

BOARDLINES

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Info and Opinions from Your Board Members



Ron Benfield
President
Newport
541-265-2770
rbenfield@newportnet.com

Better Service, Better Preparation

Our Operations facility in South Beach (south of Newport) houses specialized crews who serve our entire District, and yet that location will be under water in the event of a tsunami, severely hampering our efforts to restore service after a disaster. As a result, my fellow board members and I voted last fall to authorize relocating that facility to a site in North Newport. We broke ground in May, and it's tremendous to see top-notch contractors, many of them local businesses, working away at the site on NE Avery, near NE 73rd Street. I can't wait to see those crews, personnel, warehousing and equipment moved to the new, safer location next year. This is a vulnerability for us that has been a concern of mine for some time.

The Board has also authorized moving forward with a new software platform, giving you account access via smartphones and tablets as well as through the web. You will be able to check account balances, pay your bill and sign up for automatic payment, and check billing history and usage. And a new pay-by-phone system will allow you to do these by phone as well. It will streamline our system, while allowing us to cut some costs.

Central Lincoln exists to serve you. And we never forget that overriding mission. These projects demonstrate our commitment to quality service for you.



Curt Abbott
Vice President
Mapleton, South Beach, Swisshome, Waldport, Yachats
541-563-2257
cabbott@cencoast.com

The Ongoing ESA Saga

Last year I wrote about the Energy Supplier Assessment (ESA) and how we had joined other PUDs in suing the state to declare the ESA as a tax. This way it would receive proper oversight from the legislature. Our suit continues to slowly grind its way through the court system. However, the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) that is funded by the ESA is currently being evaluated by a committee of the legislature to see if the department should be overhauled.

ODOE was created in 1975 during the time of significant energy

crisis. At the time, the legislature was concerned that we should have proper management of energy resource development. The department has come under scrutiny recently for its mishandling of millions of dollars of state tax incentives for development of renewable energy facilities. At this point most everyone agrees that these programs could be handled better by Business Oregon.

So what else does ODOE do?

The Department handles energy facility siting, but a majority of this is funded through siting fees. Besides that, ODOE is directed to produce an energy plan. Over the entire time of ODOE's existence its personnel have never created a plan of any value. Regional planning is federally directed by the Northwest Power & Conservation Council, which does an excellent job and through our supplier, BPA, we follow their plans. Yet ODOE has over 23 employees focused on planning and policy. It has three employees in communications and we have only heard from them recently to set up meetings during which they try to justify their Department's existence. ODOE also has four employees in HR, a similar-sized PUD has one.



Board President Ron Benfield and General Manager Debra Smith shared Central Lincoln's views on federal power issues with U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader (center) last month in Canby.

There are 23 ODOE employees in general administrative roles. All this, plus an employee in the Governor's office is supported by the ESA. You contributed about \$90k to that fund this year.

I believe that energy issues can be handled efficiently at an Office level, as Washington state has done, instead of a full-blown Department. The legislative committee has the opportunity to be an effective steward of government and streamline ODOE's operations. We are providing the committee with our analysis and recommendations, let us see if they will take a real step forward this fall. Stay tuned



Judy Matheny
Secretary
Dunes City, Florence
 541-902-8724
jmatheny@cencoast.com



Larkin Kaliher
Board Member
Depoe Bay, Siletz, Toledo
 541-270-2732
lkaliher@cencoast.com

Sometimes, Change is Good!

If you live in the Florence area, or visit often, you likely have noticed our bucket trucks on Highway 101, and linemen digging holes, putting in new transmission poles, and moving lines to those new poles. All this is pretty exciting from my standpoint, since ultimately the Florence Area Reinforcement Project will mean fewer outages, and that our system is “bulked up” for future development in the coastal Lane County area. The work of our engineers and linemen will complete a loop around Florence that can re-route power when there’s an interruption, meaning shorter outages or, optimally, no outage at all.

Our new substation at the Pacific View Business Park is finished, and performing the main function of substations: transforming high voltage electricity to lower voltage suited to residential, commercial and industrial customers. Now our substation crew is at work modernizing our Heceta Beach Substation to not only better serve current customers, but new customers in the years to come.

And just as the \$6 million Florence Area Reinforcement Project wraps up in the coming year, we’ll begin a streamlining of the Florence office, which was dedicated in 1953. Parts of the facility are inefficient. Our Customer Service lobby will be reconfigured to better serve you.

Central Lincoln is here to provide service, and I’m hopeful these improvements will give you even more reasons to be pleased with the service we provide.



Tom Tymchuk
Treasurer
Lakeside, North Bend, Reedsport
 541-271-3458

Thirty Plus Years of Change and Growth

As I was watering my lawn and pulling a few weeds on a sunny Saturday last month, I thought about the changes I’ve seen at this utility since being appointed to the Central Lincoln board some 33 years ago.

Back then, outages happened more often, and took longer to fix. Now we have a computerized system that allows our Operations folks to see where an outage has occurred, and send a line crew directly to that location, rather than driving around and looking at lines to try to find the issue. The computerized system is pretty great!

I’m also really pleased that we are moving our Operations facility south of Newport to a new site that’s out of the inundation zone (see Ron’s article on Page 1). That is a project that has to happen to help us better face disasters, and I think it’s great. I don’t like this utility being vulnerable.

Much of what boards do is procedural—oversee budgets and procedures. As a board member with years of experience, I believe we are surely on the right track, with the right general manager, and the right people. I’m proud of the work we’ve been able to do.

Flip the Switch—the Lights Are On! Easier Said Than Done.

Central Lincoln People’s Utility District, owned locally by you the customers, has lots of responsibilities behind the switch. Unlike large corporate-owned utilities, the majority of the work is performed by local residents, your neighbors.

Engineers plan, and design the system that holds up in our coastal environment and weather. Line crews install and maintain power poles and lines, our substation teams build complex substations, and tree trimming crews keep trees and branches away from lines and substations. All of these highly-trained craftspeople help provide resiliency by being willing and able to respond quickly to restore power in the harshest of weather conditions. The majority of them have been with Central Lincoln many years, and know our infrastructure from transmission poles to substations to distribution lines. I am very thankful to have them serving this utility and its customers.

Less visible functions are provided by support personnel. Customer service, the public face of our offices, coordinates customer needs with services. Accounting coordinates customer usage and billing, paying bills of the utility, and accounting services. Warehousing and maintenance departments assure that necessary parts and equipment are available and in running condition. Management oversees the operation and coordination of the various departments, assures purchased power balances with customer use, and plans for future needs.

Your utility’s locally-elected directors’ organizational purpose is providing safe and reliable energy at the least (actual) cost and reasonable risk. Our measurement is customer satisfaction.



Reviewing results: Board members get a firsthand look at Central Lincoln’s new substation in the Pacific View Business Park in Florence with (left to right) Engineering Manager Bruce Lovelin and Senior Systems Engineer Steve Alexanderson. Listening to Lovelin and Alexanderson’s presentation are Board Members Larkin Kaliher, Curt Abbott and Judy Matheny. (Not shown: Board Members Ron Benfield and Tom Tymchuk.)