



Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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85TH ANNUAL MEETING



General Manager Rollie Miller addressing the attendees of Vigilante Electric's 85th Annual Meeting. | PHOTO BY ROD SIRING

COOPERATIVE SPIRIT ON FULL DISPLAY

The 85th Annual Meeting of Vigilante Electric Cooperative (VEC) took place on March 3rd at the Watson Training Center outside Townsend. This being the biggest event of our business year, a lot of time and effort goes into its planning.

The meeting was opened by Board President Cheyenne Garrison, welcoming attendees that included 134 registered memberships and several distinguished guests. Starting with this meeting, VEC provided a luck of the draw scholarship to an eligible senior who attended the meeting. Cheyenne presented this year's scholarship to Townsend High School senior Jonah Wishman.

When the parliamentary aspects were completed, annual reports were given, starting with the president's report. Cheyenne presented an overview of the board's

work in 2022, which included a recap of the strategic planning session the board and management team participated in. Strategic planning deals with topics such as load growth and rate structures, power supply, risks and succession planning.

Cheyenne's commentary continued with discussion of the fact that VEC has a very low turnover rate for trustees and employees. Curious as to why, she interviewed several trustees and employees about having such a strong bond to the organization. While the answers varied, much of it came down to the beauty of the cooperative business model and the people that VEC is associated with.

Next, Secretary Tom Mitchell presented the financial report. VEC had another good

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VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND GENERAL MANAGER

Andy Johnson,

President

Dist. #6

Dillon North/Glen

Tom Mitchell,

Vice President

Dist. #8

Dillon South/Grant

Norm Tebay,

Sec/Treas.

Dist. #1

Cardwell/Whitehall/Three Forks

Dean Hanson, Trustee

Dist. #2

Silver Star/Waterloo

John Moos, Trustee

Dist. #3

Townsend/N. Helena/Lump Gulch

Colt High, Trustee

Dist. #4

Twin Bridges/Point of Rocks

Cheyenne Garrison, Trustee

Dist. #5

Wise River/Silver Bow/Melrose

Dean Peterson, Trustee

Dist. #7

Jackson/Wisdom

Allen Martinell, Trustee

Dist. #9

Dell/Lima

Rollie Miller

General Manager

ANNUAL MEETING

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year in 2022. Revenues were good, despite the fact that expenses were up \$20,000 per month over 2021. He concluded by reporting that VEC retired \$860,000 in capital credits in 2022, and did a year end rebate of \$300,000.

Rollie Miller took the podium for the manager's report. This year's theme was "Focus Forward." In a prior meeting, he reflected on VEC's past and the groundwork laid for the cooperative. In his opening remarks, Rollie discussed moving forward and how issues of today impact VEC's future. He talked about dealing with record growth, and expanded the discussion on cost increases and lead times for equipment and materials. He also indicated a need to replace VEC's headquarters building, which was built in 1955.

Rollie then discussed VEC's rates, which are the lowest in the state and some of the lowest in the country. VEC manages to keep rates low through operational efficiency and proper management, but it all starts with VEC's power supply contract with Bonneville Power Administration. Rollie explained that the current contract expires in 2028, but we hope to have a new contract in place in the next few years.

Rollie's number-one priority for our organization has always been safety. He reported that VEC has had zero lost-time accidents in the last seven years. Our Safety Roundup program continues to thrive, with more than 800 members participating. He culminated his comments by presenting the latest Safety Roundup grant to Esther Lince with Twin Bridges Schools for the installation of vaping detectors.

A tradition at our annual meeting is to have the previous year's Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., participants discuss their experiences from the trip. Because of scheduling conflicts, neither of the 2022 participants could attend in person. Gavin Garrison, who was



PHOTOS BY PAIGE GARRISON

selected to represent Vigilante Electric on this tour, and was also selected by the Montana delegation to represent the state on the prestigious Youth Leadership Council (YLC), prepared a video presentation of his experiences on the tour.

Next came the elections for trustees. Secretary Mitchell reported on candidates who were nominated from each of the districts that were up for election. With the retirement of Tom Helm from District #3, two candidates were nominated, John Moos and Shirley Wilson. The District #8 nominee was Tom Mitchell, and from District #9, Allen Martinell was nominated.

Unanimous ballots were cast for Tom and Allen. For District #3, each candidate was given the opportunity to address the members before the vote was taken. John Moos was elected as the new trustee.

Our meeting concluded with comments from Mark Lambrecht, director of government relations for the Montana Electric Cooperatives'

Association (MECA). He discussed the house and Senate bills currently before the state Legislature relevant to co-ops, and what MECA was doing to advance cooperative interests.

Overall, this was an informative, productive meeting, with a common thread shared by most speakers. Earlier in this story, it was noted that District #3 Trustee Tom Helm was retiring from the board. As an organization, we join with those who expressed their gratitude toward Tom for his selfless service.

We would like to thank the Watson family for hosting this year's meeting, securing the side-by-sides we used to chaffer attendees and providing a wonderful meal. We would like to thank all the vendors that donated door prizes, and Mark Lambrecht for taking time out of his schedule to attend our meeting. Finally, we would like to thank the members who attended the meeting; you truly honored us with your presence. RM

2023 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

In an article on LinkedIn, Amit Nagpal wrote, “Learning is essential to our existence. Just like food nourishes our bodies, information and continued learning nourishes our minds. Lifelong learning is an indispensable tool for every career and organization.”

At Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we couldn't agree more.

As a cooperative, education is one of seven principles seen as a means for effectively contributing to the development of the cooperative. This is why we provide scholarship opportunities to the graduating seniors who live in households that receive power from Vigilante Electric.

Annually, we offer the Vigilante Electric Leadership Award to deserving seniors who are planning to advance their education by attending a college or a trade school. For the 2022-2023 academic year, we are proudly provid-

ing \$500 scholarships to the following students: Hunter Barnes, Beaverhead Co. High School*; Tyler Lagunes, Beaverhead Co. High School; Parker Puyear, Beaverhead Co. High School; Gavin Garrison, Beaverhead Co. High School*; Kaden Pittman, Beaverhead Co. High School; Cole Raymond, Beaverhead Co. High School*; Rickie Scott, Beaverhead Co. High School*; Sydney Forrey, Broadwater High School; Taryn Martinell, Lima High School; Zane Wendt, Lima High School; Lydia Kluin, Three Forks High School*; Luke Groeneweg, Three Forks High School; and Levi Wagner, Three Forks High School.

Additionally, because we are a member of the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA), our students can also apply for MECA's Memorial Scholarship. The asterisks indicate those students who also applied for the MECA scholarship.

Only one of these applications could be forwarded to our statewide association for consideration, and the application chosen by Vigilante Electric to submit belonged to Lydia Kluin from Three Forks.

This year, Vigilante Electric also offered a new scholarship opportunity at our annual meeting. We had a luck of the draw scholarship for students who are seniors planning on some post-secondary education in the 2023-24 academic year, and who attended the annual meeting. This year's luck of the draw scholarship went to Jonah Wishman from Townsend.

Vigilante Electric Cooperative would like to congratulate this year's scholarship winners and wish them the best in their future endeavors. We would like to especially thank Jonah Wishman for taking time out of his schedule to attend our annual meeting. RM

ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS DAY THANK YOU IS NOT ENOUGH

On April 26th, we join businesses across the nation in celebration of Administrative Professionals Day. At Vigilante Electric we are blessed to have four remarkable women that we want to recognize for the extraordinary work they do every day.

Each of our administrative professionals are tasked with individual functions that are critical to our operation, which they execute with remarkable efficiency. This team-oriented crew is willing and able to contribute and assist, regardless of the situation.

“I am truly proud and grateful for our team of administrative professionals. They make our jobs easier with the skills they bring to the job, and our days are made better by their strength of character and unique personalities,” said Rollie Miller, general manager.

“We are so fortunate to have a diverse group of employees. The wisdom of those who've worked here for many years coupled with the fresh perspective that our younger employees bring, is just a great combination that serves our cooperative and its members in the best possible way,” said Raquel Reno-Morast, office manager.



Pictured are Emily May, Paige Garrison, Jackie Clark and Chelsey Hutchison. | **PHOTO BY ROD SIRING**

While their efforts are appreciated every day, we would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for all they do to Jackie Clark, Emily May, Chelsey Hutchison and Paige Garrison. Joseph Addison once wrote “No one is more cherished in this world than someone who lightens that burden of another.”

From a grateful organization, thank you. RM

LINEWORKER APPRECIATION DAY

A TRIBUTE TO THOSE WHO KEEP THE POWER ON

AMERICA'S electric cooperatives have designated the second Monday of April as National Line Workers Appreciation Day. On April 10th, we proudly recognize our linemen for their dedication to our membership and their craft.

Year in and year out electric line work ranks as one of the most dangerous occupations. As a lineman, you're required to work in the proximity of high-voltage power lines, while working with awkward and heavy objects regardless of the weather or the time of day. No matter the circumstance, they answer the call.

"Being a lineman is not for everyone. It takes a special individual that has not only the physical strength to do the job but the mental acuity to do the work safely and efficiently. One that takes the initiative to complete individual tasks, but is also team oriented so that everybody goes home at night. We are truly fortunate to have the crew we have," said Rollie Miller, general manager.

"Having been a lineman for the better part of my career, I have a different perspective of these men. I know their dedication to each other, their work, and the members they serve is second to none. Being able to work around these guys that have this kind of character wired into them, and being able to call them friends makes work the kind of place I want to be," said Justin Bair, line superintendent.

We would like to thank Tyler Arnio, Clint Begger, Jess Davidson, Andrew English, Vance Forsman, Joe Kidd, Zach Maershbecker, Austyn Paulsen, Chuck Romerio, Cody Tarter, Charles Wharton and Chase White for all they do to keep the power on and our membership safe.



The Dillon crew: Jess Davidson, Andrew English, Vance Forsman, Tyler Arnio, Cody Tarter, and Charles Wharton | **PHOTO BY PAIGE GARRISON**



The Townsend crew: Clint Begger, Chase White, and Austyn Paulsen. | **PHOTO BY PAIGE GARRISON**



The Whitehall crew: Joe Kidd, Zach Maershbecker and Chuck Romerio. | **PHOTO BY PAIGE GARRISON**