

Co-op meeting delayed

http://www.dchieftain.com/news/co-op-meeting-delayed/article_af3b6da4-ac29-5a6b-bcb6-38c792d62bb6.html
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The annual members meeting of the Socorro Electric Cooperative took place May 15 at Finley Gym in Socorro, and the board took many pauses to consult with New Mexico parliamentarian Adam Hathaway.

At 3 p.m. after introductions and an opening address by SEC general manager Joseph Herrera, board of trustees president Luis Aguilar said there are 9,528 members of the co-op and 286 are needed for a quorum.

He said 185 mail-in ballots were returned and 396 people voted on site at the poles, thus creating a quorum for the meeting.

During committee reports, trustee Donald Wolberg began a PowerPoint presentation as the bylaw committee report. He began by explaining the electric co-op system and pointed out most of the co-ops in New Mexico have more than five people on their boards.

SEC's members had voted for a five-member board at a previous annual meeting and, while currently there are still seven members, ultimately there will be five as attrition takes out trustees in obsolete positions.

The membership applauded when Wolberg said there are only five members on SEC's board but he went on imply there should be more.

"The problem here is that, with the low number of trustees, is that no member of the SEC board will ever have an influential place on national or regional cooperative board groupings because they can't be there long enough to know what's happening," Wolberg said. "We will never have a significant place at any table."

Wolberg went on to say SEC is bigger than eight states in terms of area, has 41,000 power poles and 3,500 miles of line taken care of by 34 staffers, 10 of whom do the job.

Then Wolberg began addressing bylaw change resolutions introduced and approved by District V members during their district meeting.

He started on the first one to explain why it should not be passed during the next annual meeting.

Wolberg was stopped from the floor by audience member James Lear claiming "point of order."

"It seems to me this should be taken up under new business," Lear said.

Aguilar said it was permitted because it was the secretary's report.

Arf Epstein, from the floor, raised another point of order.

"This is not a report," he said. "This is a partisan discussion about whether certain proposed bylaws should be passed. It is not a report, a report does not say 'this is what you should do for this election.'"

Aguilar again insisted Wolberg was sharing a report.

Trustee Charles Wagner appealed Aguilar's decision to the assembly; his appeal was seconded. But the discussion continued to go back and forth until Georgette Grey stood to talk for a minute.

"A report does not contain editorializing viewpoints," Grey said. "It is a straightforward ,factual statement and does not have any persuasive argument attached to it. If the report can be stated that way, we want to hear it, if not it is not a report."

Aguilar then asked for a vote.

"All those in favor of sustaining the decision of the chair say 'Aye,'" he said.

No one said "Aye." Numerous members cried "No," when he asked for nos.

Wolberg was not allowed to continue with the presentation.

During the treasurer's report trustee Leo Cordova said the co-op has \$69,856,681 in total assets; \$69,856,681 in liabilities; \$25,145,810 in revenue; \$23,240,150 total expenses and a net income of \$1,905,651 for the year.

Leo Cordova, Dave Wade and Anne Dorough reported on their district meetings, thanking the members who elected them and saying members are welcome to call them anytime on any concerns they have.

The elections results were read by Ernie Marquez of Election Services. All but three of the 17 resolutions on the ballot failed by approximately 1 to 4 ratio.

Resolutions 3, 5 and 6 passed, also by an approximately 4 to 1 vote. These were the items voted for by member/owners at the 2012 annual meetings.

Resolution 3 makes district meetings annual; Resolution 5 says mail-in ballots will count as part of the quorum; and Resolution 6 says each trustee from each district will appoint one election official to validate the mail-in process and two alternates will be appointed by the board.

When new business was brought up, Aguilar said it was time to bring up the resolutions of District V.

Wagner interrupted saying he had not been allowed to make his district report and Aguilar allowed him to speak.

Wagner said redistricting had been accomplished as the members had wanted, but, the redistricting was done in secret.

He also talked about the process of amending bylaws, claiming the co-op is violating federal law by not allowing the members to change bylaws at the annual meetings at the time the amendments are discussed.

Aguilar announced at this point he believed there was no quorum left at the meeting;he asked the staff for a count. Wagner asked that a third part yadministrator perform the count. Co-op staff members proceeded to walk among the audience and count the bands on people's wrists indicating votes. The chairman did not ask people to raise their hands so the bands could be seen.

Wagner pointed out the bylaw that had just passed required mail-in ballots to count as part of the quorum.

Aguilar announced the meeting was still in quorum. A discussion continued with members coming up to the microphone with various concerns. A member requested District V resolutions be voted on in totality since everyone had a hand out.

Co-op attorney Lorna Wiggins stood up and said she had been asked to explain a quorum. She said the new bylaw requiring mail-in ballots to count as a quorum does not state that the ballots count as in-person votes and thus there is not a quorum present. She pointed out the District V recommended amendments were not included in the meeting notice and therefore can't be voted on during the meeting.

Wagner pointed out it was the management of the co-op who knew those resolutions should be in the notice of the meeting and they made the decision not to include those bylaws.

An audience member pointed out that there were people at the meeting who were not counted because they were not wearing a wrist band because they had already voted by mail-in ballot.

The parliamentarian described the kinds of motions that could be made without a quorum and one of them is continue the meeting on a later date. Such a motion was made and voted for.

The meeting was adjourned to be re-set on the second Saturday of June and held at the Macey Center at New Mexico Tech if possible.