



VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

P.O. Box 1049, Dillon, MT 59725-1049
(406) 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271

Web site: www.vec.coop
E-mail: contact@vec.coop

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

2017 Annual Meeting of Members

March 3, 2017, marked Vigilante Electric Cooperative's 79th annual meeting. Members from across our service territory convened in Dillon on the campus of the University of Montana – Western. On a day that was spring-like, a record number of attendees were treated to a wonderful lunch and a wealth of information about our cooperative.

One of the more anticipated parts of the meeting is to see what Trustee Norm Tebay does for the invocation. This year he sang the Emma Lazarus sonnet, "The New Colossus"; its lines appear on a bronze plaque on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. Then the membership joined together in singing "America the Beautiful."

The informational part of the meeting started with Board President Dean Hanson reporting that Vigilante Electric had another strong financial year, and that membership continues to grow. Because of our contract with Bonneville Power Administration, we continue to have the lowest residential and irrigation rates in the state — and one of the lowest in the nation.

President Hanson also mentioned Vigilante's support for community through scholarships and donations to organizations such as rural schools, and local foundations such as the University of Montana-Western Foundation, the Broadwater Community Foundation and the Montana 4-H Foundation.

Next to speak was Brent McRae, Executive Committee president, Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA). He started by thanking General Manager Rollie Miller and the Vigilante Electric trustees for their service to MECA and their

help during the current legislative session. He also thanked the grassroots members for their continued support during this and past sessions.

President McRae explained that MECA's main legislative concern with any proposed bill is how it will affect the reliability and affordability of power to cooperative members. He then mentioned several important bills and resolutions that MECA was monitoring.

Following the legislative report was the financial report by Office Manager Raquel Reno-Morast. Raquel highlighted the financial information presented in the annual meeting report. Of note were 2016 net margins of \$1.1 million, and an equity ratio of just over 50 percent. She also reported that Vigilante Electric refinanced its Rural Utilities Service loans with CoBank to take advantage of lower interest rates, saving our organization a substantial amount of money.

The meeting continued with the manager's report by Rollie Miller. Rollie started by introducing his wife Gina, and thanking the employees of Vigilante Electric for their service. He also announced that Staff Assistant Linda Meine will retire this year after 41 years, and thanked her for her service.

Rollie's comments then turned to wholesale power rates. Members of Vigilante Electric continue to benefit from our wholesale contract with BPA, which allows for the lowest residential and irrigation rates in the state. While our current contract with BPA expires in 2028, we are actively exploring options to fulfill our power needs beyond this point.

Another way we are keeping rates down is by looking at more efficient ways to operate. In 2016, we started an in-house pole testing program that is saving the cooperative money. We have also implemented a Standards Committee to recognize and eliminate inefficiencies between the Dillon, Townsend and Whitehall warehouses.

Rollie continued with updating attendees

Continued on page 4



Dean Hanson



Brent McRae

Outage Notification Numbers

M-F 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
683-2327 or (800) 221-8271

Dillon

After Hours Mon. - Thurs.
Justin Bair925-1540
Charles Wharton ..660-1878
Gary Ferris.....683-6321

Weekends

683-2327 or (800) 221-8271

Whitehall

After Hours and Weekends
Marty Simons287-3950
Chuck Romerio491-5466
Zach
Maershbecker ...701-290-9265

Townsend

After Hours and Weekends
John Moos266-3605
Chase White459-3892
Marty Simons287-3950

Annual Meeting

Continued from page 3

about our community solar project. While we fully support this project, we are temporarily postponing our efforts due to current projected costs being higher than anticipated. We feel that in the future the technology and pricing will stabilize, making this project more feasible down the road. We are proceeding cautiously.

Rollie then discussed our ongoing partnership with Rocky Mountain Supply in the propane company Montana Energy Alliance. Over the years, this partnership has been lucrative for our organization, and he commended Manager Gerry Goody on his fine work. He closed his remarks by thanking President Hanson and the board of trustees for all they do for our cooperative.

The next item on the agenda was the election of trustees. Vigilante Electric's service territory is divided into nine districts, each having an elected representative. Each member of the board of trustees serves a three-year term. Terms are staggered to maintain six experienced trustees at all times.

In 2017, districts having trustee positions up for nomination are District #3 serving the Townsend-Toston area, District #8 serving Dillon south, and District #9 serving Dell-Lima. Nominations for trustee are made at the district meetings.

This year, Jim Petersen was nominated by District #8 and Allen Martinell by District #9. Each was cast a unanimous ballot. District #3 had two nominees, Tom Helm (incumbent) and Cary Hegreberg. Each candidate was granted the opportunity to address the meeting. Attending members then voted for one of the candidates. Ballots were collected and tallied, with Helm receiving the majority of the votes.

The meeting concluded with guest speaker Sarah Calhoun, the owner of Red Ants Pants. She started by describing her move from rural Connecticut to White Sulphur Springs as a modern day pioneering story that was inspired by Montana author Ivan Doig's novel, *This House of Sky*.



Rollie Miller



Sarah Calhoun

Ms. Calhoun not only started her own entirely made in the USA women's work-wear business, but is also the founder and producer of the popular Red Ants Pants Music Festival and director of the Red Ants Pants Foundation, whose mission is to support women's leadership, working family farms and ranches, and rural communities.

Overall, the meeting was a huge success.

We would like to thank the staff of the University of Montana – Western for the venue and the wonderful meal. We would like to thank Sarah and Brent for their contributions to our meeting. Finally, we would like to thank our members who took time out of their schedules. Thank you for attending and giving us the opportunity to serve.



Brent McRae and Tom Helm



2017 Leadership Award Winners

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.” — Benjamin Franklin.

At Vigilante Electric, we have long supported the aspirations of area students wanting to further their education. We also understand that true learning and growth go beyond the classroom.

Each year the Vigilante Electric Cooperative Leadership Award is given to students who are dependents of members and have distinguished themselves in the classrooms and communities. Applications are judged on four components, academic strength, activities in school and community, employment/volunteerism/community service and a personal statement.

The first three components are judged equally and give us the quantifiable aspect about the student. More weight is given to the personal statement because it is more personal. The best personal statements that we have received are well thought out, organized and creative.

We have been reviewing scholarship applications for Vigilante Electric for 20 years. The applications from the past have set the bar pretty high in terms of overall quality. This year’s applications continued the tradition of incredible academic achievement, hard work and commitment to school and community. Plus, some of the personal statements received this year were quite remarkable.

For the 2016-17 academic year, the Board of Trustees of Vigilante Electric have decided to award 13 \$500 scholarships. This year’s Leadership Award recipients are:

- Jayden Chilson – Beaverhead Co. High School
- Bailee Doering – Beaverhead Co. High School
- RJ Fitzgerald – Beaverhead Co. High School
- Dillon Hahnkamp – Beaverhead Co. High School
- Tristan Huxtable – Beaverhead Co High School
- McKenna Jones – Beaverhead Co High School
- Adrianna Pittman – Beaverhead Co High School

- Tessa Sawyer – Beaverhead Co. High School
- Augusta Voss – Beaverhead Co. High School
- Morgan Nunn – Broadwater High School
- Connor Ford – Butte Central High School, attending University of Chicago Loyola
- Katelynn Sutton – Lima High School
- Skiela Mager – Twin Bridges High School

We again paired our Leadership Award with the Montana Electric Cooperatives’ Association Memorial Scholarship. This gives students the opportunity to win two scholarships while filling out only one application. The top application received is forwarded to our statewide association for consideration for one of four Memorial Scholarships. This year we selected Tessa Sawyer’s application to compete for the MECA Memorial Scholarship. At the time of this article, the winner of the MECA scholarship has not been announced.

On behalf of Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we would like to congratulate this year’s scholarship winners and wish them the best in their future endeavors.

Electric Lineworkers Scholarship

At Vigilante Electric, we understand that college is not for everybody. There is a large need for skilled workers in a broad variety of trades. One such trade impacts our industry and lives every day, that of an electric lineworker.

For years, Vigilante Electric has provided opportunities for qualified applicants to receive a \$500 scholarship to use at one of our regional line schools. For a person that likes working outside and with their hands, this trade offers excellent pay, great benefits and opportunities worldwide.

Because some of the regional line schools run multiple sessions a year, we keep this scholarship open. Since introducing this scholarship in 2009, we have not had many applicants. We did, however, have one this year. We are proud to be providing an Electric Lineworkers Scholarship to Kyle Romerio, a senior at Whitehall High School.

On the Clock

Austyn Paulsen

Vigilante Electric Cooperative would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to our newest employee Austyn Paulsen.

Austyn is currently an apprentice lineman and will be working out of our Townsend shop. He was raised in Jefferson City, Montana. He is working his way through the Western States Apprenticeship Program and worked as a apprentice lineman at PAR Electric prior to working at Vigilante Electric.

We would like to welcome Austyn, and his wife Loretta, to our organization and look forward to a long association.



Austyn Paulsen

Prescription Discount Tracker

Total Paid Claims YTD.....	564
Total Savings YTD	\$20,136.35
Total Savings Percentage	41.55%
February Paid Claims	8
February Savings	\$595.64
February Savings Percentage.....	70.39%

Lasich Earns Director Gold Certificate

In January 2016, NRECA announced a new Director Gold certificate curriculum. Director Gold recognizes directors who have already earned their Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) and/or Board Leadership Certificate (BLC), and who wish to continue to learn throughout their service on the board. At the January 2017 board meeting Sharon Lasich received her certificate for completing the Director Gold requirements.

“The Director Gold certificate is geared toward directors who are committed to continuing their education beyond CCD and BLC, and who desire a tangible credential that reinforces their stature as part of an experienced and educated group of directors,” said Rollie Miller, general manager. “Director Gold also demonstrates to co-op members those directors’ ongoing commitment to advancing their knowledge and performing their fiduciary duty to the best of their ability.”

Congratulations Sharon!



Dean Hanson and Sharon Lasich

Lives on the Line

Thanks from a Grateful Cooperative

Every year, we take the time to thank our linemen who dedicate their lives to keeping the lights on. At Vigilante Electric, 12 linemen maintain 2,706 miles of line that provide service to more than 10,000 meters in our service territory.

We depend on our entire staff to keep our cooperative running smoothly, but on April 10, 2017, we honor all lineworkers whose jobs place them in dangerous and challenging situations. These brave men and women repair damaged lines and maintain critical infrastructure for our communities. Without their hard work and commitment to the job, our co-op would not thrive. No matter the time — day or night, weekday or weekend — if the lights go out, so do they.

Perhaps you have seen them raising their bucket trucks in howling winds and torrential rains, or in freezing, icy conditions. They work around the clock near high-voltage power lines until electricity is restored to every member.

We hope you will join us in thanking the many lineworkers — both locally and around the world — for their efforts. Remember, your power works because they do!



L to R: Chuck Romerio, lineman; Zach Maershbecker, lineman; and Marty Simons, foreman.



L to R: John Moos, foreman; Austyn Paulsen, apprentice lineman; and Chase White, lineman.



L to R: Travis Jensen, lineman; Justin Bair, line superintendent; Jess Davidson, lineman; Charles Wharton, foreman; Cody Tarter, lineman; Vance Forsman, lineman; and Morgan Noel, apprentice lineman.