

BARC Hosts Annual Members Meeting

Members and guests gathered at the BARC Electric Cooperative Highland Belle office for the co-op's 2025 annual meeting, reflecting on another year of growth, innovation and service.

Board President Keith Swisher addressed attendees, noting that 2024 was both rewarding and challenging for the utility sector. Swisher addressed increasing energy demands, driven by data centers and electrification, that are outpacing the supply of new, reliable generation. He explained how this is leading to potential capacity shortages and volatile pricing.

Swisher highlighted BARC leadership's continued focus on investing in the future and ensuring reliable service while representing members' best interests.

Secretary/Treasurer John Quantz gave a financial overview, noting many milestones for BARC Electric and BARC Connects. A major software conversion was completed in 2024 to streamline operations and improve member service. The implementation of a single platform — SmartHub — for both companies creates convenient payment options.

"Mother Nature has posed many financial difficulties," Quantz reported,



Top: Keith Swisher and Creigh Deeds. Top Right: CEO Bill Buchanan discussing right-of-way maintenance. Bottom right: John Quantz gives the financial report.

with costs at a 10-year high due to storm damage.

CEO Bill Buchanan spoke on the importance of system reliability, especially through difficult weather patterns and aggressive right-of-way (ROW) maintenance. He highlighted ROW is the cooperative's single largest expense, next to power supply.

"Keeping these corridors open is essential to safety, preventing outages, shortening restoration times and reducing wildfire risks," Buchanan told members.

BARC has cleared approximately 30 miles of ROW this past year and hopes to stay on track to clear another 180 miles more. While herbicide application is an important part of ROW maintenance, Buchanan emphasized, "BARC strives to achieve a careful balance between environmental safety and reliability."

Buchanan proudly announced that, in 2024, BARC surpassed 750,000 work hours with no lost-time incidents, an exceptional safety milestone and testament to BARC's overall safety program.

He reiterated the value of the cooperative business model, noting that nearly 900 electric cooperatives operate across the U.S., serving areas often overlooked by investor-owned utilities.

"Cooperatives were born out of necessity, and they remain vital in ensuring that rural communities aren't left behind," he said.

Over the past year, BARC Connects was awarded a USDA Rural Development Community Connect Grant to bring fiber to 400 locations in the Collierstown area. Also, in partnership with Rockbridge County, BARC Connects received a \$2 million Virginia Telecommunications Initiative grant to extend fiber to the Buffalo Creek and Spring Valley areas.

BARC remains committed to overcoming these hurdles through creative financing, member support and continued advocacy.

During the meeting, directors Kae Zulager and Michael Sandridge were reelected to serve new three-year terms on the board. More than 1,000 members submitted their proxy designation cards and were entered into a drawing for \$150 bill credits. The winners by district were:

- District 1: Richard Gallagher
- District 2: Fred Conner
- District 3: Stacy Jordan
- District 4: Darren Whitesell
- District 5: Gay Kell Jr.
- District 6: Mountain Grove Community Church, c/o George Chestnut
- District 7: Arlene Christenbury

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Chief Executive Officer
Bill Buchanan

Local Page Editor
Amanda Cunningham

BARC Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

BARC Communities

DO NOT SHOOT

BARC is asking for your help this hunting season. As a reminder, do not shoot at or near electrical and fiber equipment and lines.

We are dedicated to providing our rural communities the most reliable and cost-effective electricity and the best internet services. Damage caused by shooting fiber and power lines can result in potential liabilities and criminal charges and also leaves homes and businesses without power and internet service.

We know the majority of hunters practice safe hunting and understand the potential hazards when discharging a firearm. We encourage these experienced hunters who are familiar with the area to help identify locations of electrical equipment to the younger, less experienced hunters and gun enthusiasts. Tampering or misuse of fiber and electric lines can not only put yourself in danger but can also affect all other members that are down-line.

Please respect yourself, your fellow members and our power and fiber infrastructure.

REMINDER: DO NOT SHOOT AT OVERHEAD LINES. PLEASE SHARE.



Sandridge to Chair Board



Sandridge



Swisher

BARC is pleased to announce, Michael Sandridge was elected to serve as board chair. Sandridge succeeds Keith Swisher, who served as chair for 17 years. We thank Mr. Swisher for his service as chair and congratulate Mr. Sandridge on his new role.

Kevin Bryant Promoted



Congratulations to Kevin Bryant on his recent promotion to manager of technical services. His contributions have strengthened our organization, and we congratulate him on this well-deserved promotion.

In the past month, we have blocked **41,000** intrusions. Security for every connected device on all residential packages.



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