

Tis the Season

Dear Members,

It is hard to believe the new year is just around the corner. Why is it when we look back, it feels like we just brought in a new year and here we are at the end of another?

So, what have we done this year? We battled through the Reconnect 2 grant environmental clearance and have begun the construction on that grant in Audrain County. We were awarded this grant in January 2021, but were delayed by USDA and the Osage Nation Tribe. We had to wait for clearance before we could bid the project out to construction companies. Sellenriek Construction, who has been Kingdom's contractor since the 1970's, won the bid and began work in early October and depending on our winter weather we hope to have it done by late next fall.



Reconnect 3, which is the much larger grant, is still going through the environmental process and we can only hope we don't see the same delays. I hope to get started next summer but only time will tell. The first grant was about 80 square miles, but this Reconnect 3 is about 465 square miles and has many more historical sites to deal with. The total window for construction once environmental clearance is achieved is five years, and it will likely take most of that to complete.

Building these grant areas and all the areas that have been built under our Phynx Fiber brand will almost double our physical footprint going from about 605 square miles in the Kingdom area to almost 1,180 square miles in total. These areas give us just over 18,000 locations passed for a significant chance at nearly quadrupling the customer size of our company since the expansions began.

It wouldn't be the same without my talking about Universal Service Funds (USF). I have shared that industry groups have been talking to the FCC about reforms to the program. The last order dated December 29, 2011, had USF expiring for our company in December 2026, and reviewing it in 2024 for competitive overlap reductions. But, when Covid hit in 2020, our country realized how important support was to get internet to all. The better news is that the government and FCC have realized that it is not just "build it and be done", but that these networks take money to maintain and support. So, in August of this year, the FCC offered a model-based support mechanism to all providers. For Kingdom, considering we have a tremendous amount of competition and would likely have lost most in 2024 and all in 2026, this is amazing news! The FCC calls it "Enhanced Alternative Connect America Cost Model" support. What a mouth full, so we call it E-ACAM. This support will provide funding for 15 years beginning January 2024.

Because the standing order leading up to August 2024 had Kingdom losing USF, management and the Board planned accordingly and over the past seven plus years have been working to replace the average USF dollars in preparation and did so in June 2022. This achievement added to the \$28 million dollars in grant funds, and E-ACAM will make this company extremely viable! Additionally, as soon as the E-ACAM support has been confirmed, we will plan to finish fiber upgrades in the last five cabinet areas that were left as copper, making Kingdom Telephone area 100% fiber to the premise.

Also, this year, we have been able to upgrade electronics in the Hatton, Mokane, and Tebbetts central offices and now have the ability to offer 2 gig services to those customers who are in Hatton and Tebbetts, or directly served from the central office in Mokane. We will be working to notify those customers of the new speed via email to let them know. Just like our other fiber speeds this 2-gig service would be symmetrical and provide 2 gig both for upload and download.

Believe it or not, December is the beginning of our planning period for the annual meeting. In this newsletter, you will see the nominating committee for the directors whose terms are up in March 2024. The directors up for re-election are Jake Anderson, Williamsburg, David Horstman, Mokane, and Adam Elley, At-Large Southern. If you live in the area of the incumbent and have an interest in serving on the Board, please contact one of the nominating committee members in that area.

We will again be pushing to get all member email addresses updated so that voting credentials can be emailed for the electronic voting process. In addition, we will be emailing the Annual Report to those members with valid emails, so please make sure we have your correct email address on file. Anyone without internet service will receive both of these items via USPS as before. If in doubt about your email address on file go to: <https://kingdomtelco.com/contact-update/> - this will allow you to update it.

Not much more news to share so, until next time, enjoy the remainder of your holidays and keep your families safe and healthy!

RELAY MISSOURI PROVIDES FREE PHONE ACCESS FOR HEARING AND SPEECH IMPAIRED

Relay Missouri is a service that provides full telephone accessibility to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and speech-disabled. It can be used to make telephone calls to family, friends, businesses, or anyone who has a phone. The service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year. It is accurate and transparent. The operator voices everything you type and types everything you say. All Relay Missouri calls are strictly private. No records of any conversations are maintained. Relay services are available at no charge. Equipment itself is available upon request to eligible parties. The services are funded by the State. To learn more, visit relaymissouri.com or kingdomtelco.com/relay-missouri. To use the service, dial 7-1-1 or call the Relay Customer Service Hotline at 800-676-3777 to reach the type of relay needed.

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS: APPLY NOW FOR A \$1,000 KINGDOM SCHOLARSHIP

Kingdom Telephone Company will be offering a college scholarship to help further higher education among our rural youth. The scholarship is available to students for their first year of college, university or vocational-technical school. Kingdom will award two \$1,000 scholarships to qualified applicants.

Application information will be sent to schools in our serving territory in early December. If you need additional information email us at scholarships@kingdomtelco.com.

The children and grandchildren of employees, board members, former employees, and former board members are not eligible to participate.

BOARD SELECTS NOMINATING COMMITTEE; ANNOUNCES MEETING VENUE

Kingdom Telephone members elect three directors each year at the Annual Meeting, and the first step in this process is the selection of a committee to nominate the candidates who will run. This year, the nominating committee members for the Board of Directors appointed are:

- . Beth Stieferman, Mokane, 676-5636
- . Glen Horstman, Mokane, 676-5489
- . Charles Eckert, Williamsburg, 826-0781
- . Zach Brinker, Williamsburg, 254-3800
- . Kevin Horstman, Mokane, 676-5062
- . Jim Buffington, Mokane, 676-5685

Our bylaws describe two methods of nomination:

1. Selection by the nominating committee. If you are interested in becoming a candidate for Board membership, contact a member of the nominating committee at your earliest convenience. The committee will meet on January 2, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at the business office.
2. Nomination by petition. Petitions must be signed by fifteen or more shareholders and delivered to the business office by 5:00 p.m., February 3, 2024.



The Affordable Connectivity Program is a Federal Communications Commission [program](#) that helps connect families and households struggling to afford internet service. This new benefit provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward broadband service for eligible households.

Eligible households can enroll directly with the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) using an [online](#) or mail in application.

You can learn more about the benefit, including eligibility and enrollment information, by visiting www.fcc.gov/ACP, kingdomtelco.com/affordable-connectivity-program, or by calling 877-384-2575.