

Co-op changes annual meeting date

by [Eva K Österreich](#) | April 1, 2013 | Filed under: [News Uncategorized](#)

At the March 28 meeting of the Socorro Electric Cooperative, the annual meeting date was changed and the board determined which bylaws would be brought to the members/owners at that meeting.

In January, the board voted to schedule the annual meeting date for May 18, a Saturday. But at March's meeting, the board rescinded that decision and reset the date for May 15, a Wednesday.

Trustee Donald Wolberg was the motion initiator.

Wolberg said the meeting should be on Wednesday because people have indicated to him they would prefer a weekday meeting. There is so much going on during weekends at that time, weekends are too busy.

He also said nine other New Mexico co-ops also have weekday meetings and find they are more popular. No one is denied their democratic right to votes since the co-op has mail-in ballots, he said.

"Several of us (board members) have major conflicts," Wolberg said.

Trustee Anne Dorough pointed out mail-in ballots do not count toward a quorum so they do not provide full representation.

"Holding a meeting on a weekday, when people have to work, when children have to go to school, when parents are busy with their weekday schedules is a big departure from the fact we have always held our meetings on Saturdays," Trustee Charlie Wagner said. "For that reason, I don't think that it's a good idea unless you just don't want a quorum at that meeting."

Wagner said he thinks the purpose of the motion is against the interest of the cooperative and asked the chair to not allow the motion.

Chairman Luis Aguilar said he will allow the motion.

Three trustees voted to change the date to May 15, three voted against the change. Aguilar had to provide a tie-breaker vote and voted in favor of the change.

At the January meeting, when the same tie-breaker came up, Aguilar had voted in favor of the Saturday meeting. His was the only vote that changed.

The annual meeting will be held Wednesday, May 15, with registration and voting beginning at 1 p.m. and the meeting to begin at 3 p.m.

Bylaw committee suggestions

The co-op's bylaw committee met several times in February and March. The committee had suggested in January the board resubmit the 14 bylaw amendments recommended last year that the voters had turned down at the 2012 meeting. The committee also recommended not to include the bylaws suggested during the District V meeting.

Dorough made a motion to rescind the previously adopted motion to resubmit all the

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bylaw suggestions member-owners rejected at last year's meeting.

Dorough said she questioned the wisdom of reintroducing 14 amendments to the bylaws that were already rejected by the membership five to one at last year's meeting.

"There is a perception by the membership that the board does not listen to their wishes," she said.

Wolberg said he got a contrary perception from members he has spoken to.

"When I explained to folks ... they said, 'Darn, we need to correct those spelling errors,'" Wolberg said. "Darn, we need to correct the fact that we don't do satellites any more." Wolberg said it is the responsibility of the board to conduct business in appropriate ways, formulate policies that have "substantive meaning," bring the cooperative to standards of other cooperatives and similar businesses, and "it's important to get with the year 2013."

"We are talking about the bylaws and not about the policies," Wagner said. "It is the members in this organization that have the right to change bylaws, and the board does not. And the members have spoken and have declined the 14 amendments you are trying to offer them now."

Wagner said what needs to be done now is to concentrate on the motions made by District V to change the bylaws.

Wolberg insisted the bylaws are archaic and need to be changed.

The motion to rescind failed with only Dorough and Wagner voting yes and the other board members voting against. The 15 bylaws members voted against at the 2012 meeting will once more be on the agenda to be voted on at the 2013 meeting.

The bylaws amendments recommended by District V members, however, will not be on the ballot to vote on. They will only be on the annual meeting agenda to be "considered."

During the bylaw committee report section of last week's meeting, Wolberg said the committee met several times to try to understand what was recommended by District V.

"Some things remained contradictory, confusing and, frankly, violated state law," Wolberg said.

He said the committee would recommend the District V amendments be returned to the district to work on.

He then turned the meeting to co-op attorney Lorna Wiggins, who had prepared a memo on the issue.

She quoted the Rural Electric Cooperative Act, stating the suggested amendments have to be brought to the annual meeting for consideration but said "consideration" does not mean they have to be voted on at that time.

"That bylaw is not to be read as permitting inclusion," Wiggins said.

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