



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

P.O. Box 1049, Dillon, MT 59725-1049

(406) 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271

Website: www.vec.coop

E-mail: contact@vec.coop



This year Vigilante Electric's 83rd Annual Meeting is scheduled for March 5, 2021. | FILE PHOTO

83rd Annual Meeting

Vigilante Electric's Meeting of Members set for March 5

By **ROD SIRING** | *Member Services*

On March 5, 2021, Vigilante Electric Cooperative is planning to host the 83rd Annual Meeting of Members. For the trustees, management and staff of Vigilante Electric, this is the most important event of the year and, for the first time, we are planning to have our annual meeting in the Townsend area.

We are fully aware that COVID restrictions at the time may change our plans, but at the writing of this article, we are moving forward to make this meeting happen. This year's meeting will be held at the Watson Irrigation Training Center. Registration will begin at approximately 9 a.m. with the meeting to begin at 11 a.m.

Following the meeting, members in attendance will be treated to a prime rib sandwich for lunch.

The business meeting will be conducted

as normal. Members will hear our leadership discuss cooperative issues, recap events of the previous year and receive information regarding our financial status. While we cannot confirm guest speakers at this time, our meetings are known for having well-spoken and informative individuals address us.

Members will also participate in the trustee elections. Our service territory is divided into nine districts. Each district has an elected representative on the board of trustees who serves a three-year term. Terms are staggered to maintain six experienced trustees at all times.

This year's trustee elections will be for District # 4 Twin Bridges/Point of Rocks, District # 5 Melrose/Divide/Ramsey/Wise River and District # 7 Big Hole and Grasshopper valleys. All three incumbents have

See MEETING on next page

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

Tom Mitchell, Trustee

Dist. #8

Dillon South/Grant

Allen Martinell,

Dist. #9

Dell/Lima

Rollie Miller – General Manager

Trustee Allen Martinell completes elements for Director Certification

THE trustees of Vigilante Electric Cooperative invest a tremendous amount of time into our cooperative. They meet monthly to review cooperative business and travel to meetings regularly as a representative of our organization. Participation in these meetings is important because our trustees have to stay informed so that they have the knowledge required to make good decisions that affect the cooperative.

Some trustees take their commitment to the cooperative and the membership a step further. Those trustees wanting to go above and beyond what is required enroll in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's three part Director Education program.

The Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) program focuses on basic governance knowledge and the essential skills required of cooperative directors. The CCD prepares directors to fulfill their fiduciary duty as elected officials serving on behalf of their membership. Upon completion, the director is awarded the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate by the National Rural Electric Cooperative



Trustee for the Dell/Lima area, Allen Martinell has completed the Credentialed Cooperative Director's program and the Board Leadership Certificate. | **VIGILANTE ELECTRIC PHOTO**

Association (NRECA), and is eligible to advance to the next program.

The Board Leadership Program (BLC) focuses in greater depth on specific industry and governance issues. These include risk management, power supply, parliamentary

procedure, technology and policy development.

Finally, the Director Gold Credential recognizes directors committed to continuing their education beyond the CCD and BLC who desire a tangible credential that demonstrates their ongoing commitment to advancing their knowledge and performing their fiduciary duty to the best of their ability. We would like to recognize and thank Allen Martinell, trustee for the Dell/Lima area, for his efforts in completing the Credentialed Cooperative Director's program and the Board Leadership Certificate.

Allen ranches north of Dell and began his service to our membership in 1981. During Allen's tenure he has served as president, vice president and secretary/treasurer. He represents VEC on the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association's (MECA) Board of Trustees and the Safety and Loss Control Standing Committee, and is a member of the Vigilante Electric Safety Committee.

Again, we would like to thank Allen for his years of service and his continued leadership to our organization.

RM

MEETING

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expressed a desire to continue representing their respective districts.

All the elements that attendees would expect from our annual meeting will be there. Attending members will receive a gift at registration, be eligible for wonderful door prizes at the end of the meeting and will be treated to a delicious meal.

Our hope is that having the annual meeting in Townsend will provide an opportunity for the members in that area to participate in this important event. A formal announcement with a map of the meeting location will be sent to all members in the next couple of weeks.

We hope to see you there. RM



Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 418
Total Contributions: \$7,233.84

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

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

PRINCIPLE #6

Vigilante Electric answers the call

By **ROD SIRING** | Member Services

WORKING for an electric cooperative is a tremendous experience mainly because of what our organization stands for and the people who make it work. In the past you have read about the cooperative principles, which are at the core of who we are as an organization.

On January 13 Vigilante Electric participated in one of the truest examples of Principle 6 – cooperation among cooperatives.

This principle states that cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative

movement by working together. On January 13, Montana experienced a major wind event. Several cooperatives in western Montana, including Vigilante Electric, experienced widespread outages, some worse than others.

As the day progressed and we got a handle on our system outages, we received calls from other Montana cooperatives asking for assistance.

The cooperatives of the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association have a mutual aid agreement in place for such an event. Even with this agreement, a cooperative still must be willing to commit line personnel and

equipment.

Without a second thought we had a line crew and equipment preparing to head to the Seely Lake area to help Missoula Electric Cooperative repair its system in that area. Downed trees had wreaked havoc with the system in that area, which would take them several days to repair without help.

This is going above and beyond the call of duty, but this is what electric cooperatives do. We would like to recognize linemen Jess Davidson and Vance Forsman, and apprentice lineman Andrew English for responding to this request for help. RM

2021 Youth Tour scholarships awarded

Scholarships also given to 2020 winners as trip was canceled due to COVID

By **ROD SIRING** | Member Services

In “normal” times, we would be announcing the winners of the Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. right about now. However, due to the continued uncertainty and risk of the pandemic, Montana cooperatives have canceled their plans to participate in the event for the second year in a row.

In an attempt to keep junior and sophomore students interested and engaged for future participation, VEC recently announced that we will be offering a scholarship in lieu of the trip this year.

At our October board meeting, our trustees agreed to offer the top two essays a \$1,500 scholarship that will be awarded upon their graduation from high school.

This year's overall best essay will be forwarded to the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA), our statewide association, for a



chance to win an additional \$2,500 scholarship.

Our 2020 Youth Tour winners, Kylie Salerno and Samuel Konen, will also receive this scholarship due to their trip being canceled.

The essay topic was quite relevant to the pandemic environment that we are in: “How has reliable electricity benefited you and your community through the COVID-19 pandemic?” We were fortunate to receive five exceptionally well-written essays. Of the five, four were from Beaverhead County High School and the other was from Lima High School.

All five applicants would be excel-

lent representatives of our organization on a trip to Washington D.C or worthy of a scholarship, however, we can only pick two. Three of the applicants were sophomores and we will be strongly encouraging them to apply again next year when we can hopefully resume this wonderful event.

Now, we are proud to announce that the winners of the 2021 Youth Tour scholarships are Daniel Martin and Treyton Anderson, who are both Juniors at Beaverhead County High School. Daniel's essay was forwarded to our statewide association for consideration of the MECA scholarship. Congratulations gentlemen! RM



Daniel Martin



Treyton Anderson

Working together requires access

As an organization, everything we do is to fulfill our mission to provide reliable power at the lowest possible cost. From an operational standpoint this means building and maintaining a cost-effective distribution system, and to do this takes a cooperative effort between us and our membership.

A lot goes into having a reliable distribution system. We need skilled personnel to plan and build our lines. We need to purchase and use reliable components and equipment. We need to be able to identify and address issues with our system in a timely manner, whether it is through scheduled testing or prompt response to outages. To do any of this requires us to be able to access our wires, poles and meters which are often on private property.

We all have a stake in the success of Vigilante Electric, and to keep it successful we each need to do our part. We try to notify members who will be impacted by planned work that requires outages. Moving forward we will also notify members when our linemen will be in the area doing pole testing.

We ask for our members' patience and understanding when we are on your property for the purpose of main-



Pictured is lineman Cody Tater demonstrating a pole-testing drill. | **VIGILANTE FILE PHOTO**

taining and improving the reliability of our system. Also understand that when our line crews come upon a locked gate, we will cut one of our locks into the chain, allowing us access while keeping the property secure.

When you become a member of Vigilante Electric Cooperative you enter into a contractual agreement governed by the bylaws of this organization. This allow us access to all transmission, distribution and metering facilities that reside on your

property. This includes contractors working on needed updates to our facilities.

We acknowledge the fact that there are a variety of reasons why people restrict access to their property.

For many of you, your property is your livelihood. Damage to crops or the introduction of unwanted weeds could prove to be costly.

By working together, we can keep this intrusion to a minimum, and keep the power flowing to our members.

RM

Vigilante Electric rebates membership

ONE of the many benefits of membership is that once financial and loan obligations are satisfied, excess margins are allocated back to the membership.

2020 was an exceptionally strong financial year for Vigilante Electric Cooperative and at the November trustee meeting a rebate of \$500,000 to the membership was approved. It is estimated that the rebate on \$1,500 in usage would be approximately \$60.

General Manager Rollie Miller said,

“We’re not here to collect more than it takes to serve our membership. We have minimum covenant requirements from our lenders to cover our financing, but anything over that we want to return back to our members.”

Vigilante Electric has around 10,400 metered accounts in 10 counties in southwestern Montana and a portion of eastern Idaho.

Currently, Vigilante Electric has the lowest residential and irrigation rates in the state of Montana, and ranks in

the lowest 1 percent in the country. It also has an Average Service Availability Index (ASAI) of 99.96%.

Miller continued, “Vigilante Electric’s mission is to provide reliable power at the lowest possible cost. To accomplish this requires strong strategic planning, responsible fiscal management and efficient operations, all made possible by the skills and dedication of the trustees and staff of our organization.” RM