

EXPANDING THE POSSIBILITIES

50th

ANNIVERSARY

**EMILY
COOPERATIVE
TELEPHONE
COMPANY**


tremolo
COMMUNICATIONS
POWERED BY ECTC

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Board of Directors



Chad Genz District 1, Emily
218-763-4200



Ken Hersey District 2, Fifty Lakes
218-763-3802



Phil Yetzer District 3, Fairfield
218-763-4150



Norman Hawley District 4, Little Pine
218-763-3026



Kathy Hachey District 5, At Large
218-763-3333



Josh Netland CEO/General Manager
218-763-3000

President, Secretary & CEO/ General Manager's Report

Over the past 50 years your cooperative has witnessed tremendous change in the telecommunications industry. An industry focused primarily on connecting the world with hard-wired telephone lines is now delivering communications over fiber optic glass connectivity. A smartphone or device connects wirelessly and travels over fiber optic cables to connect with friends and family worldwide. The internet has truly transformed ECTC - Tremolo Communications and the industry.

As internet service enhances voice and video technology, the need for traditional telephone lines has decreased. Also, with additional streaming options, traditional video viewing habits are changing. Tremolo Communications continues to focus on providing a first-class internet service to our members and expanding to underserved areas.

In 2023, the coop experienced growth by expanding its borders to Ideal and Jenkins Townships and the city of Jenkins. Contractors installed approximately 125 miles of fiber throughout the area, making service available to approximately 2,000 business and residential locations. Home-based businesses, remote working options, and online education drive our area's need for internet connectivity. The coop continues to pursue these growth opportunities to remain viable in our communities.

As Tremolo Communications expands, internet usage continues to increase exponentially, with added users and additional devices that connect to the internet. Throughout 2023, the coop continued to make substantial investments in the all-fiber network, rolling out necessary network upgrades to process the additional internet traffic. The primary services that drive high-volume usage include:

- Video streaming and conferencing
- Online gaming
- Music and photo downloads
- Smart home solutions
- Multiple devices connected to the internet simultaneously

This past year, Tremolo Communications also upgraded business and residential email and spam filtering services. The new email service provides members with robust spam and virus protection and easy to access webmail. As malicious email scams and other cyber threats continue to increase, it is essential to provide the best service possible and up-to-date equipment, reducing exposure to our members.

The Tremolo Team rolled out streaming video in 2023. The TremoloTV app is now available on Amazon Firestick, Roku, and Apple TV devices. Instead of requiring a set-top box for each TV, members can download the TremoloTV app on a compatible device, enter account information, and you're streaming. As traditional viewing habits transition to streaming, an area that has stayed the same is increased programming costs. Programmers continue to force high annual increases to carry their channels. Tremolo Communications is a member of the National Content & Technology Cooperative (NCTC), representing over 700 service providers, and continues negotiating with these national programmers to keep programming costs as low as possible for our members.

On behalf of the Board, Management, and the Tremolo Team, I would like to thank the entire membership for a great year. I look forward to the future of the coop and to providing our members with quality local services. I hope everyone can attend the 50th Annual Meeting!

Josh Netland, CEO/General Manager
Norman Hawley, Board President
Kathy Hachey, Secretary/Treasurer

2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

Call to order:

The 49th Annual Meeting of Tremolo Communications Powered by Emily Cooperative Telephone Company was called to order by President Mr. Hawley at 6:00 pm in the Emily City Hall Auditorium.

Quorum:

Secretary/Treasurer, Mrs. Hachey certified a Quorum based on 2023 registration numbers.

Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Hawley. Pastor Barry Hite said the invocation.

Introduction of Board and Management:

President Hawley introduced the members of the Board of Directors and the Management of the Cooperative.

Notice of the Annual Meeting:

Secretary/Treasurer, Mrs. Hachey read the Notice of the 49th annual Meeting with the purposes of

- To elect one board director from District 4, Little Pine
- To receive and consider the financial statements and reports of the operation of the company for the calendar year 2022.
- To transact such other business as may properly come before the meeting or any adjournment thereof.

Report of Nominating Committee:

Ms. Raph gave the nominating committee report. Mr. Hawley applied for Little Pine, District 4 board position. The committee met March 8th and April 12th.

President Hawley asked the membership present if all ballots had been turned in. He then closed the election, and the ballots were taken to be counted by the nominating committee.

President's Report:

President Hawley gave his 2023 annual report. As a cooperative, our company relies on the member owners to operate and fulfill its obligations. Community service in the form of high-quality telecommunications products and to be service oriented in interactions with current and potential customers is the goal.

The availability of state and federal grants has created the ability for our company to bring high-speed internet to neighboring areas. This gives our company a larger geographical area and customer base.

The board's role is oversight and advice not management. I and the rest of the board are thankful for the excellent job done by our terrific management team and excellent union employees.

Minutes of the 2022 meeting:

No changes to the minutes of last meeting June 20th, 2022, and a motion to waive the reading of minutes was made by Russ Philstrom with a second by Gary Hein. Approved.

Financial Report:

Ms. Porta, Accounting Manager, gave the financial report.

- Total revenues are up \$455,000.
- Assets increased to \$6,900,000.
- Investments are down

General Manager Report:

General Manager/CEO Mr. Netland welcomed everyone to the 49th annual meeting and gave the following updates:

Mr. Netland introduced the ECTC employees and thanked them for their hard work and commitment. He recognized the employees retiring in the past year.

Reviewed Strategic Planning – The board of directors and management conduct Strategic Planning meetings annually or at a minimum every other year. Two main areas of focus out of these meetings are:

- Review and update coop's mission statement which is - Emily Cooperative Telephone Company provides reliable, secure communications and technology with a positive customer experience.
- Identify strategic objectives to assist with the direction of the coop on a 3-5-year plan.

The current strategic objectives include:

- Growth – expand membership/service area.
- Economic Development – market area/communities
- Partnerships – focus on current and new partnership opportunities.

The reasons these objectives are important for the coop:

- Remain viable in our communities.
- Keep our communities connected – eLearning, work from home, ability to run your business. – Estimated 40 million people work from home in the United States
- Create employment opportunities.
- Internet adoption, importance of service, rely on service for communications.
- The transition from voice to internet, decline in voice and long-distance revenues.
- Replacement strategy for universal service support revenues.

Mr. Netland reviewed a map of traditional ILEC area along with current and past projects since 2020.

The streaming video platform to be launched towards the end of 2023 was introduced to the members.

Mr. Netland discussed Cybersecurity awareness.

Additional coop updates included capital credit distribution and bylaw updates.

2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

continued...

General Manager Report continued:

Mr. Netland thanked the board of directors and the employees for their hard work and commitment to the co-op, the Pine River Bakery for catering, and Kai and Bridget Allen for the entertainment.

Old Business:

No old business was brought before the membership.

New Business:

No new business was brought before the membership.

Election Results:

Election results were given by Ms. Raph. Mr. Hawley was elected to District 4, Little Pine.

The bylaw changes (listed below) passed with 86 yes and 2 no votes.

- Flexibility to schedule when the annual meeting is held and allows the board to select a date.
- Current bylaws consistently refer to telephone service which would be modified to services (cable, broadband, other communication)
- Change "husband, wife" in current bylaws to joint membership (any two or more adult residents in the same household)
- Remove compliance requirements of Rural Utilities Services as the Co-op no longer is a party to a loan with them.
- Allows the board to use reasonable discretion in determining "conflict of interest" to serve on the board.

Grand Prize drawing winners:

Kent Reece won the 43" Smart TV
Gaylund King won the Yeti tundra Cooler.
A hundred-dollar gift card was won by Mary Fletcher.
Four fifty-dollar gift cards were given away and eight twenty-five dollar gift cards were given away.

Adjournment:

Mr. Philstrom made a motion to adjourn the 2023 Annual Meeting with a second by Mrs. Heglund. Approved.

Adjournment: 6:51



Board Member Candidates



Chad Genz Incumbent for District 1

My name is Chad Genz, and I am proud to have been born and raised in Emily. I am now raising my family here. My wife, Kami, is the Director of Probation in Aitkin County, and we have been married for 19 years. We have an 18-year-old daughter, Charlee, and a 15-year-old son, Cooper. I have volunteered at the Emily Fire Department since 1997 and am currently serving as the elected Fire Chief. In addition, I own two local businesses that directly serve the Tremolo Communications (ECTC) area. I would love to continue serving on the Tremolo Communications (ECTC) Board of Directors. Throughout my first term on the board, I have learned much about the communications industry and gained excellent knowledge. I bring a lot to the board of directors because Emily is my hometown. I want to ensure the coop remains viable in our communities for years. My businesses rely on the services Tremolo provides, so I know firsthand the value of these services. I am excited for an opportunity to continue to serve on the Tremolo Communications (ECTC) Board of Directors and would appreciate your vote!



Jan Peterschick Candidate for District 1

Having lived in the Emily/Fifty Lakes area full-time for the last 9 years, I am very invested in making our communities a great place to live and work. Our family vacationed in the area during my childhood, my parents retired to Outing in 1986 and my brother and his family-owned Land O' Lakes Marine in Outing.

I spent 20+ years working in the Commercial Carpet Fiber and Polymer business, most recently as a Director of Sales. My team called on major end-users like Apple and State Farm, educating them on specifications. These encounters were part of a very complex sales process plus we were dealing with facility people up to the CEO's. Due to my husband's health, I took early retirement in 2015 and I decided to invest my time into finding places to volunteer, thus my involvement in the Lakers Lions and Our Savior's.

My late husband worked for "Ma Bell" for 34 years and we were both very active in the Telephone Pioneers, so I am knowledgeable about the telecommunications industry.

Using my marketing and management skills, I have helped our club grow with a dozen new members since becoming President. I have actively sought out opportunities to help with social media for the organizations that I am involved in. My belief is that my skills from corporate work could be beneficial to Tremolo and the Board of Directors, maximizing the cooperative's reach. People in the community need to better understand the cooperative and what it does for our area. My activeness in the community would help bring the cooperative more exposure.



Kathy Hachey Incumbent for District 5

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Tremolo Communications Board (powered by Emily Cooperative Telephone Company) as the director at large. I truly value the privilege to assist this hard working, knowledgeable, member-based board with a general manager and staff who continue to investigate ways to diversify the cooperative and keep it a viable business in the Emily area. This is your co-op with a board and staff working to enhance and personalize your connections to the global world.

I have been a co-op member since 1976 when Tremolo Communications (ECTC) had private lines ahead of other area telephone providers. Tremolo Communications (ECTC) has been in the forefront of technological advances ever since. It has provided high quality, affordable service to ensure the rural Emily area has the ability to safely communicate and do business around the world.

There are powerful opportunities for Tremolo communications (ECTC) to help the members stay in their homes with the advent of telemedicine (med pods, med cottages, granny homes, doctor on demand, physician of the home, online eye exams, notification to take pills), home security, and monitoring systems. Entertainment options are available particularly with the streaming opportunities. There could even be a "tele pet service" for our pets. These prospects keep people in their homes, and saves on trips to clinics and drug stores which can be great distances from homes. I see this cooperative helping to keep our area a healthy, viable and productive community in rural America.

It is critical that we keep talking to our legislators because most of them are from urban areas and need to be reminded that a strong rural America with equal and affordable services the urban areas have, makes a strong America. America does not work without its rural production areas.

Thank you again for the privilege of serving on the Tremolo Communications (ECTC) Board. I would appreciate your vote for the at-large director position.

From the By-laws of Emily Cooperative Telephone Company Section 4, of Article 3

Section 4. Nominations and Elections. It shall be the duty of the Board of Directors to appoint, not less than one hundred twenty (120) days before the date of a meeting of the members at which directors are to be elected, a committee on nominations consisting of not less than five (5), nor more than nine (9) members who shall be selected so as to include at least one member from each such districts. No member of the Board of Directors may serve on such committee. The committee, keeping in mind the principle of equal representation, shall prepare and post at the principal office of the Cooperative at least thirty (30) days before the meeting a list of nominations for directors which shall include at least two candidates for each director to be elected. Any fifteen (15) or more members acting together may make other nominations by petition not less than twenty (20) days prior to the meeting and the Secretary shall post such nominations at the same place where the list of nominations made by the committee is posted. No member may nominate more than one candidate.

A ballot marked "Ballot of Directors" containing the names of all the nominees so posted alphabetically arranged and stating the residence of each along with space for a write-in voting shall be mailed with the notice of the meeting. The Secretary shall also mail with the notice of the meeting a statement of the number of directors to be elected and showing separately the nominations made by the committee on nominations made by petition. Such statement of the Secretary shall also inform the members of the manner in which they may vote by mail for directors as provided in this section.

Any member who is absent from any such meeting may vote for directors by marking on the ballot an "X" opposite the names of the number of candidates equal to the number of directors to be elected. Absentee ballots may be returned by mail or delivery, but must be received by the Cooperative prior to the meeting. Absentee ballots shall be enclosed in a sealed envelope marked "Absentee Ballot for Directors Enclosed." The sealed envelope must be signed by the absentee member. The sealed and signed envelopes shall be kept unopened until all ballots have been cast during the meeting. If a husband and wife hold a joint membership and are absent from such meeting, they may vote for directors by jointly marking and enclosing the ballot hereinabove provided for. Notwithstanding anything in this section contained, failure to comply with any of the provisions of this section shall not affect in any member whatsoever the validity of any election of directors.

**You're invited to attend Tremolo Communications, powered by ECTC's
Annual Member Meeting**

**Monday, June 17, 2024, at Emily City Hall
Registration is at 5:30 pm, Meeting starts at 6:00 pm**

Please join Tremolo Communications, powered by Emily Cooperative Telephone Company (the "Company") for our Annual Member Meeting on Monday, June 17 at Emily City Hall. Doors open at 5:30 pm with the meeting starting at 6:00 pm, followed immediately by a meal.

The meeting will be held for the following purposes:

1. To elect one Board of Director from District #1, Emily and At Large, District #5.
2. To receive and consider the Financial Statements and Reports of the Operation of the Company for the calendar year 2023.
3. To transact such other business as may properly come before the meeting or any adjournment thereof.



Kathy Hachey
Secretary/Treasurer
Date: May 9, 2024

Order of Business:

- Registration will be required to receive a member gift, and to register for attendance prizes.
- Business meeting to begin at 6:00 pm.
- Free meal after the meeting catered by Pine River Bakery

Additional nominations for a director can be made from the floor. Minutes from the 2023 Annual Meeting are included. You must be present to win attendance prizes. A proxy ballot is included in this mailing.



**Ballot
Inside!**