

Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation Access Live
June 23rd, 2002

Jeff Joines:

Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Jeff Joines, President of your Board of Directors for Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation. I represent you as a Director from the Caldwell District, and I'd like to welcome you to our 86th annual meeting of Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation. Thank you for your interest in the business of your cooperative. As a courtesy to others, please silence your cell phones at this time. Now, would you please stand and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag? I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Thank you. Please be seated. At this time, I'd like to ask Vice President Johnny Wishon from the Allegheny District to come and give the invocation. Director Wishon.

Johnny Wishon:

Thank you. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you for this day and for the many blessings each new day brings. We give you special thanks and praise for this opportunity to meet as a co-op. Thank you that we all live in a country where we're able to do that. Lord, we know not everybody has the freedoms that we do. Please be with the people of Ukraine and help them to get to a peaceful resolution. Lord, there are other countries that have their own crises and we pray for them as well. Please give the world leaders the wisdom to make decisions that are not rooted in evil or greed, but in peace.

Johnny Wishon:

Lord, please be with the families here in the United States who experienced violence, poverty, and injustice. Help all of us to be a compassionate people. God, we pray for our co-op. Please give our co-op leaders wisdom and guidance, give our lineman and other workers safety as they risk their lives every day to make life better for all of us, and continue to give a servant's heart to all of our employees. Lord, we ask all of these things in your precious and holy name. Amen.

Group:

Amen.

Jeff Joines:

Thank you, Johnny.

Jeff Joines:

I'd like to recognize some special guests that we have here today. And as I call your name, if you would please stand. Frances Liles is the Director of the North Carolina Rural Electrification Authority. Frances, we're so glad to have you with us today. Bo Lewis is the Director of Marketing and Technical Services for TEMA, way back in the back. Bo, we're glad to have you with us today. And Jason Wilson, Job Training and Safety Specialist with NCAEC. Jason, we're delighted to have you with us as well. Thank you for coming and good little peace to be with us today. And thanks to all of you again for being with us today. This is an important meeting of your cooperative and we're delighted that you are here to be with us.

Jeff Joines:

I want to take time to recognize the members of our board of directors, and I'm going to start with, and ask them to stand as I announce their name. I'm going to start with Kelly Melton, our Secretary Treasurer from here in Caldwell, David Eggerss from Caldwell District, J.B. Lawrence, your Assistant

Secretary Treasurer from Watauga District, Tom Trexler from Watauga District, and the recently appointed Director Hope Caroselli from the Watauga District. I'll share more about Hope in a little while, as in a little later in the meeting. From Ash county, David Boone, from Cindy Price also from Ash County, and James Young. You just heard from Johnny Wishon our Board Vice President doing the invocation. We also have Mitch Franklin from Allegheny County and Brian Edwards from Allegheny County. These are our board members that represent you, our members, for Blue Ridge Energy. Thank you, Please, please be seated.

Jeff Joines:

We are conducting the annual meeting in a hybrid fashion to allow the opportunity to participate based on the preference of our members, employees, and board members. We have been encouraging you, our members, to participate in the annual meeting process by phone like last year's annual meeting and our popular telephone town halls, or to attend in person if that is your preference. This year we are also live streaming on YouTube, which can be accessed by the YouTube app. And the livestream is also available on the Blue Ridge Energy website. The meeting will be recorded and posted on our website for future reference. In order to participate in the motions and to ask questions live at the end of the annual meeting, you must be part of the call-in process.

Jeff Joines:

To join the annual meeting live, either be present here in the room with us or on the phone by calling 1-866-1, excuse me. Let me start that over. 1-866-416-5215. I'm going to repeat that number. 866-416-5215. Please make note of that. You must also have your member account number handy to join the call. We appreciate your participation with us today. During this meeting on two different occasions, I'll be asking meeting attendees either in person or by phone to approve or oppose motions being made. Before asking you to approve or oppose a motion being made, if you are attending by phone, I will be prompting you to press star three if you want to discuss that motion before voting. You will then be asked to press one if you approve or two if you oppose the motion. Please be prepared to respond when prompted.

Jeff Joines:

As Chairman of the annual meeting, I hereby call the meeting to order. It's 4:06 in the afternoon and I declare that the business meeting is now in session. I would like to appoint Lisa Bryant, Executive Office Manager, as secretary and Debbie Harden, our General Counsel for Blue Ridge Energy, as the parliamentarian for the meeting. At the close of business on June the 16th, Blue Ridge had 61,331 active members who are entitled to vote at the annual meeting. Article 2 Section 204 of our bylaws state registration in person, by proxy, or by the return of ballots and proxies of at least 400 members of the cooperative shall be required for the transaction of business at any meeting of the members. As of 3:59 this afternoon, approximately 5,622 Blue Ridge members have registered either in person or by proxy. We have met the bylaw requirements for a quorum.

Jeff Joines:

Thank you to all of our members who chose to be involved in the director election process. The notice of the meeting was mailed as a part of the May edition of the Carolina Country Magazine to all members in late April 2022, and updated as a reference and notice in the June Carolina Country with specific instructions for remote participation by telephone, and special arrangements for those voting by ballot in the June Carolina Country, and as posted on Blue Ridge's website. Director election kits were sent to

members on May the 25th and the number of proxies returned indicate receipt of the voting information. The decision to hold this meeting using this hybrid format was made by the Board back at the May meeting. Supplemental notice of the annual meeting and instructions for participating in the meeting process were mailed in the June edition of the Carolina Country Magazine.

Jeff Joines:

At this time, do I hear a motion to dispense with the reading of the notice of the meeting?

Speaker 10:

I make that motion.

Jeff Joines:

I have a motion. Do I have a second?

Speaker 11:

Second.

Jeff Joines:

I have a motion and a second. Now, if anyone wants to discuss this motion to dispense with the reading of the notice of the meeting, press star three at this time to signify. Or if you're here in person, you can signify by raising your hand if attending the meeting here and we will get you a microphone. Since this time we have members participating by telephone, it may take a few seconds to learn if anyone would like to discuss the motion, so I'm going to pause for just a moment, wait for my confirmation for my Parliamentarian.

Debbie Harden:

Mr. President, there's no request for discussion.

Jeff Joines:

Thank you. Hearing none, you may now participate in the voting process. As I mentioned earlier, you are now being prompted to vote on the pending motion for those attending in person, please say, aye, those who oppose please say no. If attending by phone to approve this motion, press one on your phone now. Or if you oppose, please press two on your phone. Now we'll pause once again, as I'll wait for confirmation on the vote from our parliamentarian.

Debbie Harden:

Motion has been approved, Mr. President.

Jeff Joines:

Thank you. Having noticed that the motion has been approved, I'll continue. I have before me a copy of the minutes of the June 24th, 2021 annual meeting, these minutes were also made available to you by the website. And other means for your review. I would like to dispense with the reading of these minutes. I would like to have a motion requesting the board, approve these minutes at their next regular meeting, which is scheduled immediately following this meeting and to dispense with the reading of the minutes. Do I hear a motion? Mr. President I'll make that motion. I hear a motion. Do I hear a second?

Second? I hear a second. Now, if anyone wants to discuss this motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes, please raise your hand. Seeing then I'll continue. And we will give you a microphone, which I don't see anyone or press star three at this time. And I'm going to wait again for confirmation from my parliamentarian.

Debbie Harden:

There's no request for discussion, Mr. President.

Jeff Joines:

I'm sorry?

Debbie Harden:

There is no request for discussion.

Jeff Joines:

No request. Thank you. Hearing none, you may now participate in the voting process. As I reminded you before, you are now being prompted to vote on the pending motion. All those attending in person and in favor, please say aye.

Group:

Aye.

Jeff Joines:

Any opposed? Those attending by phone, please approve this motion by pressing one on your phone at this time. Or should you oppose, press two on your phone at this time. And again, I'll pause temporarily.

Debbie Harden:

Motion is approved, Mr. President.

Jeff Joines:

Thank you. We have notice that it's been approved. In the June edition of Carolina Country mailing, you received an agenda that includes the rules for the annual meeting. These rules were approved by your Board of Directors and this meeting will be conducted in accordance with those rules and the bylaws. The first order of business is the election of directors. At this time, I'm going to yield the chair to our general counsel, Debbie Harden, to review the voting process for our annual meeting. Attorney Harden.

Debbie Harden:

Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, everyone. Each Blue Ridge member had the option to vote before this annual meeting by returning a completed proxy by mail or by internet. Again this year we had excellent member participation in the election of Blue Ridge directors with approximately 5,622 members having voted before this meeting either by mail or by internet in the proxy process. So at this time I would like to recognize the four directors whose terms are expiring today. They are your President, Jeff Joines from the Caldwell District, J. B. Lawrence, your Assistant Secretary Treasurer from the Watauga District, James Young from the Ash District, and Brian Edwards from the Allegheny District.

On behalf of the membership, thank you gentlemen for your service. Now it's time to turn to this year's nominating process for 2022 for director candidates.

Debbie Harden:

At Blue Ridge, candidates can be nominated in one of two ways. The first method is by the nominating committee. The nominating committee evaluates candidates for each open director seat based on applications received by the first business day in March. After review and interviews, the nominating committee decides whether or not it will nominate one or more candidates for each open seat. Additionally, the second method by which a director candidate may be nominated at Blue Ridge is by petition by the member. A director candidate can be directly nominated by petition by members when it's signed by 20 members, that is five from each of the four districts, and that petition is filed on or before the first business day in April. This year, there were no nominations by petitions received. All the candidates before you for this election were nominated by the 2022 nominating committee.

Debbie Harden:

This committee is composed of the following members. Caldwell District was represented by Jason Carpenter, Robert Marshall, and Ron Vance. The Watauga District was represented by Kelden Grodder and Jimmy Fraley. The Ash District was represented by Melanie Miller and Sean Horton. And the Allegheny District was represented by Tommy Mains and Heather Andrews. On behalf of the membership, I thank today each of these members of the nominating committee for their service. The nominating committee met back on March 10th and nominated a slate of four candidates for the four open seats. The official report of the nominating committee was publicly posted immediately thereafter at Blue Ridge Electric's corporate offices and on the website.

Debbie Harden:

So now, I have the pleasure of introducing the 2022 director candidates. They are, for the Callwell District, Jeff Joines, for the Watauga District seat, J. B. Lawrence, for the Ash District seat, James Young, and for the Allegheny District seat, Brian Edwards. On behalf of the members, we thank you to each of these candidates for agreeing to stand for election and for your service.

Debbie Harden:

So how or what is required to, for one, to be a director candidate or a director of Blue Ridge? Well, we turn to section 3.02 of Blue Ridge's bylaws, which provides that in order to be eligible to become or remain a director of the cooperative, you must meet the bylaw qualifications. As the presiding chair today over these elections, I can tell you that each of these candidates have met those bylaw qualifications. And now, moving forward with the election, I declare that the polls for voting on the election of directors are hereby open at 4:17 PM. If any of the 5,622 members who've already voted by mail or internet want to change their vote, you can do so at this time. But if you're satisfied with your vote, you do not need to do anything. If you haven't previously voted, you should raise your hand and let us know. You should be registered and we will get you to the lobby with the CNE committee and to the polls where you may cast your ballot. Is there anyone here that has not voted that wishes to vote?

Debbie Harden:

All right, let me check my phone and make sure we don't have anyone waiting in the lobby. Okay. Everyone has already voted by proxy and therefore I can close the polls and we will tabulate the results. The polls are officially closed today at 4:18 PM. And President Joines, I'll return the chair to you.

Jeff Joines:

Thank you, Attorney Harden. The next order of business will be brief reports from myself as President, then the Secretary Treasurer, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief Executive Officer. Later in the meeting, there will be an opportunity provided for member questions. Now it's my pleasure to deliver for you the President's report. Again, welcome to your annual meeting for Blue Ridge Energy. We are continuing measures of safety by offering you this opportunity to meet in a hybrid fashion this year. The meeting again is participation by telephone or in person and we're delighted that we've been able to do this. While you can listen and participate by voting on motions and asking questions by telephone or in person, we also have a livestream of the meeting if you simply wish to watch. We will also be posting a recording of this meeting to the Blue Ridge Energy website.

Jeff Joines:

As we turn to the business portion of the annual meeting, I first would like to recognize a longtime board member who retired earlier this year, as well as welcome a new board member appointed to fill that seat. Joy Coffee served the membership with commitment and dedication for 25 years. She represented Watauga District, and like all board members, she served in the best interest of all members. A former bank executive, she was Secretary Treasurer for 14 years. Joy was very involved in her community and served on many different committees of the cooperative for a number of years. She retired from the board in January. And I want to say on behalf of the entire board, how much we appreciate Joy for her leadership and outstanding service.

Jeff Joines:

Appointed in April by the board of directors to fill that seat and serve Joy's remaining term through 2024 is Hope Caroselli. Hope lives in Watauga County with her husband Bill and daughter, Chloe. She's a graduate of Appalachian and she is a mortgage relationship banker with Life Store Bank. She also works as a realtor with Blue Ridge Realty. She's Membership Chair of the Boone Chamber of Commerce and active with the High Country Young Professionals. We're delighted to have Hope be on the board and we look forward to serving with you.

Jeff Joines:

As a cooperative, our goal of making life better for those we serve is at the heart of everything we do. Your board, your cooperative's management, and all the employees are working on behalf of the best interest of the members. We achieved excellent results in 2021 in overall operations and financially. I'm pleased to say that COVID has not financially impacted your cooperative. You'll hear more about the operational and financial results in just a little bit. I'm especially proud to report that the strong history of caring for our communities by your cooperative continued in 2021. One way we achieve this is through the Blue Ridge Energy Member Foundation.

Jeff Joines:

The foundation is funded by donations from members joining Operation Roundup, as well as from your cooperative's ridge link, and propane and fuel subsidiaries. You'll see this information in your annual report. In 2020, the severe impact of COVID led us to a decision to dedicate all foundation funds to crisis energy bill assistance. At that time, over 2300 families received help for electric, propane, or fuel bills. However, in 2021, we saw the need for this level of help declining. That allowed us to reinstate the foundation's community grant program. Last year, over \$150,000 in grants were awarded to local, not for profits that also are working to make life better for the members of our region. Nearly 1000 families

receive crisis energy bill assistance. We're also helping support safe, strong communities through our role in the government's rural economic development loan and grant program. In 2021, we helped local communities secure over \$1.7 million.

Jeff Joines:

These funds are being used to help build or improve local fire departments. And also for economic development initiatives. I'm pleased to report that your cooperative's efforts to help bring broadband to local areas lacking this vital service is underway. We have a partnership with sky BI communications and we awarded a great grant from the state of North Carolina. Construction's well underway and around 60 members have already connected to Sky Best high speed internet. The project includes about 70 miles of fiber construction in the rural mountainous areas of Northern Caldwell County. Once this project is completed, we'll have approximately 400 members who have the option to choose Sky Best internet if they so wish. We are also partnering with Sky Best on a similar project with grant funds that have been secured from the Watauga County government or areas in that county lacking broadband. Construction's already underway in the Howard's Creek area, Castle Ford, and the Wildcat area.

Jeff Joines:

Please be assured that we continue seeking additional grants for broadband in other parts of our service area. These efforts are part of our vision for a brighter future by providing these services of broadband. It also helps in the need for education, jobs, healthcare, and more. As I close, I'd like to thank the Blue Ridge members serving on the nominating committee, the credentials and election committee, the member advisory committees and community leaders council. All of you provide a vital service to our cooperative. I want to thank all of our Blue Ridge employees. You work tirelessly and safely to keep energy flowing and provide the best service to Blue Ridge members and our customers. Thank you so much for your dedicated efforts finally, to everyone listening today. Thank you for your time and your interest in your elective. Electric cooperative. This meeting is for you now it's time for your cooperative's financial report. And I would like to introduce Kelly Melton, our board secretary and treasurer. Kelly?

Kelly Melton:

Thank you, President Joines and good afternoon, everyone. We appreciate your time to join us for Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation's annual meeting to help conduct the business of your cooperative. I hope you've had time to review the annual report in your June issue of Carolina Country. It contains the statement of operations and balance sheet of the cooperative. I'm very pleased to report to you this afternoon that our cooperative is in a strong financial position to serve you, our member owners. Noteworthy from 2021 was the 6 billion we were able to give members in bill credits last August. We received these funds from our power provider as a result of a settlement between Duke Energy, the North Carolina Attorney General, our state's utilities commission and the Sierra Club, related to the largest coal ash cleanup in history.

Kelly Melton:

We were also pleased to return over 5 million in capital credits, refunds to members for the several years. Through the Blue Ridge energy members foundation, nearly 1000 deserving families were helped with crisis energy field assistance. As President Joines mentioned, to support the quality of life in our communities, the foundation also resumed the grant program to community projects that help our members in many other valuable ways. These positive results directly reflect the daily work and commitment to providing a strong cooperative for the members. It is also due to outstanding leadership

and strategic planning and execution by the employees at Blue Ridge Energy. I hope you will join me in appreciation of our 2021 results by the leaders and employees who exemplify a heart of service for members and the communities we serve. At this time, I'd like to ask our Chief Financial Officer, Katie Woodle, to come forward and present the financial report.

Katie Woodle:

Thank you, Kelly. And thank you to all the members for the opportunity to present your financial report for 2021. This report includes the consolidated financial results of Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation, as well as the cooperative's wholly-owned subsidiaries, Blue Ridge Energies, LLC, and Ridge Link, LLC. As Kelly mentioned, 2021 financial results remain strong. Certainly challenges associated with COVID-19 pandemic have continued, but the cooperative, as I mentioned last year was in a sound financial condition from the start. And I'm glad to say that we've maintained that status. The cooperative's overall vision remains to make life better for the member owners that we serve. It's certainly important that we, as a cooperative, have a strong financial position in order to meet this vision and have that to be achieved. So now I'd like to give you some of the statistics. Kelly mentioned they're in the Carolina Country, your annual report. I'm going to highlight some of the financial statistics from that report.

Katie Woodle:

The cooperatives asset based at the end of 2021 came to 487 million and the member equity ended at 818.8 million that equates to 39% of the total assets. So this is right in line with our goal for that metric. Given this financial stability, Blue Ridge was able to return 5.6 million of the equity back to the members this year during the capital credit retirement process. Just last month, as far as your financial report from operations, the kilowatt hour sales increased by 3% as compared to 2020, it was slightly colder in 2021 as compared to 20. So that increased those sales, but also many of the pandemic impacts lessened throughout the year. So we saw an increase there as well. On propane side, the propane gallons sold were up as compared to 2020 by 12%. The cooperative continues to implement initiatives, work smart, which provides for expense reductions.

Katie Woodle:

Certainly we are talking a lot about costs now and inflation, and we continue to watch that as we move forward, as well as the energy market conditions are currently much less predictable in that market. And we are watching all of this very closely at Ridge link. The for profit dark fiber subsidiary growth continues along with positive financial performance. The two subsidiaries together contributed \$4 million in benefit to Blue Ridge electric members in 2021. I'm glad to say that meter growth is now beginning to trend up in our area after many years of flat growth. So with that, along with the continued focus on cost savings and strong subsidiary performance, all of this has resulted in strong overall financial results for your cooperative for 2021, the total margins were \$10 million. You can find more details on the financial results for 2021 in the annual report published in Carolina country magazine this month or through a link on our website. Thank you.

Jeff Joines:

Thank you, Katie and Kelly. I went too far. Now I'd like to recognize our Chief Executive Officer, Doug Johnson, to provide his report. Doug has worked at Blue Ridge for 44 years and has served as very capably as our CEO since 1989. That's 33 years. Our cooperative is achieving outstanding results through Doug's leadership and the work with his senior staff and all of our employees. And I'm sure Doug, Doug

will share more with you about the results at this time. It's my pleasure to introduce to you Doug Johnson.

Doug Johnson:

Thank you, President Joines. And thank you to everyone that's here with us today and with us virtually over the telephone. I want to thank you also for this incredible opportunity that I've been given to serve as your chief executive officer throughout 2021. And even still today, we successfully endured operating with the COVID 19 pandemic as Katie talked about. While it presented a lot of challenges to us, I continue to be very grateful for our members, our customers, and our employees that we all work together to overcome and still to overcome a lot of difficulties. I'm pleased to say that our operational and financial results for 2021 were outstanding. And I'm proud to say we made it through some tough times with all employees, fully employed and working hard to deliver these strong performance results. Last year, our 2021 key performance indicators show that Blue Ridge energy employs of all three companies, electric, propane, and fuels and Ridge link achieved excellent results.

Doug Johnson:

Again this past year, as they continue to demonstrate our motto of nothing less than our very best last year, we achieved an American consumer satisfaction index of 88, a score of 88. The average for cooperatives across America is 74. That's a remarkable difference in performance and relationship with our member owners in our propane and fuels company. Last year, we scored 9.99 on customer satisfaction out of a 10 point scale. Again, an outstanding result for our employees, our operational team delivered top quartile reliability from a national standpoint with a system average inter interruption duration of 62.3 minutes, which is really incredible. When you think about the train and the weather that we have pleasure to serve. And of course, safety is an incredibly important part of our cooperative and our subsidiaries. And we've continued to achieve outstanding results and to have a very strong safety culture at Blue Ridge energy.

Doug Johnson:

I'm also pleased to say, as Katie reported, we're in a strong financial position that we've not had an increase in our rate since 2013, and that we've returned over 40 million during this period of time from some of our power costs savings to our members. And as Katie shared an additional 5.6 million in capital credits, we've been able to do this for a lot of reasons. Part of it that significant part through a very favorable wholesale power contract that we have with duke energy through our work smart program, where we're creating savings to employee led initiatives, to reduce cost and improve efficiency and utilize new technologies today, cumulative that has saved our members about 57 million over this period of time subsidiary performance. As Katie shared, produced over \$4 million. I'm extremely proud of that. Our propane and fuels company, our Ridge link, fiber business, just incredible benefit producers for our member owners.

Doug Johnson:

And as we think about all these good things that are happening, and this is 2021 that we're sharing, we also need to turn our attention to our vision and our strategy for the future. And we've implemented our brighter future vision. And there are three key pillars in this vision. First is to enrich the lives of our members in the communities that we serve. Think about things that Jeff shared like loans for fire departments, economic development, youth programs, many things that we do with our young people. And then Jeff shared about broadband, where we're sharing broadband to people who did not have

access to the internet. The, the second pillar is low carbon to achieve a 50% reduction in our carbon footprint, over 2005, by 2030 and net zero carbon emissions by 2050. We're well, on our way to the first 50% reduction. And I'm pleased to say that we feel like we'll be able to achieve this goal, but I also want to say it's incredibly important.

Doug Johnson:

And this is playing out in front of us, very graphically today, with all the geopolitical things that are happening in Ukraine, we must achieve affordability and reliability, and we must not let those two items Trump us from being able to achieve our sustainability goals that has to be at the top of the list. People have to be able to afford electricity. It has to be reliable at the same time. We're trying to achieve the sustainability and renewable energy goals. So the other leg of our pillar of our vision is innovation and reliability and cost. We want to utilize our innovative energy solutions to make our electric grid more flexible, more efficient and more resilient than ever before. We want to be your trusted energy advisor and your trusted energy provider. Some of the ways that we are showing you this is through our new 11 megawatt brighter future utility scale solar here in Caldwell county.

Doug Johnson:

We also have five community solar sites, energy efficiency rebates, over 9,000 people participating in our beat, the peak program and other demand management programs and offering new technology and expanded offerings in our showrooms. Some very exciting things happening there. And of course, we're doing a lot of work in what we call beneficial electrification, which is providing a lot of support to our members who want to purchase and drive electric vehicles. So we have a lot of different initiatives to encourage and support members who want to put distributed energy resources at their homes or at their businesses. We're in the process of you doing a pilot program on advanced time of use rates, doing a pilot rate in that area for critical peak pricing for whole house and for electric vehicles. And we have on the table for study and advanced time of use rate for rooftop solar.

Doug Johnson:

So we're looking into that as well. So I want to talk just a minute about wholesale power cost and rates. And so we've seen a lot of volatility in this area, particularly in the fourth quarter of last year. And then is this problem occurred with the Russian war against Ukraine. The around the world, the cost of generation fuels have become extremely expensive and it moved to extremely high levels, particularly for our industry for natural gas, coal and even uranium. So we're working a lot in this area and quite frankly, it's something that we're worried about because of the potential cost impacts that it could have for our members. Duke energy is also working to develop their carbon plan in order to comply with the new North Carolina law called house bill 9 51, which will also put pressure on our rates for the foreseeable future. In addition, we've been investing in and seeing the need to invest in our own electric facilities.

Doug Johnson:

We're beginning to wrap up and complete a 46 million investment for increased reliability and resiliency to our mountain counties with 17 miles of two 30 double circuit line from west Jefferson, du boon. And we're also going to be building a new Ruth Wood substation, which is actually starting this year and we'll continue in the next year. One of the things that I'm most proud of is our own Blue Ridge energy crew built the last eight miles of the two 30 line from west Jefferson over to other wood. So other things that you'll be hearing from us, additional initiatives coming up is we're beginning to deploy next generation

of advanced automated metering in our members' homes and businesses. We've put in a more advanced meter data management system to manage all the data that we receive. And we're seeing exponential changes in it and OT and OTs, operational technology, and we're having a significant number of employee retirements.

Doug Johnson:

So all these things together certainly are things that have our strategic attention and that we're working on to continue to provide the level of service to our members, the kind of reliability and cost that our members have come to expect. So at this time, I want to personally express my appreciation to all of our Blue Ridge energy employees that continue to deliver such incredible results to our member owners and to our customers. You know, our culture is based on strong values, hard work, and a deep belief that providing great service to our members and to our customers is our highest priority. I'm very proud of our employee team for their deep level of commitment, to our purpose, to our vision and to our strategy, we share a very strong commitment to our communities and we foster a family based work environment that honors and appreciates people. I believe that's why our employees continue to produce topnotch results for you. Our member owners, year in and year out. I'm also pleased to share that Blue Ridge energy just received business North Carolina, magazine's best places to work in North Carolina award for the seven at the time, this award symbolizes the fact that the key driver of our success is our employee's enthusiastic commitment to our purpose to make life better for our members and for our customers. Thank you very much.

Jeff Joines:

Thank you, Doug, for your leadership. Thank you for your service to this cooperative for many years. The next item of business is the report of the election results. And I'm going to call on attorney Debbie Harden to do that. Debbie?

Debbie Harden:

Thank you. President Joines. Each year, your board of directors appoints a member committee who oversees the cooperatives director election process. And I have the privilege of working with that committee this year, the credentials and elections committee reviewed the selection process and the recommendation and selected the independent election administrator who has run the 2020 election. They reviewed and approved the proxy and the ballot that each of you as members used to vote for your directors. And today, they have been on site and responsible for certifying the results of this year's election. The appointment of this committee was made in December of 2021, and it's for a one year duration.

Debbie Harden:

At this time, I'm going to ask the members of the 2022 credentials and elections committees to stand as I call their names. And we want to recognize them for their hard work, diligence, and devotion to all of you, the members. From Caldwell District, Glen Wright, from Watauga District, Bob Radzinsik. And Bob and I have been practicing his name, okay? From Ash District, Marty Norris. From Allegheny District, we have Ron Farmer and Dwayne Bright. On behalf of the members of Blue Ridge, thanks teach of you for serving on this committee. And now I get to introduce the chair of the 2022 credentials and elections committee, and that is Marty Norris. I'm going to ask Marty to join me at the podium and share with you the results of the 2022 director election.

Marty Norris:

Thank you and good afternoon. I'm Marty Norris, your 2022 chairman of the Blue Ridge Energy credentials and elections committee. The credentials and elections committee has received and reviewed the voting data reports of our independent third party election administrator survey and ballot systems. After review, the committee consisting of Glenda Wright, Bob Radzinsik, myself, Marty Norris, Ron Farmer, and Dwayne Bright has certified that the bylaws quorum requirement has been met. Further, the credentials and elections committee certified the election results for each district as follows.

Marty Norris:

For the Caldwell district, the CNE committee declares Jeff Joines the newly-elected director of the board of Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation. For the Watauga district, the CNE committee declares J. B. Lawrence the newly-elected director to the board of Blue Ridge Electric Membership Cooperation. For the Ash District, the CNE committee declares James Young the newly elected director to the board of Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation. And the Allegheny district, the CNE committee declares, Brian Edwards, the newly elected director to the board of Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation. Congratulations to all the 2022 elected directors and a special thank you to all who participated in the director elections for Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation. This concludes the report of the credentials and elections committee. Thank you.

Johnny Wishon:

Thank you, Chairman Norris. The newly elected directors, and that is directors Joines, Lawrence, Young, and Edwards will be installed later this evening at the June 2022 regular board of directors meetings. So at this time, I will declare the election concluded and return the chair to President Joines.

Jeff Joines:

Thank you, Marty and Debbie for that report. Get to the right place. We've come to that part of the meeting where members have the opportunity to ask questions. Your board of directors really values this opportunity to hear from the members. And we have reserved a portion of this annual meeting to be able for you to do this at this time. If you have questions or comments you would like to make it this time, please raise your hand and we will give a microphone to you or dial star three and you will be in the queue for questions. I'll pause for just a moment to see if we have any members who wish to ask questions.

Debbie Harden:

President Joines, you have no questions from the telephone group. I do not believe I saw anyone raise their hands in the room.

Jeff Joines:

I didn't see any, but I'll ask once again. Is there anyone in the room who would like to ask a question or make a comment? Seeing none, I understand we don't have any members in the queue or present today who would like to ask a question. I'd like to remind our members that if they would feel more comfortable speaking with us, please do that. Just talk with us here today, or call your local office. All your questions will be routed to the appropriate staff member. Ladies and gentlemen at 4 47, I declare the annual meeting adjourned. Thank you for being here.

