

# 2023

❖ ELECTRICITIES *of* NC

# ANNUAL REPORT



❖ **ELECTRICITIES of NC**

**On the cover:** Joe Daniels, 2nd Class Lineman with the Town of La Grange, repairs an outage in the town's historic district.

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Photo: NC State

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*Recognizing cities and towns that leverage their people as their greatest asset*



A family attends Apex Night Out, an opportunity to learn more about the benefits of public power and other services Apex provides its residents.



The Town of Maiden's Electric Department stands ready to serve residents. Left to right: Nolan Larson, Line Technician II; Shane Stines, Electric Superintendent; Jacob Whitehair, Lineman III; Bryan Trantham, Lineman III; Daniel Harris, Lineman I.

## MESSAGE *from the* CHAIR and CEO



**RANDY E. MCCASLIN**  
Chair



**ROY L. JONES**  
Chief Executive Officer

Public power providers are known for working together and the strength that comes from that.

Whether we're joining forces to purchase hard-to-get supplies, advocating for our communities at the state and federal levels, or learning from each other in committee meetings or at member conferences, one thing is clear: Public power's strength and value are undeniable when we collaborate.

That teamwork truly shined in 2023 as we began putting our Strategic Plan for Public Power into action.

This year's Annual Report highlights how five ElectriCities members are bringing our plan's strategic priorities to life in their communities.

In the pages that follow, you'll learn how North Carolina State University is modernizing its electric system to better support the people who learn, work, and research there—now and well into the future.

You'll discover how Apex is creating public power advocates throughout its community and how La Grange is providing superior power with an approach that controls costs and improves grid stability.

You'll learn how a key partnership in Monroe is helping support and grow businesses, and you'll discover how Maiden is investing in its workforce to ensure exceptional customer service.

As we continue executing toward our long-term vision, collaboration remains key. Together, we turn challenges into opportunities, helping us reach our collective goals.

We're excited about the opportunities ahead, the value we bring to our customers, and the impact we can make as we continue powering our community's future.



**Randy E. McCaslin**  
Chair, High Point



**Troy R. Lewis**  
Vice Chair, Tarboro



**Mayor Constantine H. "Costi" Kutteh**  
Secretary, Statesville



**Whitney Brooks**  
Lexington



**Anthony C. "Tony" Cannon**  
Greenville Utilities Commission



**Donald I. Evans**  
Wilson



**James "Jim" Gallagher**  
Gastonia



**J. Richard "Rick" Howell, Jr.**  
Shelby



**Edmond C. "Ed" Miller**  
New River Light & Power



**Charles D. Nichols, III**  
Laurinburg



**Kipling D. "Kip" Padgett**  
Wake Forest



**Jonathan "Jon" Rynne**  
Fayetteville PWC



**John M. Stiver**  
Newton



**Robert "Robbie" Swinson, IV**  
Kinston



**Mayor John "Jack" Edwards**  
NCMPA1 Chair  
Pineville



**Mayor Eddie Braxton**  
NCEMPA Chair  
Scotland Neck

# MEMBER COMMUNITIES



## LEADERSHIP TEAM

**Roy L. Jones**  
Chief Executive Officer

**F. Timothy "Tim" Tunis**  
Chief Financial Officer

**Matthew E. "Matt" Schull**  
Chief Operating Officer  
(partial year)

**Kathy L. Moyer**  
Chief Operating Officer  
(partial year)

**Jay Morrison**  
Chief Legal and External  
Affairs Officer

**Andrew M. "Andy" Fusco**  
Chief Strategy Officer  
(partial year)

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

# Future-focused

Future-focused utilities are built on strong fundamentals. They have a defined purpose, and they know how they provide value to customers. They utilize talented employees to innovate, solve problems, and take decisive action, resulting in long-term success for their community.



NC STATE

## POWER FORWARD

Electrical Distribution System Upgrade

Shown here in Wolf Plaza, the North Carolina State University Power Systems Team proudly supports a customer base with the same electrical demand as the Town of Wake Forest packed into about 2,000 acres. Photo: Matthew Wright, courtesy of NC State



# Powering NC State Forward

“Over 50 years, our system grew without a plan,” said Alan Daeke, Director of Utilities Services at North Carolina State University. The system lacked the resiliency, redundancy, and reliability needed to support the people who learn, work, and perform life-changing research at one of the world’s top universities.

That recognition about 15 years ago kicked off planning for a distribution system upgrade that got underway in 2018 and is scheduled to be completed in 2025. It includes implementing a self-healing grid and installing new duct bank, conduit, cables, and switches across NC State’s Main Campus.

“This system when it’s fully built out will be able to detect a fault, isolate that fault, and re-energize all the load—or almost all the load depending on where the fault is—in less than 30 seconds,” said Tate Boulware, Power Systems Engineer at NC State. “That’s opposed to our typical response time of 30 minutes to an hour if we have to call somebody in.”

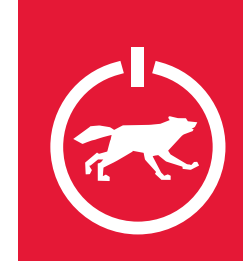
Alan said it’s also safer since the self-healing grid enables his team to operate switches remotely.

“Some of this project will feed into our SCADA system,” Tate said. “It can send us emails and text messages when alarms occur, helping us find problems before they become outages.”

With such an impactful project, the good relationships the team has built with their customers and on-campus partners, like IT, housing, and transportation, have proven invaluable. Communication has helped keep those relationships strong.



**Top:** An NC State line technician operates a switch at the new substation on Centennial Campus. **Bottom:** Connecting parts of the new system into the university’s SCADA system enables the team to receive alerts and find problems before they become outages. Photos: Matthew Wright, courtesy of NC State



Working with University Communications and Marketing, the NC State team created a campus-wide education campaign. Naming the project “Power Forward,” the communications team created a website explaining project benefits with detailed maps showing the phases and project status. They created talking points, held town halls, and produced branded screen panels for the construction fences.

“We think it’s a key to our success,” Alan said.

That success has come in the form of a robust and very scalable system designed to support NC State for years to come.

## ❖ OUR SUPPORT

*ElectriCities supports its members by providing strategic consulting, assisting with strategic road mapping, performing economic benefit studies and analysis, providing training, and assisting with data collection efforts such as customer surveys.*

“ This system when it’s fully built out will be able to detect a fault, isolate that fault, and re-energize all the load—or almost all the load depending on where the fault is—in less than 30 seconds. ”



NC State line technicians work with a new switch - essentially the heart of the self-healing grid. Photo: Matthew Wright, courtesy of NC State



APEX, NORTH CAROLINA

# Strengthen Public Power

Public power providers deliver value their communities sometimes aren't aware of, including exceptional reliability, local jobs, and community investment. In fact, many customers don't even realize their power is provided locally. We can change that and strengthen public power by educating our communities and sharing the value of public power with customers, local elected officials, and state and federal decision-makers.

Apex Night Out enables residents to connect with the people who provide valuable services to the community, including those in the electric, fire, and police departments.

# Creating Public Power Advocates in Apex

Public power pride is strong in Apex.

Monitoring online discussion, Kerrin Cox, Communications Coordinator for the Town of Apex, said, “The electric sentiment is always so positive—even in the face of a big storm where we may have an outage.”

Ongoing proactive communication and education help drive that positivity.

The Apex team educates its Town Council on topics like AMI and solar, attends community events like Apex Night Out, and keeps customers, town leaders, and key staff informed about active energy-related issues.

In back-to-back North Carolina Public Power Retail Customer Surveys, when Apex customers said they wanted to receive outage information via text, the Town listened, launching its TextOut program in 2022.

“We text customers alerting them to power outages, restoration timing, emergency repair work, and other helpful information,” said Emily Woody, Electric Programs and Technology Coordinator for the Town of Apex, who led the effort. “We’re able to let residents know that we know their power is out, which cuts down on inquiries through our

Interactive Voice Response System, customer service reps, website, and app.”

In a prelaunch social media campaign, Apex asked customers to update their mobile numbers on their utility accounts. They auto-enrolled customers in TextOut with an option to opt out, but by December 2023, only 3.12% had chosen to.

Another powerful tool for the Electric department is the Town’s annual Peak Academy. During the six-month program, citizens take a deep dive into Town services.

“We go in-depth, educating on topics like how we buy power, why it’s important to minimize our peaks, and future issues,” said Eric Neumann, Apex Electric Utilities Director. “We also share how we’re customer focused, we do it for the community, and we don’t do it to make a profit.”

“By taking every opportunity to communicate with and educate our customers, we now have advocates beyond those who are paid or elected to talk about the value of public power,” Kerrin said. “There’s a deep sense of pride throughout the community.”



**Top:** Apex electric customers receive alerts about outages via text, thanks to the Town’s TextOut program. **Bottom:** During a community event, residents take a seat in a bucket truck provided by the Apex Electric Department.

“ There’s a deep sense of pride throughout the community. ”



Terry Mahaffey, Apex Town Council member and Apex Peak Academy graduate, discusses Town business with Eric Neumann, Apex Electric Utilities Director.

## OUR SUPPORT

ElectriCities provides communications support, resources, and events to help members spread the word about the value of public power. ElectriCities’ Communications team also consults with members on developing their own campaigns and initiatives to highlight the benefits of public power within their communities, educating customers and elected officials. The ElectriCities Government Affairs team advocates on behalf of members at the state and federal levels, building relationships with elected officials and sharing public power’s many benefits with them.





LA GRANGE, NORTH CAROLINA

# Provide Superior Power

Wholesale power makes up over 70% of a utility's annual electric enterprise costs. But utilities can help control those costs. Being locally owned means public power utilities know their customers best and can provide programs their customers want. Knowing a utility's wholesale power supply arrangements is key to creating programs that benefit the municipality and the customers while providing the safest, most reliable power.

Joe Daniels, 2nd Class Lineman (left), and Ray Bostic, La Grange Electric Department Superintendent, inspect the Town's battery energy storage system.

# Managing the Peak and Lowering Power Costs in La Grange

Whether for a home or an entire municipality, lowering peak energy use is key to lowering overall energy costs.

Looking at ways to reduce both, the Town of La Grange landed on an option that helps control costs and improve grid stability in a sustainable way. They installed a battery energy storage system (BESS).

The BESS stores excess energy generated at non-peak times, then deploys it when demand spikes.

“It also provides backup power, supporting a more stable and reliable power grid and system,” said La Grange Town Manager Shawn Condon.

Determining the right BESS for La Grange meant weighing several factors, including capacity versus cost. With the chosen system’s upfront costs of about \$3 million, making the case to the Town Council and other stakeholders in the right way was key.

“It was essential to convey the overall operational financial benefits that would accrue over time, such as reduced demand charges, improvement to the overall electrical grid, and increased stability for our grid,” Shawn said.

To make the most of their resources, the La Grange team reached out to ElectriCities for operational help. ElectriCities controls the system for load management, while La Grange operates it otherwise, managing faults, alarms, etc.

It’s a new experience for both parties. “We have some members that use batteries for load management, but this is the first time we’ve controlled a battery for a member,” said Brandon Rummage, Manager of System Operations at ElectriCities. “It’s similar to how we support several members using generators for load management.”

The partnership has proven to be successful.

“They’ve done a good job hitting the peak for us,” said Ray Bostic, Electric Superintendent for La Grange. And that’s paying off for La Grange.

“It has delivered substantial cost savings that we’re using to pay for the system,” Shawn said. “Once that debt is paid off, this will be just net cost savings for the Town and for our customers as well.”



**Top:** Financial Specialist Sabrina V. Brown works the front desk at La Grange Town Hall. **Bottom:** La Grange’s Joe Daniels and Ray Bostic walk through the BESS container grid.

## ❖ OUR SUPPORT

*ElectriCities supports its members by consulting on power delivery issues related to generation, transmission, and distributed resources, consulting on rate issues, assisting with cost of service studies, and advising on load forecasting and system planning. ElectriCities regularly advises members on infrastructure improvements and keeps them informed about emerging technologies—from smart meters to SCADA solutions—that can improve operations, increase efficiencies, and enhance customer service.*

La Grange 2nd Class Lineman Joe Daniels repairs a direct residential power line.



“ This will be just net cost savings for the Town and for our customers as well. ”

MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA

# Customer-centered Innovation

Long-term success requires listening to customers today to prioritize and deliver valuable energy solutions and programs.

Marco Rivera, Services Technical Manager at ConMet, leads a tour through the company's facility in Monroe. Joining him from the City of Monroe are, left to right, Rob Miller, Director of Energy Services; Darwin De Los Santos, General Manager of Engineering; and Ron Mahle, Interim Director, Monroe-Union County EDC. In 2023, ConMet received one of the first **ElectriCities Industrial Electrification & Efficiency Grants**.

## Partnering to Support and Grow Businesses in Monroe

When it comes to economic development, along with attracting new businesses, “you really need to take care of the folks you have right in your own backyard,” said Ron Mahle, Interim Director, Monroe-Union County Economic Development Commission.

For Monroe, taking care of its business customers has led to 75% of the City's recent capital investment and job creation being in existing industries.

“I would venture to say that all of those investments started with a conversation,” Ron said.

Key to those conversations is the long-time partnership between Monroe-Union County EDC and Monroe's Energy Services team, as well as the long-term relationships they've formed with their customers—relationships they nurture by staying in touch.



**Top:** City of Monroe representatives make their way past the assembly line in the busy ConMet factory. **Bottom:** ConMet’s Marco Rivera (left) and the City of Monroe team review plans. For more than 30 years, Monroe’s Energy Services department and the Monroe-Union County EDC have partnered to support and expand Monroe’s existing businesses, like ConMet.

“Between in-person and phone calls, we’re covering all of our key accounts in Monroe,” Ron said. “We learn what their plans are and what their pain points are, and then we marshal the resources to address those issues and opportunities. We have companies that over the last 25 years have grown five times.”

Resources include seminars for business leaders on pressing issues like workforce development, supply chain management, and using artificial intelligence in manufacturing.

Other networking events, like Monroe’s annual industry appreciation golf event, provide a strategic combination of fun and networking. “We get the decision-makers together for an enjoyable afternoon, and we strategically create teams with networking in mind,” Ron said.

The Director of Energy Services for the City of Monroe, Rob Miller, and members of his team are regulars at those customer events. And, as growth happens, they stay connected.

“There will be projects in industries where we’ve been in 10 of their meetings to represent the utility perspective,” Rob said. “Then their project runs smoother.”

The teams also collaborate with existing companies to attract businesses that complement and benefit those already established.

“I think it would be virtually impossible to do this type of partnership with an investor-owned utility,” Ron said. “Having public power and the local utility, we’re in a good spot.”

### ❖ OUR SUPPORT

*ElectriCities works with members to identify and implement impactful improvements to their electric utilities. By participating in the annual North Carolina Public Power Retail Customer Survey, members can identify changing customer needs. Paired with key industry benchmarks like APPA’s Reliable Public Power Provider and Smart Energy Provider programs, members know where to invest. Members may also join forums to share best practices and learn about emerging technologies and issues.*

“ I think it would be virtually impossible to do this type of partnership with an investor-owned utility. ”



The City of Monroe boasts North Carolina’s highest concentration of aerospace companies—more than 20 companies in a 7-mile radius. This substation powers ATI Specialty Materials, manufacturer of alloys, superalloys, and specialty steels for aerospace and other industries.



Sherlyn Larios, Utility Billing Specialist and Payroll Clerk (right), assists a Town of Maiden customer. Larios used the Town's Employee Development / Education Assistance Program to increase her skills. In 2024, Maiden doubled the amount of money employees can receive to cover training.

# Investing in the People Who Keep the Community Powered

MAIDEN, NORTH CAROLINA

## People

Maintaining a culture of service excellence in the face of a changing workforce and technology landscape demands that communities attract, develop, and retain a new, diverse generation of utility leaders. A healthy workplace culture, competitive compensation, and a clear career path are critical to maintaining and growing the public power workforce of today and tomorrow.

In Maiden, one of the keys to exceptional customer service is empowering and investing in its workforce. That starts at the front desk.

“Our first line of defense is our people up front who talk to the community every day,” said Jessica White, Finance Director for the Town of Maiden. She supervises the Town’s customer service representatives.

“When you come into a public sector position—especially one that deals with utilities and the electric side—there’s no script or manual that says, ‘If someone calls in and says my bill is too high, tell them this,’ she said. “That’s because any number of things could cause a high bill.”

Building that knowledge means CSRs are equipped to confidently support customers. Maiden CSRs were the first to earn Electricities’ Customer Service Professional certification, launched in 2023.



**Top:** Rose Edwards, a Customer Service Representative for the Town of Maiden, accepts a customer’s payment. Rose was one of the first to achieve ElectriCities’ Customer Service Professional certification, launched in 2023.

**Bottom:** Bryan Duckworth, Maiden’s Public Works Director, chats with Daniel Harris, the first graduate of the Town’s Lineman Recruitment Program.

Beyond the front desk, responding to difficulty filling lineworker positions, Maiden created its Lineman Recruitment Program. Participants receive a salary and tuition-free lineworker training at Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute. In exchange, they commit to working for the Town of Maiden for four years after graduation.

Daniel Harris, the program’s first graduate, now works as an apprentice lineworker. Maiden used system betterment funds from ElectriCities to help cover his tuition, books, and salary while he was in school. Daniel’s development continues through ElectriCities’ Lineworker Apprenticeship Program, which leads to journey lineworker status.

The Town’s Employee Development / Education Assistance Program enables employees like Sherlyn Larios, Utility Billing Specialist and Payroll Clerk, to further her accounting expertise. Maiden pays for training in exchange for a two-year commitment.

Beyond training, the Town celebrates its workforce—especially on social media, said Anna Hughey, Maiden’s Town Clerk and Public Information Officer.

For Public Power Week 2023, Anna and team created and distributed a booklet showcasing the value of public power and highlighting the people who provide it. “The goal is to put a face with public power,” Anna said. That they did, fostering pride and engagement among the staff and the community alike.

#### ❖ OUR SUPPORT

*ElectriCities works with member communities to establish career pathways and assist with compensation benchmarking information. Learning and development programs are available through ElectriCities, including safety training, customer service classes, and a lineworker apprenticeship program. ElectriCities actively promotes energy careers to students and works in partnership with other utilities to address workforce challenges.*

Daniel Harris, Lineman I with the Town of Maiden, inspects power lines in a residential area.



“ The goal is to put a face with public power. ”



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