



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

81st Annual Meeting

Another successful one in the books

On March 8th, members from across our service territory convened in Dillon for our 81st annual meeting. Our streak of decent weather on meeting day continued, the number of memberships represented at the annual meeting was up over last year, and attendees participated in a very informative meeting. If you missed this meeting, you missed a good one.



The meeting was called to order by Board President Allen Martinell. After the ceremonial and procedural aspects of the meeting were complete, Allen gave the president's report, which included a brief history of the cooperative tradition in the United States and some commentary on the beginnings of our organization, including how our name and location have changed over the years. He also discussed the seven cooperative principles that guide organizations such as ours.

Next to address the meeting was then Montana Electric Cooperatives Association (MECA) Interim CEO Gary Wiens, who provided an update on the current legislative session. He discussed the status of co-op equity legislation impacting capital credits, the aquatic invasive species tax, and the fight to move funding away from utilities that buy hydroelectric power. Gary concluded his remarks by thanking Vigilante Electric Cooperative members who signed up for the MECA Grassroots Action Team.

Following the legislative report was the financial report by Office Manager Raquel Reno-Morast. The operating revenue and expenses for 2018 were similar to 2017,

while non-operating revenue was up significantly from 2017. Plant value was up by \$2.1 million, and Vigilante's equity ratio remains at 47 percent. By all financial measures, Vigilante Electric continues to be in a strong financial position.

Manager Rollie Miller then provided a brief history of Vigilante Electric, and reported on the people, the power, the plant, the financials, and our community "by the numbers." A written version of this is in our annual meeting report that has been posted to our website www.vec.coop.

Rollie noted that Vigilante Electric continues to have the lowest rates in the state, as well as being in the lowest one percent of rates in the country. In 2018, Vigilante Electric also lowered its line losses and outage occurrences, and significantly reduced the amount of idle services. Rollie completed his review of the numbers with the one he is most proud of: in 2018, Vigilante had a clean safety record — with zero incidents.

Rollie next discussed our Bonneville Power Administration contract, which ends in 2028. Vigilante is actively working on our future power-supply agreement to ensure that we can continue our mission of providing our members with the most reli-

Continued on page 4

Board of Trustees & General Manager

Tom Helm, President – Dist. #3
Townsend/N. Helena/Lump Gulch

Sharon Lasich, Vice Pres. – Dist. #4
Twin Bridges

Cheyenne Garrison, Sec./Treas. –
Dist. #5
Wise River/Silver Bow/Melrose

Norm Tebay, Trustee – Dist. #1
Cardwell/Whitehall/Three Forks

Dean Hanson, Trustee – Dist. #2
Silver Star/Waterloo

Andy Johnson, Trustee – Dist. #6
Dillon North/Glen

Dean Peterson, Trustee – Dist. #7
Jackson/Wisdom

Jim Petersen, Trustee – Dist. #8
Dillon South/Grant

Allen Martinell, – Dist. #9
Dell/Lima

Rollie Miller – General Manager

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

Annual Meeting

Continued from page 3

able electric service at the lowest possible cost.

Rollie concluded his comments by providing members with information regarding our business relationship with Montana Energy Alliance and stating that Vigilante is currently exploring worthy causes for Operation Safety Roundup donations. Rollie then thanked the cooperative employees and answered questions from members.

The next item on the agenda was the election of trustees. Nominations for trustees are made at the district meetings. This year, Norm Tebay was nominated for District # 1 (serving Whitehall/Cardwell/Three Forks); Dean Hanson was nominated for District #2 (serving Silver Star/Waterloo); and Andy Johnson was nominated for District #6 (Dillon North). With no additional nominations from the floor, each was cast a unanimous ballot.

This year's guest speaker was Macie Martinell, a junior at Lima High School and one of our representatives on the 2018 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. Macie shared her favorite experiences from the Youth Tour, encouraged other high school sophomores and juniors to apply for this opportunity, and thanked Vigilante Electric.

Our meeting concluded with the awarding of door prizes, and was followed by another wonderful meal from the



2018 Youth Tour participant Macie Martinell addressing the annual meeting about her experience at last summer's youth tour.

University of Montana - Western food services. We would like to thank Macie Martinell and Gary Weins for their contributions to our meeting, and also the event staff and food services at the University of Montana - Western for all of their efforts in making this meeting a success. Finally, we would like to thank the members that took time out of their schedules to attend the meeting.



2019 Construction Season

In order for Vigilante Electric to provide reliable electrical service, we invest heavily in our facilities. This requires ongoing testing, maintenance and replacement of the electric facilities in our service territory. With spring upon us, we would like to make our members aware of major projects and where our line crews and contractors will be working.

Vigilante Electric line crews will be busy with new services, pole testing and pole placements throughout our service territory. Starting this summer, our Dillon crew will be upgrading the electrical distribution system throughout the town of Melrose.

This summer, Western Line Builders, from Wells, NV, will be working in our service territory doing some re-conductoring projects. In May, they will finish a project in the Whitehall area, then move to the Glen area, and will finish the construction season in the Grasshopper Valley.

We do not anticipate many major outages but there will be a few minor outages associated with this work. We ask for your patience and understanding in these efforts. We will continue to use this publication for periodic updates. We will also post current information on the News/Events section on our website – www.vec.coop, or you can call our office for updates.

Western Line Builders changing out a pole outside of Whitehall.

Electric Co-ops are Engines of Economic Development

By Dan Riedinger

Vigilante Electric Cooperative is deeply committed to providing affordable and reliable electricity to our consumer-members and empowering the communities that we serve. This means being more than just an electricity provider; it means being a partner in economic development and other activities that improve the lives of our members.

But have you ever stopped to wonder what kind of an impact the nation's roughly 900 electric co-ops have across the United States?

A new report on this very topic shows that electric co-ops supported nearly 612,000 American jobs and contributed \$440 billion in U.S. GDP from 2013 to 2017, or \$88 billion annually. Those are some big numbers.

The study, "The Economic Impact of America's Electric Cooperatives," was conducted by FTI Consulting for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation.

The report quantifies what many rural American families and businesses know well—electric cooperatives are powerful engines of economic development in their local communities. Affordable and reliable electricity is a key ingredient for a successful economy. Because electric co-ops were built by, belong to and are rooted in the communities they serve, they play a vibrant role as economic cornerstones for millions of American families, businesses and workers.

Access to electricity was a vital component of economic development and diversification in the mid-20th century, and that remains true today. Roughly one in eight residents nationwide are served by an electric co-op, meaning direct co-op employment and investments can ripple throughout the economy and create additional economic value for local communities, regions and the country.

From 2013 to 2017, electric co-ops contributed \$881 billion in U.S. sales output, \$200 billion in labor income and \$112 billion in federal, state and local tax revenues.

Nationally, electric co-ops spent \$359 billion on goods and services across the economy, including \$274 billion on operational expenditures, \$60 billion on capital investments, \$20 billion on maintenance and \$5 billion on credits retired and paid in cash to members under the membership structure of cooperatives.

In conducting its analysis, FTI Consulting used data from 815 distribution cooperatives and 57 generation and transmission cooperatives as inputs into a national model to simulate the economic effects from the direct expenditures by co-ops. The model also calculates the indirect effects throughout the industrial supply chain and the induced effects from consumer spending by the employees of co-ops and their suppliers.

The result of all this effort is a first-of-its-kind study that reveals electric cooperatives to be economic anchors all across rural America. And it demonstrates on a macroeconomic scale one of the seven guiding cooperative principles: Concern for Community.

MAY 2019

Direct payment and safety roundup

2019 Construction Season

For some time now we have communicated the benefits of participation in our direct payment and safety roundup programs. In an effort to expand participation in these programs, Vigilante Electric is offering a one-time, five-dollar bill credit on each program for new signups.

As a reminder, the direct payment program allows you to have payments made automatically from your checking, savings or bank card. You simply fill out an authorization card providing the bank account or card information. Payment will be deducted on the first banking day after the 24th of each month. Direct Payment Plan authorization cards are available by contacting us or through the E-Bill site.

To join our Safety Roundup team, members have three options: (1) have their bill rounded up to the next dollar (from experience, the average roundup amount is about \$6 per year, and the most it could be would be \$11.88 per year); (2) add a monthly dollar value of their choice; or (3) make a one-time donation. Regardless of how you donate, 100 percent of the money will be presented to worthy organizations through grants.

Any nonprofit organization within our service territory in need of safety-related funding will be eligible to apply for this grant. Funding will not be allocated based on the type of organization, but rather what the funding is needed for.

The bill credits on these programs are only available for a limited time. If you have any questions regarding these programs or would like to sign up for either, or both, please feel free to give us a call.



Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 217

Total Contributions: \$2,182.98

To apply contact our office at
(800) 221-8271 or 683-2327

An online application is available at www.vec.coop.

Safety Starts with You

By Derrill Holly

Electricity plays many roles in our lives, from powering baby monitors, cell phones and lighting, to running HVAC systems and appliances. No wonder we get so comfortable with its instant availability that when we flip a switch, we expect most systems or devices to do the job.

May is National Electrical Safety Month, and here at Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we think it's a great time to look around your home and check for potential safety hazards.

Remember, every electrical device has a purpose and a service lifespan. While we can extend their operations with maintenance and care, none of them are designed to last or work forever. When electricity is involved, failures can present electrical hazards that might be avoided with periodic inspections.

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters

Outdoor outlets or those in potentially damp locations in a kitchen, bathroom or laundry room often include GFCI features. They are designed to sense abnormal current flows, breaking the circuit to prevent potential electric shocks from devices plugged into the outlets.

The average GFCI outlet is designed to last about 10 years, but in areas prone to electrical storms or power surges, they can wear out in five years or less. Check them frequently by pressing the red test button. Make sure you hit the black reset button when you are done. Contact a licensed electrician to replace any failing GFCI outlets.

Loose or Damaged Outlets or Switches

Unstable electrical outlets or wall switches with signs of heat damage or discoloration can offer early warnings of potential shock or electrical fire hazards. Loose connections can allow electrical current arcing. If you see these warning signs, it may be time to contact an electrician.

Surge Protectors

Power strips with surge protectors can help safeguard expensive equipment like televisions, home entertainment systems and computer components from power spikes. Voltage spikes are measured in joules, and surge protectors are rated for the number of joules they can effectively absorb. That means if your surge protector is rated at 1,000 joules, it should be

replaced when it hits or passes that limit. When the limit is reached, protection stops, and you're left with a basic power strip.

Some surge protectors include indicator lights that flicker to warn you when they've stopped working as designed, but many do not. If your electrical system takes a major hit, or if you don't remember when you bought your surge protector, replacement may be the best option.

Extension Cords

If you use extension cords regularly to connect devices and equipment to your wall outlets, you may live in an underwired home. With a growing number of electrical devices connecting your family to the electricity you get from Vigilante Electric, having enough outlets in just the right spots can be challenging. Remember, extension cords are designed for temporary, occasional or periodic use.

If an extension cord gets noticeably warm when in use, it could be undersized for the intended use. If it shows any signs of frayed, cracked or heat-damaged insulation, it should be replaced. If the grounding prong is missing, crimped or loose, a grounded cord will not provide the protection designed into its performance. And always make sure that extension cords used in outdoor or potentially damp locations are rated for exterior use.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, approximately 51,000 electrical fires are reported each year in the United States, causing more than \$1.3 billion in annual property damage.

Electricity is an essential necessity for modern living, and Vigilante Electric is committed to providing safe, reliable and affordable power to all of our members. We hope you'll keep these electrical safety tips in mind so that you can note any potential hazards before damage occurs.

Affordable. Innovative. Member Focused.

It's hard to predict the future, but one thing seems certain—**new government regulations will increase the cost of electricity.**

We want to work with you to keep your electric bills **AFFORDABLE**. We're controlling costs and no matter what the future holds we'll continue to put you, our members, **FIRST**.



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

Find out how we're *Looking Out for You* at www.vec.coop

Looking Out
for You