



**Singing River  
Electric Cooperative**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

*Bringing power and energy services to local communities*

**BRIAN HUGHEY**  
General Manager & CEO

**LORRI FREEMAN, APR**  
Manager of Public Relations

**AMANDA PARKER**  
Public Relations Specialist

For more information, call 601-947-4211, 228-497-1313  
or visit [singingriver.com](http://singingriver.com).

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 @SRECooperative

SRE is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

## A MESSAGE FROM YOUR CEO

# Board brings broadband vote to membership on October 9

There is no debate over the growing need for reliable, high-speed internet service or broadband within our service area. During the ongoing pandemic, broadband has become essential to many families, as some parents and students work from home and complete school assignments.



Brian Hughey  
General Manager  
& CEO

Singing River Electric's management and board have completed a great deal of research on whether to provide broadband.

**Our focus is our core competency - providing quality, dependable and affordable electric service to our members for 82 years. Our careful, deliberate study of the possibility of providing broadband is necessary to ensure the success of this electric cooperative.**

The board has not made a final decision to offer broadband, as they are still studying its financial viability. However, the board has agreed to ask the membership to vote to ratify a change to Singing River Electric's Certificate of Incorporation. Voting "yes" to the change could give your co-op the option to offer both electric and broadband services. Presently, we can only offer electric service.

We need your vote! **A Drive-in Broadband Vote and Meeting will be held on October 9, 2020.** See details of the meeting in the notice on the page to the right. The event will be held outdoors to allow for social distancing. If you cannot attend, you may ensure your voice is heard by returning your mailed ballot or voting online at [singingriver.com](http://singingriver.com) by the October 5, 2020, deadline. The meeting notice will mail and the online broadband vote will begin on September 8, 2020.

**Let's discuss SRE's completed research on the broadband topic.** In January 2019, the Mississippi legislature enacted the Broadband Enabling Act. Following that, our board tasked SRE's management to complete a feasibility study and member survey. The feasibility study showed a projected cost of \$130-150 million to provide broadband to our entire membership. The member survey completed in August 2019 oversampled a representative portion of our membership, which means we surveyed four times the number of SRE members than what was originally presented as being representative of the whole. Furthermore, we oversampled in the unserved areas of our system to get solid feedback. The results of the survey showed two-thirds of participants had high-speed internet and that only 29% of par-

ticipants would likely sign up for a premium service (\$100) and only 30% expressed interest in a mid-range package (\$75).

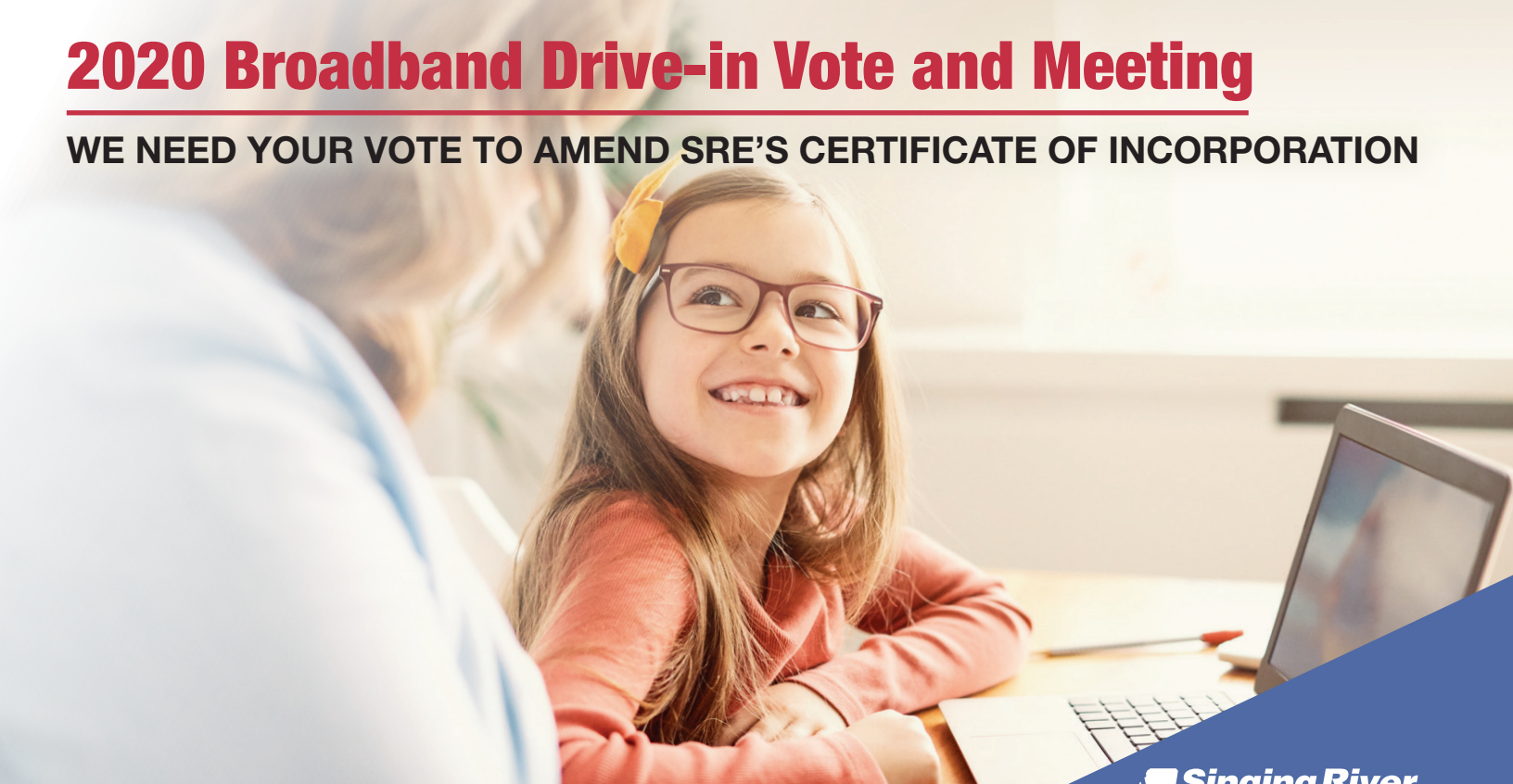
March 2020 brought the hardship of COVID-19 or Coronavirus, and our dependency on quality high-speed internet significantly increased. After the pandemic hit, your SRE board decided to update the feasibility study and form a subcommittee of board members to review any changes and potential funding opportunities, some that quickly became available and some still on the horizon. The subcommittee, as well as the entire 10-member board, agreed to partner with an experienced consultant to increase the depth of study on this issue.

**So what about CARES Act funding, and what are our plans moving forward?** As \$65 million in CARES Act funding became available, your board decided not to apply for the funding. There are numerous reasons that led to this decision. Several electric cooperatives, many of which had already made the decision to provide broadband, participated by submitting a small project. This was a matching grant. Doing the math, \$65 million divided by 15 electric cooperatives means around \$4 million was available per participating co-op. This of course would require the co-op to put up a matching \$4 million to go towards a fiber project that would provide service to only a very small, underserved area. Additionally, the CARES Act funds were required to be spent, projects completed, and services offered to members within six months, with a deadline of December 31, 2020. This made it near impossible to hire additional workers and complete necessary work in the short time frame. As we researched fiberoptic vendors, lead time for ordering required cable was estimated at 12-15 weeks. Another reason SRE didn't apply for CARES Act funding was at the deadline time, it hadn't been legally determined that electric cooperatives would even qualify for the funding. SRE's board was also aware of other funding opportunities.

Your board continues to work carefully with the consultant to determine the financial viability of broadband and is now also asking for your vote to amend the Certificate of Incorporation for SRE to be able to offer broadband. A decision will be made by the end of the year and will be shared in this publication. We do not want to put our electric members at risk, as we value providing quality electric service at the lowest possible cost, but we also recognize the need for quality internet service, today more than ever.

# 2020 Broadband Drive-in Vote and Meeting

WE NEED YOUR VOTE TO AMEND SRE'S CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION



## Your Co-op. Your vote.

Drive-in vote to amend **SRE's Certificate of Incorporation**

**Friday, October 9**

*11187 Old 63 South, Lucedale*  
Registration begins at **3:00 p.m.**  
and ends at **3:45 p.m.**

Meeting begins at **4:00 p.m.**

Participate by voting in person, online or returning your ballot by mail. Co-op bylaws require a **10 percent** quorum of the membership in order to conduct business. Your participation is crucial to our success, and with it you will be eligible to win prizes including **\$500** in cash!

### THERE ARE **THREE** WAYS TO PARTICIPATE: IN PERSON, BY MAIL AND ONLINE



Voting in person can be done at the drive-in vote meeting on **Friday, October 9, at 4 p.m.** The meeting will be held at the SRE Lucedale office at 11187 Old 63 South and **will be held outdoors to comply with COVID-19 restrictions.**



Return your completed ballot by mail using the enclosed self-addressed, postage-paid envelope by **Monday, October 5.** You may still attend the meeting.



Voting online is easy! Members can vote online beginning **Tuesday, September 8, through Monday, October 5.** Simply click on the "Vote Here" icon on either the SmartHub app or website at [singingriver.com](http://singingriver.com). By entering your membership ID and zip code, you can view the ballot and cast your vote.

**Eight members who vote online or return their ballots by the October 5 deadline will be selected to receive a \$250 CASH prize. One member who votes online or returns the ballot by the deadline will receive a special grand prize of \$500 CASH!**

# Attendees drive up and tune in to 2



With health and safety in mind, Singing River Electric worked to plan the July drive-in annual meeting. The meeting had to be short to take into account the heat of the afternoon, and it had to be viewed from within attendee vehicles to ensure safe distancing due to COVID-19. All employees and members were encouraged to wear masks.

“Having the meeting outdoors was a first for our cooperative,” said Singing River Electric General Manager and CEO Brian Hughey. “Our goal was to provide our members with a meeting, yet keep safety absolutely our prime focus.”

Employees wearing bright yellow, reflective vests and masks guided members to park along the side of SRE’s building, and signs instructed attendees to tune into an FM broadcast to hear the meeting proceedings from their vehicles. Meeting registration was done touch-free using iPads. Participants honked to make motions and vote.

Singing River Electric member Mary Mallette posted on SRE’s Facebook page that “Given the situation we were all in with COVID-19, this meeting could not have gone better! I felt like I was a part of something special and just love how organized and how well the meeting went.”

Board members James “Robert” Steele from District 1, Roy Grafe from District 2 and Kristal Sisson from District 3 were re-elected to their board seats for a three-year term.

“Everyone followed our safety guidelines and seemed to enjoy the changed format,” said Hughey. “We felt the departure this year from our normal meeting setup was a success.”

## 2020 SRE Online/Proxy Prize Winners



Pictured are members Mr. and Mrs. Odom from Lucedale who received the grand prize of \$500.

### \$250 winners include:

- Horn, Jr. from Lucedale
- Scamman from Ocean Springs
- Achee from Pascagoula
- Jones from Gautier
- Gavliniski from Ocean Springs
- Leaf Baptist Church in McLain
- Yates in Ocean Springs
- SeEVERS in Ocean Springs

Winners received their checks by mail. Congratulations and thank you for participating in our 2020 Director Elections!

# 2020 Annual Membership Meeting





## Supporting education

### SRE donates T-shirts for Jackson County FABLAB to make masks

As electric cooperatives, we belong to the communities we serve.

We adhere to a set of seven cooperative principles, and the seventh is concern for community. It is a part of all that we do.

Singing River Electric recently donated spare cotton T-shirts to the Jackson County FABLAB. The FABLAB is a technical platform for STEAM education, workforce development and business idea prototyping that allows students to explore the entire engineering design process in a real world context. The lab is a part of Jackson County School District but works through grants to service the needs of students, teachers and community members at large.

They recently stopped planned efforts and used grants, donations and resources to make masks for local students. Singing River Electric and many other local businesses donated T-shirts to assist the effort.

## Fall Farm Safety Check

Electrical safety on the farm is key to prevent injuries and potential death. Take a look at possible electrical hazards. Scan the horizon for overhead power lines before you climb on any farm equipment. For more tips, visit [myelectriccooperative.com/safety](http://myelectriccooperative.com/safety) or [safeelectricity.org](http://safeelectricity.org).

## It's National Preparedness Month!

Take steps to prepare for emergencies in your home, business, school and community. Take time with your family to make a plan and build a disaster kit. Review your evacuation plans and meet up location. Disasters don't wait. Make your plans today. Visit [ready.gov](http://ready.gov) for more information.

Visit [singingriver.com/my-community](http://singingriver.com/my-community) for more information on community donations.