



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Vigilante Electric Cooperative's 84th Annual Meeting was March 4. | VEC PHOTO

84th ANNUAL MEETING VEC hosts another successful meeting

COOPERATIVES are guided by seven principles that are the foundation of our organization. Principle #2 is Democratic Member Control, which was on full display at our annual meeting. Members from across our service territory gathered to take part in cooperative business as a community – a cooperative community.

The 84th annual meeting of Vigilante Electric Cooperative, Inc. (VEC) was called to order by Cheyenne Garrison, VEC board president, on March 4th at the Beier Auditorium at the University of Montana-Western in Dillon, Montana. Garrison chaired the annual meeting and started by welcoming attendees and introducing special guests.

As part of a long-standing tradition, Trustee Norm Tebay presented the invocation. He was joined by the Montana Youth Challenge Academy Color Guard

presenting our nation's flag and the flag of the state of Montana. In what can be described as inspirational, Norm led the near 300 attendees in *America the Beautiful*.

After all of the formalities were completed, Garrison discussed the challenges faced by VEC. She touched on the work-related issues created by the pandemic, as well as supply chain and equipment shortages. She discussed the worsening drought conditions and wild-fire danger within our service territory, noting last summer's Deep Creek Fire that destroyed 3.5 miles of distribution line, and left affected members without power for 10 days.

Rates are always a topic of interest, and Garrison addressed this topic from

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VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND GENERAL MANAGER

Cheyenne Garrison,
President

Dist. #5
Wise River/Silver Bow/Melrose

Andy Johnson,
Vice President

Dist. #6
Dillon North/Glen

Tom Mitchell,
Sec./Treas.

Dist. #8
Dillon South/Grant

Norm Tebay, Trustee

Dist. #1
Cardwell/Whitehall/Three Forks

Dean Hanson, Trustee

Dist. #2
Silver Star/Waterloo

Tom Helm, Trustee

Dist. #3
Townsend/N. Helena/
Lump Gulch

Colt High, Trustee

Dist. #4
Twin Bridges/Point of Rocks

Dean Peterson, Trustee

Dist. #7
Jackson/Wisdom

Allen Martinell, Trustee

Dist. #9
Dell/Lima

Rollie Miller,
General Manager

MEETING

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the board's perspective. While VEC has the lowest rates in the state, our current Bonneville Power Administration contract expires in 2028. She reassured members that the VEC board and management are actively researching the best options for future power supply.

She concluded her remarks by noting that the board has recently had meetings with local legislators to discuss issues facing our organization, and that they will soon be conducting a strategic planning session to analyze current data, prioritize needs and put a plan together to address these needs.

The meeting continued with Secretary Tom Mitchell presenting the financial report for 2021. The numbers that Mitchell reviewed were in last month's *Rural Montana* Magazine. Mitchell noted that VEC's financial position remains strong and stable, and that we experienced record sales for the year, which was a factor in providing another year-end rebate to the membership. He concluded with comments about the retirement of \$890,000 in capital credits in 2021.

Manager Rollie Miller spoke about this year's theme of "The Challenge of Change," adding depth to comments made earlier. Miller emphasized the number of new services in 2021, which nearly doubled our average, and that not only does VEC have the lowest rates in the state, but also some of the lowest in the country. He expects that VEC will likely maintain the current rate structure for another two years.

Rollie then discussed the proposed breaching of the four lower Snake River dams. They play a vital role in keeping VEC's rates low while providing clean and renewable hydroelectric energy. This is an important battle and we have to ensure that these dams are not breached.



VEC Manager Rollie Miller, left and Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association CEO Gary Weins address the audience at Vigilante's 84th Annual Meeting. | **VEC PHOTOS**

Miller stated that safety is, and always will be, VEC's number one priority. He noted that VEC has had no recordable accidents in nearly six years, which is unprecedented for our organization. He also discussed the new dispatch service that VEC is using, which adds an extra layer of safety for our linemen and enhanced service to our membership.

Miller concluded with a discussion of our Safety Roundup program. VEC recently donated Safety Roundup funds to the Broadwater School District for the installation of a security light at one of the school district's remote bus stops. Miller also presented a Safety Roundup check for \$1,200 to the Lima School District to aid with the implementation of a mental health/suicide prevention program in the middle and high schools.

This year, we had two members request the opportunity to speak. Peter Reiss, a VEC member living in Broadwater County, presented his views against the breaching of the Lower Snake River dams. His career in aviation and aviation security provides him with a unique perspective on how a breach could affect event preparedness and energy-grid security. Beaverhead County Commissioner John Jackson thanked VEC for its assistance with setting up a flagpole at the Mountain View Cemetery in Dillon.

The next business on the agenda was trustee elections. Trustees serve three-year terms to ensure at least six experienced trustees at all times. Nominations occur at the district

meetings, with the election taking place at the annual meeting. This year's nominees were, from District #1, Norm Tebay (incumbent), from District #2, Dean Hanson (incumbent) and from District #6, Andy Johnson (incumbent). With all three incumbents running unopposed, unanimous ballots were cast for each.

Finally, we heard from Gary Wiens, CEO of the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA). Gary discussed the proposed breaching of the Lower Snake River dams. These dams are beneficial to our environment and our economy, and Gary encouraged members to reach out to their legislators and let them know of their opposition to the proposed breach.

Gary also discussed other legislative issues that MECA is working on, including legislation that would promote the development and implementation of wildfire mitigation plans as a means of limiting liability on fires started in the utility right-of-way, as well as a proposal for preventing the sage grouse from being placed on the endangered species list.

Overall, this meeting was a remarkable success. We would like to thank Gary for taking time out of his busy schedule to participate in our meeting, the event and food services at the University of Montana – Western for their efforts and all the vendors that donated door prizes.

Finally, we would like to thank all of the members that attended the meeting; you truly honored us with your presence. **RM**

Vigilante Electric names 11 leadership award winners

“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other”
 – John F. Kennedy

SINCE the early 1990s, Vigilante Electric Cooperative has supported member youth who embody this statement by offering scholarships to further their education and continue to develop as leaders. This year’s applicants for the VEC Leadership Award is a collection of students who have excelled not only in the classroom, but in the communities in which they live.

One of my favorite parts of my job is getting to review the applications for the leadership award and the Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. I always marvel at the quality of the applications, the varying aspects of the applicants’ involvement in their schools and community, and the high academic accomplishments achieved. In terms of the academic accomplishments, the 2022 applicants were quite remarkable.

The unique feature of our leadership award is that we pair it with the Montana Electric Cooperatives’ Association (MECA) Memorial Scholarship. Students can fill out one application and have the opportunity to win two scholarships. The top application received is forwarded to MECA for consideration for one of four memorial scholarships. This year we selected Daniel Martin’s application for consideration for the statewide scholarship.

On behalf of our organization, I would like to congratulate this year’s recipients and wish them well in their future endeavors. RM

WINNERS

The following are the recipients of the 2022 Vigilante Electric Cooperative Leadership Award:

- Treyton Anderson**
Beaverhead Co. High School
- Gracie Bravo**
Lima High School
- Evelyn Hansen**
Beaverhead Co. High School
- Samuel Konen**
Twin Bridges High School
- Daniel Martin**
Beaverhead Co. High School
- Colton Noyes**
Broadwater High School
- Lauryn Petersen**
Beaverhead Co. High School
- Marcus Sandall**
Beaverhead Co. High School
- Miranda Velasco**
Lima High School
- Connor Vezina**
Beaverhead Co. High School
- Zoey Wichens**
Broadwater High School

2022 YOUTH TOUR WINNERS

CONTINUING A REMARKABLE TRADITION



Gavin Garrison



Taryn Martinell

THE dictionary defines the word “knowledge” as facts, information and skills acquired by a person through experience or education. At Vigilante Electric Cooperative, our educational programs are designed to assist students in acquiring knowledge, and the best of these programs is the Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

The Youth Tour is organized by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Over the years, this program has evolved and grown from 400 students from 12 states in 1964, to more than 1,500 students and 250 chaperones from 44 states. During the week, participants tour the city and many of its historical treasures, visit with their state’s

congressional delegation, and participate in youth rallies and socials.



For the past two years, the Youth Tour was canceled because of the pandemic, but we are excited that this summer we will again send two outstanding representatives on the one-of-a-kind opportunity.

On June 18th, Gavin Garrison and Taryn Martinell will embark on their Youth Tour journey. Gavin is currently a junior at Beaverhead Co. High School and Taryn is a junior at Lima High School. We would like to congratulate Gavin and Taryn on their selection, and wish them a wonderful trip. We look forward to hearing about their adventures. It will be an experience that they will not soon forget. RM

WELL-DESERVED RECOGNITION

- APRIL 11 IS LINEWORKER APPRECIATION DAY
- APRIL 27 IS ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS DAY

FOR an organization such as ours to run effectively, it takes a team effort. At Vigilante Electric Cooperative we are blessed with a wonderful staff, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank our administrative professionals and our linemen for their time and dedication to our organization. During the month of April, we nationally recognize these individuals that constitute the heart and soul of organizations. Because of their efforts, we are able to keep the doors open for business and the power on.

Listed as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the U.S., lineworkers have to be available to work at any time of the day or night, work in the worst possible conditions and potentially work around the clock to restore power. At Vigilante Electric, our linemen are responsible for maintaining approximately 2,780 miles of lines across 10 counties.

America's electric cooperatives have designated the second Monday of April as National Lineman Appreciation Day. On April 11th, join us in thanking Tyler Arnio, Clint Begger, Jess Davidson, Andrew English, Vance Forsman, Joe Kidd, Zack Maershbecker, John Moos, Austyn Paulsen, Chuck Romero, Cody Tarter, Charles Wharton and Chase White for their outstanding service to our membership, and our organization.

"Electric linemen do not often receive the recognition they deserve," said Rollie Miller, general manager. "They work all hours of the day, often in hazardous conditions, to restore power to our communities. Our linemen, as well as linemen from across the nation, truly deserve this special day of recognition."

On April 27th, we join businesses across the country in celebration of Administrative Professionals Day. Like in most offices, these people work behind the scenes, but their function within our organization is vital. We would like to acknowledge and thank Jackie Clark, Emily May, Chelsey Hutchison and Paige Garrison for their efforts in making our office run effectively.

"I am very happy and proud to be working with all of the administrative professionals in our office," Rollie Miller said. "I am very proud of the accomplishments we have made as a team over the previous year. I hope you take time to thank these people when you see them next."

"This group of administrative professionals has over 35 years of combined experience with Vigilante Electric. They each bring a unique perspective to the table, which is essential to our company. It is a pleasure to work with this group of women," said Raquel Reno-Morast, office manager. RM



Whitehall Line Crew: Zack Maershbecker, Chuck Romero, Austyn Paulsen and Joe Kidd. | **VEC PHOTOS**



Dillon Line Crew: Vance Forsman, Jess Davidson, Charles Wharton, Cody Tarter, Tyler Arnio and Andrew English.



Townsend Line Crew: John Moos, Clint Begger and Chase White.



Administrative Staff: Chelsey Hutchison, Emily May, Paige Garrison and Jackie Clark. | **VEC PHOTO**