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Central Florida Electric Co-op hosts Dixie County Chamber of Commerce monthly meeting



Central Florida Electric Cooperative Customer Service Manager A.D. Goodman (right) shows people what the CFEC app looks like on the screen of a smart phone or tablet.

Story and Photos By Jeff M. Hardison © Jan. 13, 2017 at 4:47 p.m.

CROSS CITY -- A.D. Goodman, manager of customer service for Central Florida Electric Cooperative, and one of Goodman's colleagues, CFEC Customer Service Representative John Cherry, helped the members and guest of the Dixie County Chamber of Commerce learn some happy news about CFEC on Thursday (Jan. 12).



CFEC Customer Services Representative John Cherry stands by the serving area for sandwiches, cookies and drinks.

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This monthly meeting of the Dixie County Chamber of Commerce included CFEC providing lunch. Also, Goodman was the keynote speaker. He helped business owners learn some happy news in regard to electric costs for CFEC members. Cherry helped in serving the sandwiches and drinks, which were picked up buffet style by the many people at the meeting.

There must have been at least 50 people at the meeting. The Dixie County Chamber of Commerce is continuing to show positive strides in growth of the organization and helping its member business interests.

The good news from CFEC, Goodman said, is that electric bills is dropping.

As of Jan. 1, the cost 1,000 kilowatt-hours went down by \$10.50 per month, Goodman said.

"Now the idle accounts are going to see a little increase," Goodman said, "because they are not using any power. So if the facility is just sitting out there and not doing anything, it is costing the co-op money and the members money, so that's where are costs are right now -- with the facility."



Debbie DeWeese (left), a former Chamber president, and current Chamber Secretary Vondla Sullivan (next to her) listen to A.D. Goodman speak about Central Florida Electric Cooperative.

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The leader of CFEC customer representatives said this rural electric cooperative strives to help its members.

Another service where the price is reduced is the fee for establishing a new account, he said.

"Instead of it being \$60 to establish an account," he said, "it's \$30."

Goodman explained why some people experience difficulty reporting an outage. When a substation goes out, he said, that is about 2,400 people who lose electric service. There is one dispatcher and three other people to answer the phone.

There is an automated system, however, for reporting power outages.

And now, for people with a smart phone – Android or iPhone – there is an app to report an outage.

He demonstrated how it works and took one-second to report it by one click. He then asked Cherry to call dispatch and let them know that power was not really out at his house.

This app shows the number of outages on a map in the whole system. At that minute there were two, including the test report – which was not an actual outage.

This app also can show the user how much electricity they use each day.

During Hurricane Hermine, there were about 26,000 members of the 36,000 total CFEC members who experienced some electrical outage, Goodman said. That is when the system bogged down.



Since then, he added, CFEC has added servers to better handle a catastrophic level such as that. If the cooperative was to hire enough customer service representatives to handle that many calls on a regular basis, though, the rates would have to significantly increase.

Goodman provided the Chamber members and guest with an informative, educational and entertaining program.

Dixie County Chamber of Commerce President Carol West is seen moments after the regular meeting ended, and just before the directors' meeting began, as she starts to get a sandwich. By leading the meeting, she was not able to eat while everyone else was eating.

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IN OTHER BUSINESS

In other business at the meeting, Chamber President Carol West ran an efficient meeting as the group was able to cover many topics.

Minutes from the December meeting, which were provided by Chamber Secretary Vondla Sullivan were approved. Everyone recognized Sullivan for her excellent volunteer service as secretary.

Chamber Treasurer Debbie Dembo provided a report of the financial standing as of December.

Mike Cassidy, in the absence of attorney Rhett Bullard, spoke about the Dixie County Legislative Delegation of newly-elected State Rep. Charles Wesley "Chuck" Clemons Sr. (R-Jonesville, Dist. 21) and State Sen. Robert "Rob" Bradley (R-Orange Park, Dist. 5).

Jeff Cary and President West and Vice President Art Bellot spoke about the April 15 Expo to be at the Cross City Airport. This huge event is from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on April 15.

Another big event for the Chamber is the annual meeting, which is set for Jan. 30 at 5:30 p.m. at a private residence located at 704 N.E. 351 Highway in Cross City. The cost to enjoy the meal and meeting is \$10 per person. For more information about the Chamber, send a note to promotedixie@gmail.com.

President West said the Chamber leadership chose to provide a different type of venue for the meeting this year. She said the business aspect of the meeting will be shorter than usual, and there will be more time for networking with fellow members.

Any of the following directors who were present and able to do so-- Ken Baumer, Michelle Cannon, John Cherry, Terry Dembo, Susan Lamb, Ruth Ann Lovelace, Vondla Sullivan, Carol West, Melanie Anderson, Yzzy Arzayus, Arthur Bellot, Cindy Bellot, Jeff Cary, Karen Evans, Dana Johnson, Beverly Pivaeck, Robbie Lee and Bob Leichner – stayed after the regular meeting to conduct more Chamber business.

Once again at this Chamber meeting, a good time was had by all and progress was made in helping the business community of Dixie County.