

DIRECTORS from A1

Leisinger, Drew Fangman, Jordan Hettinger, Hunter Canfield, and also new staff members in 2025 are Kimberley Lewis and Tyson Helms. Leo Dettbarn was also recognized as an intern in 2025.

Becker announced that all of the grant projects from 2024 had the grant reimbursements received in 2025. While most of the grants were extremely small, the largest one had nearly 50 locations awarded.

In the Spring of 2025, EBTC created a separate subsidiary LLC named “County Line Fiber”, and deployed fiber Internet service to the south part of Oelwein – south of the railroad tracks — including both residential homes and the industrial park, and continued south through Hazleton to serve all of town. This project comes from existing fiber cable east of the Oelwein golf course, and also from the south of Hazleton near a cell tower just SE of Fontana Park where EBTC had fiber deployed for many years. This created a fiber “ring” and redundancy in the case of a major fiber cut. EBTC also purchased property in Oelwein at the site of the old elevator and placed a new central electronics distribution building on that land.

Starting now and in 2026, County Line Fiber will expand to the western portion of Oelwein. We also have two other potential fiber projects that may occur in 2026, so he advised the membership to stay tuned.

By expanding to serve more customers, EBTC intends to provide for the long-term success of the cooperative as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) continues to adjust federal programs which could limit or reduce Universal Service Funding.

On a good note, EBTC connected the first Oelwein customers around August 1st, and EBTC is gaining more new residential and business customers each week. The customer reviews have been fantastic and we hope that as word spreads, more and more people will look to County Line Fiber as their local and reliable Internet service provider.

Becker noted that EBTC has the same pricing for Oelwein and Hazleton customers as they do for members within the cooperative area. The County Line Fiber team tries to treat each and every customer in the best manner possible, and believe that as more and more customers realize that the service and response times are superior, that we'll get more customers. Here's an example of a testimonial that County Line Fiber received:

9/2/25 The installation went very well, the installers being knowledgeable and professional. They immediately introduced themselves and went to work. They included us in the decision-making when it came to equipment placement, and were available to answer all of our questions. Everything is working perfectly. We have had no buffering and the picture is far clearer than it has ever been. Thanks for bringing this service to us and our community!

EBTC is also deploying fiber next Spring to a new 7-home subdivision on 220th Street just east of the Quasqueton Diagonal Blvd — just east of Independence. Footings were poured and backfilled in late November for the first home.

Becker also took the time to discuss and explain the countless ads for home Internet service from cell providers on TV.

EBTC also “resells” home Internet service from a cellular provider — and we call this service EB WiNet. We started this “alternate”

service back in 2022, and we only offer this service outside of our fiber footprint because fiber is so much more reliable and faster than any cellular connection — and fiber provides synchronous download and upload speeds.

When EBTC created “broadband labels” for EB WiNet service as required by the FCC, they dug deep into the cellular carrier's policies and discovered that it states right within their network policy, that in the event of network congestion (meaning that there are too many people on their cell tower causing a slowdown of service), the first service to be restricted or slowed down will be their home Internet service. Why...you may ask? Because as a cellular company, they are required to prioritize voice calls because of possible emergency calls to 9-1-1 services. So if and when they get more customers on towers, their service quality will diminish.

Becker reminded the crowd that as a cooperative member, they belong to a non-profit organization. All margins (aka “net income” in a for-profit business) are allocated to cooperative members into their individual account. In essence what they're paying on your monthly bill for services is greatly reduced as those allocations will be paid out when the Board, as the coop fiduciaries, believes it is appropriate.

It's like receiving a partial refund for services rendered — a reward for being a cooperative member. That's exactly how cooperatives work! And when factoring in allocations and comparing bottom-line rates to cellular companies' home Internet service pricing, EBTC is very competitive and as stated before — EBTC's Internet service is faster and much more reliable.

EBTC is local — and your friends and neighbors — and over the past 5 years EBTC has donated over \$6,000 back to local organizations on an annual basis.

Becker reminded cooperative members that if they move away from the cooperative area, the former members will still get patronage when it is decided to distribute dividends to the entire membership, as long as EBTC has the former member's current mailing address. He reminded members that if they move away, they should be sure to always keep EBTC up-to-date with their current address no matter where or how many times they move. If the member can't be located, after a certain period of time, those allocated funds are in “default” then placed into the coop's “Education” Fund and used for certain restricted purposes.

On a more somber note, Becker reminded the crowd that if a cooperative member passes away and the estate provides the necessary paperwork, all patronage that had been accrued in their account is usually quickly paid out to the estate after documentation is received and approved by EBTC attorneys.

Becker asked those in attendance to give special attention to calling Iowa One Call by dialing 8-1-1 at least 48 hours before doing any digging! And he also stressed that of utmost importance, to remember that if you're burning ditches in the Spring or know anyone who does, do not burn any of the green fiber pedestals, nor the white fiber marker posts with orange tops as it may cause outages and the person causing the burning will be liable and invoiced for any damages. He noted that this past Spring EBTC had over 20 fiber markers and locate posts damaged or melted. If they can't locate the fiber cable when they get notification from the 811 call center due to locate posts being burned, the chances greatly

increase that the fiber could be cut. So he strongly encouraged attendees to NEVER burn any posts or equipment of any type in the Right of Way.

It was also noted that the federal government's Internet grant program called “BEAD” was released this past year and Iowa was anticipated to have over \$413M available. EBTC looked at the nearby locations eligible for BEAD funding and decided that it was not worthwhile to pursue. The case must have been similar for other Iowa companies as Iowa is projected to use only about half of the BEAD funding allocated to the state for broadband projects.

Becker had another reminder that EBTC has a USDA revolving loan fund where they are able to create loans to assist businesses and non-profit organizations. Back in 2023, EBTC created a substantial loan to Nicks Family Grocery for remodeling prior to re-opening the store. The Board is currently in the process of creating a small loan for another small business. The Board of Directors reviews all applications, approves or denies those applications, and sets the terms and conditions including interest rates.

This past Fall, EBTC also updated the signage on the office as the original EBTC signs were faded and cracked from the 20+ years of weather since they were first installed with the new office addition. He encouraged attendees to take a drive past the office at 214 Third Street North in Winthrop to see the new signs on the our office building that were created by Signs & More in Independence.

EBTC is boosting all of their customers' Internet speeds to the next speed tier — at no extra charge — for the entire month of December. Becker explained it is a gift to all their customers that will help when families get more electronic devices over the holidays on their home WiFi. It should help them download any needed updates before using those new electronic devices. And gaming over the holidays should also be much easier. He further explained that the speeds will be reduced to each customer's original speed after the first of the year. So if customers like the additional speed, he asked that they let EBTC know so the customer is kept at the increased speed for your household's needs.

If you're on Facebook, please “like” EBTC's company Facebook page — and also the County Line Fiber Facebook page — as they provide updates, tips, and maintenance notifications via Facebook. Please also leave them reviews on Google as this helps us become recognized as a leader for Internet services in the area.

Becker concluded by saying that the EBTC Board and staff want to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our cooperative members and customers.

After a refreshment break, the Election Committee reported the election results:

District 1 (Winthrop): Rose Hansen 107; Don Sperfslage 34

District 2 (Quasqueton): Kenny Gericke 40; Tony O'Hara 9

District 3 (Aurora-Stanley): Nancy Mosher 33; Vinnie Block 12

President Peterson then asked that the election results be made final and a motion was made, seconded, and approved by the membership.

Becker then held a drawing for four \$25 gift certificates. The winners were Butch Rorabaugh, David Johnson, Allan Berns, and Gerald Dennie.

As there was no unfinished business nor new business, President Peterson concluded the meeting at 2:30pm.



Chocolate Candy

BY SUBMITTED BY GRACE KULLMER

Chocolate Candy
1 lb Velveeta cheese
1 lb margarine
4 lb powdered sugar
1 cup Hershey's powdered cocoa
1 tsp vanilla
Nuts
Melt Velveeta cheese and margarine until blended. Remove from heat and add powdered sugar, cocoa, vanilla, and nuts. Mix well and spread in jelly roll pan. Enjoy!

Want to submit a recipe?
Please ensure each recipe contains a yield and measurements, necessary equipment, and ingredients are clearly stated. You are welcome to explain a little about the recipe and its sentimental value or include tips and tricks, but please limit this portion of your submission to 200 words. There is no limit on the recipe or preparation instructions themselves, only on the additional information accompanying them. Feel free to include photos, with a limit of 2 photos per recipe.

Recipes and instructions can either be typed or legibly handwritten. Handwritten recipes may be transcribed, so if you're bringing in a beloved but ancient notecard explaining how to make great-grandma's best bundt cake, please make sure it's readable!

Please include your name, a good phone number, and your location with your submission in case we have trouble reading or understanding the recipe during the transcription process. Recipes must be submitted by noon on Monday to be included in that week's print editions.

Recipes can be submitted in person in the newsroom at 900 5th Ave NE in Independence, by mail to Independence Bulletin Journal, P.O. Box 290, Independence, Iowa, or sent via email to editor@bulletinjournal.com.

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NUCLEAR from A1

said Mike Peters, president and CEO of WPPI. “Securing this emissions-free baseload resource at a known cost supports long-term stability for our member communities in a rapidly changing energy industry.”

The agreement follows the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's approval of the plant's second license renewal in September, which allows the facility to continue operating for an additional 20 years.

About Independence Light & Power, Telecommunications (ILPT)

ILPT serves residents and businesses in Independence, Iowa.

The locally owned, not-for-profit electric utility is one of 51 members of WPPI Energy, which provides member communities with reliable, affordable wholesale electricity, forward-thinking services, and advocacy on a not-for-profit basis. Together, WPPI member utilities serve more than 220,000 homes and businesses in Wisconsin, Upper Michigan and Iowa. For more information visit www.ilpt.com.

About NextEra Energy Resources

NextEra Energy Resources, LLC, together with its affiliated entities, (“NextEra Energy Resources”) is the largest energy infrastructure developer in the

U.S. With approximately 33,410 megawatts of net generating capacity in operation as of year-end 2024, the company develops and operates a diverse portfolio that includes renewables, battery storage, natural gas and nuclear. NextEra Energy Resources builds and operates electric transmission assets, is a leading supplier of natural gas and power, develops natural gas plants, and delivers integrated energy and technology services to utilities and businesses across the U.S. NextEra Energy Resources, LLC is a subsidiary of Juno Beach, Florida-based NextEra Energy, Inc. (NYSE: NEE). For more information, visit: www.NextEraEnergyResources.com.