

July 2020

P.O. Box 1150, Prosser, WA 99350 • 509-786-2913 • 800-221-6987 • [www.BentonREA.org](http://www.BentonREA.org)

## Your Benton REA Board of Trustees

**Michael Freepons**  
*President  
District 2*

**Connie Krull**  
*Vice President  
District 7*

**Catherine Russell**  
*Secretary/Treasurer  
District 8*

**Buddy Treadway**  
*Trustee, District 1*

**Bob Evans**  
*Trustee, District 3*

**Ron Johnson**  
*Trustee, District 4*

**Tim Grow**  
*Trustee, District 5*

**Scott Fisher**  
*Trustee, District 6*

**General Manager**  
**Michael J. Bradshaw**  
*mikeb@bentonrea.org*

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## 2020 Trustee Ballots Due July 10

Benton REA is governed by eight trustees who each represent a member district. These trustees are elected by you—Benton REA members—to serve three-year terms.

Members who live in Districts 4, 5 and 6 received a ballot in June for the trustee election. Each membership receives one vote.

Members may submit their vote by returning a completed ballot in the envelope provided with the mailing or at the annual meeting July 18. Mailed ballots must

be received by July 10 to be counted.

Running unopposed in District 4 is Ron Johnson. Tim Grow is running unopposed for District 5. District 6 will be represented by either Scott Fisher or Tina Randles based on the vote of the members. All four Candidate biographies are available at [www.BentonREA.org](http://www.BentonREA.org).

Call 509-786-8260 for questions regarding what district you live in, the election or how to vote. ■



## Annual Business Meeting Postponed

The 83rd Benton REA Annual Meeting of Members was originally scheduled to take place on July 18, 2020. Due to the Washington State Governor's continued restrictions under the "Safe Start Plan" associated with the COVID-19 virus pandemic, the Benton REA Annual Meeting has been postponed and will be rescheduled to take place on a future date.

We will continue to monitor the restrictions mandated by the State of Washington and will notify you when the revised Benton REA Annual Meeting date, time, and location has been established. Thank you for your patience during these challenging times. ■



# Prosser Public EV Charging Station Operational

On May 11, Prosser gained an electric vehicle (EV) fast charger at 20 Merlot Drive, near the Verizon store and Chevron.

The EV fast-charging station is the last to be energized as part of a nine-station network along Washington state highway corridors designed to enhance interstate and intrastate EV travel. The others are in Cle Elum, Connell, Ellensburg, Kennewick, Moses Lake, Pasco, Richland and Yakima.

Each station can bring most EVs from zero to full charge in close to 30 minutes, and are capable of serving plug-in electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles. Each station also has a medium-speed charger for plug-in hybrids with smaller battery capacities.

Energy Northwest received a \$405,000 grant from the Washington State DOT to install EV stations on US-395, I-82, I-182 and along the I-90 corridor. Remaining installation costs are funded through the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Transportation Alliance, a collaboration of public utilities, municipalities, EV equipment suppliers, Greenlots, EV4, and private property owners.

Energy Northwest, the Tri-Cities Development Council and local utilities formed EVITA in 2016 to bridge the EV range gap between Eastern and Western Washington. Core members of EVITA include Benton PUD, Benton REA, the city of Ellensburg, Energy Northwest, Franklin PUD, Richland Energy Services and TRIDEC.

A ribbon-cutting will be scheduled later this summer. ■



Benton REA's Chevy Bolt charges at Prosser's newest EV charging station, at 20 Merlot Drive near Chevron.



## IS YOUR POWER OUT?

If your electricity is out for more than a few minutes:

- Check your breaker box to see if a circuit breaker has tripped.
- Check to see if your neighbors have power.
- Report Benton REA outages by calling 800-221-6987 or use the SmartHub app.

## COOPERATIVE INFORMATION

### BENTON RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

Prosser Office  
402 7th St. P.O. Box 1150  
Prosser, WA 99350  
509-786-2913

Office Hours: Mon. - Fri., 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.

West Richland Office  
6095 West Van Giesen St.  
West Richland, WA 99353  
509-967-2921

Office Hours: Mon. - Fri., 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Toll Free: 800-221-6987  
[www.BentonREA.org](http://www.BentonREA.org)  
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## MEMBER SERVICES

This newsletter is produced by the Benton REA Member Services and Economic Development Department.

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# Benton REA Donates \$20,000 to Local Food Banks

Thanks to Benton REA and matching funds from CoBank, one of the utility's lenders, \$20,000 is feeding local families.

Benton REA received a \$10,000 matching grant from the CoBank Sharing Success program. Coupled with Benton REA's \$10,000 contribution, the donation will help families through three organizations within Benton REA's service area, based on the number of co-op members in each region:

Tri-City Food Bank in West Richland and Benton City, \$12,000

Jubilee Ministries' Food Bank in Prosser, \$4,000

Sunrise Outreach Food Banks serving Mabton and Sunnyside, \$4,000

CoBank's Sharing Success program doubles the contributions of its co-op members to the charitable organizations and causes they care about most.

"We investigated the specific needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic," says Benton REA General Manager Mike Bradshaw. "We wanted to spread the donation throughout our service area, so it benefits a wide range of our members and the communities in which they live."

Howard Rickard, board president of the Tri-Cities Food Bank, says the timing of the donation was perfect.

"The next wave of people is coming—those who've never been to the food bank before," Howard says.

David Hanson, executive director of the Sunrise Outreach network, says his five food banks are twice as busy as usual this time of year.

"Words fall short in the appreciation department," says David, "but we say, thank you."

In a post on Facebook, Jubilee Ministries of Prosser says, "Thank you to not only Benton REA, but other companies, organizations and individuals who have come alongside us during this time."

Benton REA Board President Mike Freepons presented the checks to each food bank.



Board President Mike Freepons presents a check to three local food banks on May 21. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Jubilee Ministries Food Bank in Prosser, Tri-Cities Food Bank and Sunrise Outreach Food Bank serving Sunnyside and Mabton.

"We are a member-owned co-op guided by the Seven Cooperative Principles," says Mike. "One of those principles is Concern for Community. We care about our communities and are pleased to support our local food banks with this donation."

Benton REA recognizes that food isn't the only need for struggling families right now. Members with overdue utility bills are encouraged to call the cooperative at 509-786-2913.

Benton REA employees can setup a payment plan and direct you to organizations offering financial assistance for utility payments. The co-op also offers low-income, senior and disabled discounts. ■

Visit [BentonREA.org/Energy-Assistance](http://BentonREA.org/Energy-Assistance) for more information.

# Smart Thermostat Options and Rebates

*A comparison of the market's smartest and most popular*

Heating and cooling costs account for about half of a user's energy bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. When it comes to reducing energy use and cutting home energy costs, programming the thermostat can make a big impact. The right thermostat settings could yield energy savings of 8% to 15%, and new technology makes it easier than ever to achieve those settings.

Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and can be controlled remotely with a tablet, smartphone or voice control. Some models use multiple sensors to monitor temperatures in various parts of the home for more balanced heating or cooling, track user temperature preferences and use the data to optimize your heating and cooling schedule. Some are designed for complex multistage systems that control heating, cooling, dehumidifier and ventilation systems.

If you are interested in controlling your thermostat with your voice or an app, or in being hands-off and letting it learn your habits, consider a smart thermostat. To narrow your choices, factor in smart features, price and attributes that matter most to you such as color, size or style, and make sure the chosen product supports your HVAC system.

The Nest 3rd Generation Learning Thermostat and Ecobee4 are the most popular and sophisticated devices in this category. Both devices are priced around \$250, but consumers can easily recoup their money in energy-cost savings.

You can quickly get \$100 back from this purchase with Benton REA's smart thermostat rebate. Members who have their thermostat installed professionally will receive an additional \$25 incentive from Benton REA.

There are many similarities between the two thermostats. Both can be adjusted via computer, tablet, smartphone, Google Assistant or Amazon Alexa device. Both can

**Get up to \$125 for your smart thermostat purchase**  
Visit [BentonREA.org/rebates](http://BentonREA.org/rebates) for more information and to download the application.



interact with other smart devices and use your phone's GPS to determine if you're home, then automatically adjust the temperature. Nest's geofencing works with multiple phones, while Ecobee supports just one phone. Ecobee makes up for this difference with more sophisticated sensors.

The Nest and Ecobee can be upgraded to include remote sensors that allow the thermostat to take readings from any room throughout your home and adjust the temperature accordingly. This can be an advantage if your thermostat is near a draft or in direct sunlight.

The Ecobee and Nest sensors also have occupancy sensing, which notices if there is movement in the house to override geofencing if the primary phone user leaves the house and someone is still there.

Nest, powered by a rechargeable battery, is a learning thermostat and automatically learns your schedule. When you begin using Nest, it makes a few assumptions and creates a baseline for its schedule. As you adjust the temperature, Nest records it. After a week, it learns your schedule and preferred temperature settings. It continues to learn and respond to your adjustments. Nest records 10 days

of energy-use data that shows you a visual of the times your system turned on and off during those 10 days. Nest also sends a monthly email report that includes a summary of your energy use compared to previous months and other Nest users.

Ecobee must be hardwired to your electrical system. It features a touchscreen and can analyze HVAC data for 18 months. All temperature and motion data from the thermostat and sensors is recorded, and can be accessed online by the owner to help you monitor total energy use, how the weather influences your use, and how your home efficiency compares to other users in your area.

Both thermostats can connect with various energy devices in your home. Ecobee recognizes dehumidifiers, heat pumps and ventilators. Nest recognizes heat pumps and auxiliary heat.

Whichever fits your lifestyle and preferences, a smart thermostat is a good investment that can help you save energy and money in a more convenient way than ever. ■