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Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Preparing for VEC's 86th Annual Meeting in March

VIGILANTE Electric Cooperative is a Touchstone Energy cooperative, which means we are rooted in four core values: integrity, accountability, innovation and community. We live these core values every day, and this time of year brings accountability to the forefront. At the time of this publication, we will be making preparations for our 86th annual meeting. This year, our annual meeting will be back on the campus of the University of Montana – Western on March 8.

Vigilante Electric is a democratically controlled organization, and our annual meeting is the principle means by which members can participate and help guide the direction of their electric cooperative. One way this happens is through the election of representatives to the board of trustees, which happens at the annual meeting.

Vigilante Electric is exceptionally large geographically, so our service territory is divided into nine trustee 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.


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 expressed a desire to continue representing their respective districts. Nominations for the board of trustees are initially made at the district meetings, which are held in January; however, further nominations



Last year's annual meeting was a great success. This year's event is set for March 8.

can be made from the floor at the annual meeting.

The annual meeting is always informative and gives members the opportunity to learn about their cooperative from the people who lead it. Members hear about the challenges that we face in keeping the electric service reliable and the rates low. For electric cooperatives, the annual meeting is the most important event of our fiscal year.

So, mark the date on the calendar and join us on March 8, for our 86th annual meeting of members. Registration and the annual meeting will be held in the Beier Auditorium, followed by lunch served in the Lewis and Clark Room in Mathews Hall and the campus cafeteria. Registration time and the meeting agenda were finalized by the board of trustees at its January meeting, and will be included in the official notice mailed to every member this month. 

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE

BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND GENERAL MANAGER

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Dillon North/Glen

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Dist. #3

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Dist. #4

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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

Still true to our mission

AT Vigilante Electric Cooperative, our trustees and general manager are members, just like you. So, when it comes to rates, it is in everybody's best interest to keep costs down and rates low.

Rate structure design is complicated, but it is through proper rate design that we keep pace with our financial commitments. To ensure an impartial and fair assessment of our rates, we contract with a rate consultant to evaluate the impact of increases on our wholesale power costs for our various rate classifications, and what it will do to our bottom line.

In August 2023, we were notified by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) that our wholesale power cost was going to increase. BPA works on a two-year rate cycle. Its previous increase was in October 2021. At that time, this process showed that the existing rate structure and revenue flow would be adequate for the next two years, making the last time Vigilante Electric raised rates January 1, 2020.

As you are aware, our new rate

NEW RATE SCHEDULES

Rate Schedule A (Single Phase Service)

Base Charge \$28.00
All kWh @ 0.0631
KW Demand @ \$1/KW
Minimum Bill: \$40

Rate Schedule GS

THE HIGHER OF:

KVA Charge @ 1.10/KVA
OR
Demand Charge @ \$3.50/KW
All kWh @ \$0.6081

structure took effect January 1, and will be reflected in the January bill, which will be sent out around February 8. Please remember that this is a simple pass-through of our wholesale power cost increases that took effect October 1, 2023. We are not attempting to collect anything additional.

The impact of the rate modifications will vary by rate class. For residential

customers (single-phase), the increase will be a little more than 13 percent; for commercial accounts, the increase will be 15.7 percent. We will address changes in the irrigation rate later.

To deepen your understanding of how these rates could impact future usage, you simply need a statement from the past year. In that statement, you will find kilowatt hours and the highest 30-minute average demand for that rate period. For commercial (GS) accounts, you will find the kilowatt hours, KVA and KW. Use those numbers for a comparison with our new rates. (See box above.)

Our board and management team deliberated over this issue for several months, and have deemed this course of action the most prudent. Our strategic goal continues to be to treat all members in the most prudent and fair manner. We will do everything in our power to remain financially sound, while maintaining high levels of electric reliability. Even with this rate increase, we will still have one of the lowest rates in the state and some of the lowest in the nation. RM

WELL DESERVED SERVICE HONORS

EACH year, the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA) hosts its annual meeting in Great Falls. As part of the awards program, MECA honors cooperative trustees and employees for their years of dedicated service. This year, two of our own were recognized.

John Moos – 35 years

John came to work at Vigilante Electric Cooperative as a journeyman lineman in February 1988. John worked his entire career with us at our Townsend shop. In 2006, John became the area foreman. Upon his retirement in 2023, John contin-



John Moos



Rod Siring

ued to serve Vigilante Electric members as a district trustee.

Rod Siring – 25 years

Rod began his career with Vigilante Electric in November of 1997, as the member services representative. Rod has worked his entire career in our Dillon office, where he manages our energy-efficiency programs and is part of our communications team.

On behalf of Vigilante Electric, we would like to congratulate and thank these men for their service and dedication to our organization. RM

UNDERSTANDING DEMAND

Start with understanding how your home uses energy

WHEN this publication reaches our membership, we will be nearing the first billing cycle that reflects our new rates and the addition of a demand element to the single-phase rate class. While we know that there is apprehension associated with this, understanding how your home uses electricity will go a long way in how you manage your demand for electricity.

Electrical demand is the measurement of the amount of energy needed at one point in time. It is the rate at which you are using electricity. The more electricity you are consuming at any given time, the higher your demand charge will be. For our billing, we are using the highest 30-minute average during a billing cycle for the demand charge.

To take a generic view of home energy usage and demand, we need to understand that the biggest demand comes from appliances that convert electricity into heat. Understanding how our homes are heated, how we heat water, the appliances that convert electricity to heat and how many appliances we are using at one given time will help us better understand our energy consumption.

According to research, heating our homes is where the highest portion of our energy dollars are spent. Regardless of how space heating occurs, these systems must work properly to minimize how often the unit cycles on and off.

Have electric forced-air systems inspected annually. Keeping the filters clean and replacing them regularly will help to improve your system efficiency. Make sure the ductwork is clean and all vents are open and unobstructed. Be mindful that forced-air systems have an electric motor and fan to distribute warm air throughout the home. Keep all baseboard heaters clean and clear of



obstructions. If you use space heaters, remember they are not designed for whole-house heating and using them to do so will drastically increase your energy usage.

Regardless of the type of heating system, make sure the thermostats are working properly and are properly set. Keep your settings as low as comfortably possible. It is estimated that you can save as much as 3 percent for each degree you turn your thermostat down during the winter. Programmable thermostats are a real benefit.

Water heaters are another large source of energy consumption. They are used year-round and are a major component in everyday household functions such as laundry, bathing and dishes. Regardless of the energy source, proper temperature settings and routine maintenance will help your

water heater run more efficiently. A temperature setting of 120 degrees is sufficient for most people. Have your water heater inspected to ensure the elements are working properly, and have the sediment drained from the tank annually.

It is also important to note that most modern dishwashers, and some modern washers, do not rely on the water heater for hot water but instead have their own heating element. This, too, has the potential to add to your energy demand.

There is also a human element that needs to be considered. The more people in the household, the more laundry, baths, dishes etc. occur. Everyone's heating preferences and water temperatures will vary based on their specific needs and preferences. Finally, it is important to understand that all the functions noted in this article not only have the potential to overlap, but some overlap is unavoidable. For example, you are doing laundry, when one load is finished you put that load in the dryer (which is a large electric load when running) and start another load in the washer. Meanwhile, the heater may kick on and you may be doing some other chores such as vacuuming or dishes. All these things happening simultaneously will result in a larger pull of energy, therefore increasing your demand.

While all of this may seem daunting, keep it as simple as possible. Your biggest demand for electricity will come from items that convert electricity to heat. Ensure these systems are working properly, and make sure you use the proper thermostat and temperature settings. Take steps and be mindful that you don't have too much going on at one time, and if you have questions for us, don't hesitate to call. RM

Youth Tour winners announced

CONGRATULATIONS TO KALEN MARTINELL AND HUNTER WIGEN

By **ROD SIRING**

SINCE 1964, high school students from across the country have gathered in our nation's capital to take part in a special event, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. Vigilante Electric's (VEC) participation in this event began in 2003, and we have been fortunate in the quality of the individuals who have represented us on this tour.

The Youth Tour is special to me, as I have served as a chaperone on two occasions. It is an incredible experience because the history in and around Washington, D.C., is rich and vibrant, and the tour is so well organized.

The 2024 Youth Tour begins on June 14, and we are proud to announce this year's selected participants: Kalen Martinell and Hunter Wigen.

Kalen is a sophomore attending Lima High School, and is the son of members Heath and Kiley Martinell. Kalen is the third member of his family to be selected to attend. Hunter is also a sophomore, he attends Beaverhead County High School and is the son of member Breanne Smith.

Each year, applicants are selected



based on how they answer an essay question. The question this year was: If you could have dinner with a prominent Washington, D.C., figure, whether from the present or past, who would that person be and why? What would you ask them?

In the past, we have reprinted our winners' essays in this publication, but due to space constraints, we will just do excerpts of their answers. Their essays in their entirety are posted on our website.



Kalen Martinell

If I had the opportunity to sit down with a prominent Washington, D.C., figure, I would choose George Washington. As the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army and

our nation's first president, he had to make a lot of tough decisions that could have potentially led to the demise of our young nation.

I admire George Washington for his faith and his willingness to stand firm for what he believed was the best course for his country. His character and leadership qualities were extraordinary, and it

would be a privilege to be able to have an actual conversation with him.



Hunter Wigen

People hear Benjamin Franklin and picture the man who famously sits centerstage on the one-hundred-dollar bill. Benjamin's role in the history of this country is much more valuable than this.

Imagining Franklin, I see a confident and intelligent man who embodies the core values of this country. Through years of scientific research and political speech, Franklin became a learned man with an intriguing mind. I believe he could talk for hours to the benefit of this world. For these reasons, I would choose to meet him.

After judging the applications, we selected the best to be part of a statewide competition, with the winner's trip to Washington, D.C., paid for by the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association (MECA). This year, we forwarded Hunter Wigen's application and essay for consideration.

We would like to congratulate Kalen and Hunter on their selection for the Youth Tour, and we look forward to hearing about their adventures. RM

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Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 848

Total Contributions: \$24,572.88

To apply, contact our office at
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An online application is available at www.vec.coop.

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