

Transcript of Power Chat in the Electric Lounge
Season 2 – Episode 6 “Building Our Future”
June 11, 2026

00:25 – 01:15

Curtis Wynn, SECO Energy Chief Executive Officer: Well, welcome back to Power Chat in the Electric Lounge. I'm your host, Curtis Wynn, and today's conversation is all about building for the future — SECO Energy's future. We're discussing the recent groundbreaking ceremony for our new facilities, updates on SECO's Expansion and Improvement Plan, and how these investments will help us continue delivering reliable, affordable, and innovative energy services for our growing member base for decades to come. Joining me today is Brian Knappenburger, Director of Facilities Management and Fleet Services here at SECO Energy. Brian has played a major role in helping shape the vision, planning, and execution behind these exciting projects. Brian, welcome to the Electric Lounge.

01:16 – 01:23

Brian Knappenburger, Director of Facilities Manager & Fleet Services: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Wynn. I'm glad to be here. Excited to talk about these projects and what they mean for SECO's future.

01:24 – 02:06

Curtis Wynn: Well, you know, Brian, SECO has served our members exceptionally well for decades. Our service level is among some of the best in the nation, but many of our existing facilities were designed for a smaller cooperative and a very different era of operations. With your background in facilities and the career you had before you got to SECO you know a lot about facilities. Can we start by just talking about the condition and age of some of our current facilities? From your perspective, what did you think when you first walked in and took a tour of the facilities?

02:06 – 02:41

Brian Knappenburger: They've served us very well during this time. They are older. They need some love, as it is. Technology has advanced, we've grown, our workforce is larger, and member expectations have evolved. So we need to keep up with that. These buildings,

they've done a wonderful job up to this time, but we've recognized that we need to improve them, and we need to do that for our members to make the services that much better.

02:42 – 03:00

Curtis Wynn: Yeah. Brian, before both of us actually started our careers here at SECO, we know that in the past there's been a lot of improvements, but you get to a point where you just can't patch things up anymore. Would you say that's part of what you've noticed since you've been here?

03:01 – 03:19

Brian Knappenburger: One hundred percent. That's very correct. There's a point where it's not effective or efficient with your money or anything else to keep adding onto or modifying an existing building, and we're well past that.

03:20 – 03:32

Curtis Wynn: Well, before we go much further, let's give our listeners a quick overview of the three major facilities included in the Expansion and Improvement Plan and exactly where they are located.

03:33 – 04:42

Brian Knappenburger: Okay. One of our facilities is the Northern Operations Center in Ocala, Marion County. That one is designed to help strengthen our operational needs and support a large area of growth that we have. Our second one would be our Eastern Operations Center, which is over in Groveland — another area where we're seeing a lot of growth. Same thing there: we need to be able to support the members, our operational needs, and any recovery efforts that we may have. Our third, which is our Central Operations Center, is also our new headquarters and operations center. That will be our central hub for SECO, as our headquarters currently is now. Each of these is designed to increase our operational capabilities. It's going to be a better work environment for our employees, and as such, our members will notice better operations and increased efficiency.

04:43 – 04:47

Curtis Wynn: Wonderful. Brian, this is much more than simply constructing new buildings, right?

04:48 – 05:20

Brian Knappenburger: Absolutely. Every one of these projects was designed with operational efficiency in mind. We're looking at population growth, locations, increased service demands, access to roads, and infrastructure in the area. All of these were part of the evaluation. Employee collaboration was also a large need that we felt we needed to address, and that's being done as well.

05:21 – 05:28

Curtis Wynn: Yeah. So it gives us a better opportunity to really drive home this concept that we call “One SECO.”

05:28 – 05:37

Brian Knappenburger: That's correct. If you're in multiple buildings, you're not communicating effectively. Collaboration is affected at that point.

05:38 – 06:15

Curtis Wynn: So on May 26th, SECO officially celebrated the groundbreaking ceremony for one of these projects — a major milestone and an exciting moment for the cooperative. It was an exciting day for me, and I know going through that and making that event happen was really exciting for a lot of folks. But since you've been so engaged with this project, what did mean to you when we went through the groundbreaking ceremony?

06:16 – 06:47

Brian Knappenburger: Well, it's exciting. It's a big milestone. You've reached a point where you've accomplished so much. The project team — it validated the years that they've put into putting this together. There's literally years in advance of ever getting to this point. So it's brought that work to a bit of a conclusion, and now you can look at the next phase moving forward, which would be the construction phase that we're going to be moving into.

06:48 – 07:23

Curtis Wynn: Yeah. Brian, I've watched how you've managed your responsibilities, and you have a lot of folks leaning on you – employees. You have – the leadership team is really leaning on you for your expertise in this area, and even our board as well. What do you think? What have you heard from employees? What did that groundbreaking ceremony mean to them? Have you gotten any feedback from any of them?

07:24 – 08:00

Brian Knappenburger: I have several employees that I've talked to since then who have expressed that they're very happy. They've gained a lot of knowledge from it. They appreciated the fact that they got to meet a lot of people involved in the project that they didn't know anything about. A lot of the employees that we have are not aware of what goes on in the background or the amount of time that's been put into this by the staff, the board, and everyone else. So they were glad to hear that, and they're excited about the look of the new buildings and looking forward to moving ahead with the construction part of the project.

08:01 – 08:11

Curtis Wynn: Right. And this groundbreaking really represents just the beginning of a much larger and much longer-term expansion for SECO Energy.

08:12 – 08:43

Brian Knappenburger: Yes, that's correct. This is just the beginning of the project. It's multiple phases that we're going to be going through, with the next one being the construction phase, and that's going to take some time. After that, you'll be moving into the

facilities. So that's another part. But over the next several years, we'll continue moving along. The projects are going to start independently, but they will all run at the same time.

08:44 – 09:27

Curtis Wynn: Right. So, a lot of details. We're not talking here about simply office buildings. They're operational hubs. They are designed to support employees, enhance our technology, help our line technicians do their jobs more effectively, support fleet operations, emergency response, and simply serve our members, and all of this working together more efficiently. So, can you talk about the planning and design process and some of the biggest priorities behind the state-of-the-art facilities that we're getting ready to build?

09:28 – 10:33

Brian Knappenburger: Sure. One of the biggest things is geographical location — that we have coverage and making sure it is placed appropriately where our growth is at and where our members are. Operational accessibility is a big thing. The infrastructure being in place, the long-term expansion that we have, making sure we have room for growth in the future, environmental concerns — those are all things that we have to have looked at and taken into account moving forward. And the locations were selected using those items as a strategic roadmap. Then we were looking at it in regard to the dispatch operations that we're going to have, the fleet services, we've got warehouse operations that are there — everyone within the company will have a seat in one of these new buildings. We're making sure it works for everyone and it is collaborative so everyone has an opportunity to meet everyone.

10:34 – 10:46

Curtis Wynn: Yeah. So, everyone meaning - 535 employees as we speak today. And it's a growing number. And we've designed a building for that growth, as well, right?

10:47 – 11:13

Brian Knappenburger: Yes, we've designed these buildings for the growth. We have them planned out in a five-year plan. So, we're expecting that we are going to be hiring some people, but then we've also made plans for being able to add a building, if necessary, in the future, on the same property. So, that we're looking towards that growth at 10, 15, 20 years in the future.

11:14 – 11:29

Curtis Wynn: Excellent. One thing I think people don't realize is just how much work goes into this whole process before you start moving dirt and building the actual buildings. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

11:30 – 12:17

Brian Knappenburger: Well, yes. There's a lot of collaboration that goes into the planning stage of the project before you ever get to construction. You have to put together an idea of what you need, develop a plan for where you need to go with your buildings need to go, let's say, who they need to service, and where they need to service. These are all things the team has looked at. We've had people working on this for three to four years now. So, that's something that builds toward where you're going to be. You take that and put it into a conceptual plan. That conceptual plan then turns into a schematic design plan, which then turns into a design-build project.

12:18 – 12:37

Curtis Wynn: Wow. That's a lot of work. So, anytime members hear about a project of this size and this magnitude, timelines become one of the major questions. Can you tell us a little bit about the timelines for these facilities as we move into the next phase?

12:38 – 13:16

Brian Knappenburger: Well, I can tell you that in our Eastern Operations Center, we're expecting construction completion in the fourth quarter of 2027. Our Northern Operations Center we're expecting to see the construction completion in the first quarter of 2028 and our Central Operations Center here, which we will begin moving dirt and working on the site

work of facility at the end of June or middle of July, and complete that in the third quarter of 2028.

13:17 – 13:20

Curtis Wynn: Wow. It's getting real, isn't it?

13:21-13:24

Brian Knappenburger: Yes. It's getting real.

13:25 – 13:40

Curtis Wynn: Let's fast forward. Once we get completed, what practical improvements do you expect for two groups — one, our employees and second, our members?

13:41 – 14:31

Brian Knappenburger: Well, our employees they're going to see a more modern workspace, upgraded technology, a safer workspace, and facilities built for the size of the workforce we have. There will also be more efficient collaboration areas where people can meet and discuss projects and operations. Members will benefit through faster response capabilities, stronger storm response. We'll have areas on each site where we're able to bring equipment up there if that storm is moving into the area, which we currently don't have. There'll be an infrastructure that is stronger and more resilient during not only storm events but also every day.

14:32 – 14:44

Curtis Wynn: Yeah. So, I'm sure that includes a lot of technology enhancements that will also enhance the way we operate. Can you tell us a little bit about some of the technological aspects of the new facility that we could expect?

14:45 – 15:09

Brian Knappenburger: Absolutely. We'll be having advanced communication systems, operational monitoring, fleet management software. The dispatch centers that we are going to have are going to be brought up to modern style, so they'll have a lot more technology-driven abilities than our current systems have.

15:10 – 15:36

Curtis Wynn: Wow. Exciting. Now throughout this process, one message has remained clear: this Expansion and Improvement Plan. That message is this plan is ultimately a commitment to our members. Before we wrap up today, what message would you most like SECO members and employees to take away from this exciting new chapter for SECO and its history?

15:37- 15:59

Brian Knappenburger: Well, I think I'd like them to understand that this investment in SECO is all about SECO's reliability, strength, and preparedness for the future. These projects represent years of collaboration between team members, board members, city/municipality members. All of this is designed to strengthen SECO and make us more reliable, more resilient, and more efficient in our operations.

16:00 – 17:00

Curtis Wynn: Brian, thank you again for joining us and sharing more about this exciting investment in SECO Energy's future. And thank you to our listeners for tuning in to another episode of Power Chat in the Electric Lounge. As construction moves forward, SECO will continue providing updates on key milestones, project progress, and how we're building for the future while continuing the reliable, member-focused service our communities depend on every day. To learn more about SECO's Expansion and Improvement Plan, including project background, conceptual renderings, timelines, and ongoing updates, visit future.secoenergy.com. Until next time, I'm Curtis Wynn, and we'll see you in the Electric Lounge.