of rolling blackouts.

Why did the generators and the gas

pipelines freeze? Due to the structure of the deregulated market in Texas, owners of generation have little to no incentive to invest in winterizing for extreme conditions. While arctic blasts are not common for Texas, this has occurred before. Frigid temperatures in 2011 and 2014 both had crippling effects on the Texas power grid but did not cause power generators to change or upgrade equipment and infrastructure to handle colder temperatures. And ERCOT regulators didn't make any mandates to do so. Winterizing, or hardening, the system to increase reliability is expensive. An owner of generation making these investments would be disadvantaged in the deregulated market versus competitors who did not winterize.

But why couldn't Texas get power from elsewhere? Isn't the power grid interconnected? The answer to interconnection is yes and no. The United States power grid is divided into three sections:

- Western Interconnection covering the Rockies west to the Pacific Ocean.
Eastern Interconnection covering the Great Plains (minus most of Texas) east to the Atlantic Ocean.
Texas Interconnection

This means exactly what it implied: Texas (most of it) is an island unto themselves for power generation and transmission.

As such, ERCOT only has limited transfer capacity through two ties to the Eastern grid. This grid independence from the rest of the country is by choice. Continued inside.



Psalms 1:3 King James Version

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.



Church of the Month

Union Baptist Church

Sunday School 10 a.m.
Worship Service 11 a.m.
Sunday Evening 6 p.m.

50 Akin Rd. Jesup, GA 31546

To nominate your church, contact Dewayne Johns at 1-800-262-5131 Ext. 1143 or email dewayne.johns@oremc.com.

The beautiful spring came, and when Nature resumes her loveliness, the human soul is apt to revive also.

-Harriet Ann Jacobs

Statement of Nondiscrimination

Okefenokee Rural Electric Membership Corporation is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U. S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S. W., Washington, D. C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.



OREMC Member Spotlight: Reed's Grocery & Ponderosa

It is the middle of everything or in the middle of nowhere, depending on your perspective, but unquestionably at the heart of it all. The "it" is Reeds Grocery & Ponderosa situated in the Tarboro Triangle where State Route 252 Burnt Fort Road, New Post Road and State Route 259 intersect in Georgia. From the outside the unassuming white block building doesn't reveal much about its rich history. Step across the threshold, however, and you realize the past is very much present.

On this day, Greg Reed takes us back to the beginning of one of Okefenoke REMC's longest standing business consumer-members.

His father opened the original store in 1948 after returning home from WWII and wanted to be his own boss. He began selling eggs and later added ice from the Woodbine Icehouse. The family—all seven of them, plus other family members from time-to-time—lived in the two rooms in the back of the store.

As business increased, groceries, beer, wine and feed were added. A counter served as the divider between the family living area and the store. Over time, the store doubled as an entertainment area with a pot belly stove simmering a pot of boiled peanuts, a juke box playing 45 records, a pool table, card playing and food.

"Mom (Peggie) did hair in the back of the store for the women in the black community, and Deborah helped her make the big homemade hamburgers we sold to the weekend crowd," Greg recalls. "A lot of people also came to the store for advice from our mother, and the bench under the two trees (still standing) in front of the store became a gathering place."

Reeds quickly became the hub of the predominately black community.

Leroy was a community leader and Reeds Grocery became the place to go to find out what was happening in the community. He was the first black member of the Camden County School Board and served for over 10 years. He cashed checks, collected church dues and ran a weekly charge club. And the store was one of the first places to have a phone where the kids who had gone off, would call home to speak to their parents. From this evolved the social hall—Club Ponderosa—that was built in 1963 as part of the current building that stands today.

Then and now, Reeds can take care of most customers' needs. In addition to groceries, Debora attests, "We've got seeds. Need to feed your chickens, dog or hog, we have food for them. Need a nice, thick pork chop, we cut to order. Got a leak? We have glue, pipe and fittings. Need a cold beer or a little something stronger, we can handle that too."

While impromptu dancing and parties took place at the original store, the bigger building formally brought about Club Ponderosa with dances every Saturday night. Folks came from miles around—Brunswick, Folkston, Jacksonville, Waycross—because as Barry plainly states, "There weren't many places for black folks to go." And as Deborah shares, you couldn't leave without having one of Leroy's famous fried chicken sandwiches with hot sauce to wake you up! While times may have changed, Club Ponderosa still remains a happening place on Saturday nights after 50+ years.

Adding to the bonanza of activity surrounding the store and Club Ponderosa, Leroy built two baseball fields on his seven acres in the Tarboro Triangle, and the softball and baseball tournaments were legendary.

So were the 4th of July community cookouts that lasted well into the night, and the annual Labor Day fish fry.

"Our father had a dream," Greg says. "He never had a day off in his life, but his work ... the store ... because he did what he loved to do."

Read the full story at oremc.com/news.



Vision for the Future

Helping to further the "vision for a brighter tomorrow" for the visually impaired and support workforce development are the motivation behind two recent donations made by OREMC to the Georgia Lions Camp for the Blind (\$3,000) and Coastal Pines Technical College (CPTC) Foundation (\$7,000).

"We are very appreciative and thankful for OREMC's donation," says Mike Williams, camp director. "All of the money goes to the campers and because of donations like this, it's how we survive. The funds offset the cost of food, supplies and transportation."

CPTC President, Lonnie Roberts states, "We want



to thank Okefenoke REMC for their contribution. Their support of Coastal Pines Technical College, and specifically our Electrical Lineworker program, allows us to continue providing the educational opportunities needed to support workforce development in our region and state."

Funds for the donation come from OREMC's unclaimed capital credits, which get distributed to qualifying organizations supporting education, economic development and community needs.

Read the full story at oremc.com/news.



Reflections on Texas *Continued from Front*

Shouldn't there have been enough backup power capacity? As with everything else, things are different in Texas. Under Texas' deregulation model, power generators don't get paid for making generating capacity available. They recover their cost of ownership by selling energy. Thus, there is not adequate cost recovery for generating capacity used only in extreme weather conditions. With the loss of generation caused by the cold, there were not enough generators to pick up the slack, resulting in a shortage. The power shortage resulted in two things: rolling blackouts and extremely high market prices for power leading to the huge electric bills.

Could what happened in Texas happen here? Again, this is not a simple yes or no. While we continually work to make our wholesale power portfolio and the OREMC distribution system less susceptible to weather disruptions, sometimes manmade is simply no match for Mother Nature.

We can get weather that severely damages our electrical infrastructure (poles, wires, substations) all necessary for the delivery of power to our homes. We had an ice storm three years ago affecting many parts of the OREMC service area, and by virtue of our geography, live with the potential threat of hurricanes every year.

But there are investments we make to assure the power flows when you flip the switch:

- As part of our wholesale power purchases, OREMC plans for the energy that is regularly consumed collectively by our consumer-members. We also plan for the availability of additional capacity to be at the ready due to the potential for temperature extremes that peak demand—increase the call for power—beyond normal operational levels.

- Solar is the primary renewable in Georgia and Florida's power supply mix. If the sun doesn't shine the solar panels don't generate power. OREMC owns 1.86 MW of solar generation, and there is some additional solar as part of our overall power supply portfolio. But that capacity has to be available regardless of the sun, therefore we can't rely on renewables as a replacement for traditional power generators. This is why natural gas, coal, hydro and nuclear power generation are available on demand to pick up the slack.

- We invest in our distribution system's capabilities and reliabilities by integrating and upgrading system technology, system inspections, and right of way maintenance. The intent is to make OREMC's distribution system less susceptible to weather extremes and more responsive to reduce outage times when they do occur.

- Unlike Texas, the Georgia and Florida transmission systems are interconnected through the national grid. And OREMC has built system redundancies into our own distribution system to be able redirect power when the need arises.

Combined, these investments make the OREMC distribution system more resilient against weather/wind, wildlife, trees or other outside impacts to our system. While they might not result in zero power disruptions, our goal is to minimize their impact to the fewest consumer-members for the shortest amount of time.

PAY YOUR BILL WHERE YOU SHOP

Coming soon, OREMC will be offering a **FAST** and **CONVENIENT** option for paying your electric bill: cash payments on your OREMC bill through the checkout lane at participating retailers near you.

Visit oremc.com for updates and information when and where this service will be available.

- 1

GET

Get your Barcode Online or on Front or Back of Paper Bill
- 2

FIND

Find Participating Store Locations Near You
- 3

SCAN

Scan Barcode at Register and Pay Your Bill

Help Stop Power Theft

Meter tampering—whether it is damage of property or actual theft of services—results in hazardous conditions to those living in the home, OREMC employees and the public. Your help in stopping meter tampering and power theft benefits all OREMC members. If you are aware of power theft at a location or concerned about a suspicious situation, call our confidential Tip Line: 833 OKE TIPS (833-653-8477). You will be prompted to leave a voice mail with any information you may have including a brief description of what you saw, address location and names of any individuals involved if know.

