

Members approve SEC bylaws

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by [John Larson](#) | April 30, 2015 | Filed under: [News](#)



The much ballyhooed new set of bylaws for Socorro Electric Cooperative were adopted Saturday at a special members meeting at Finley Gym by a vote of 953-797, a 54- to 46-percent margin.

The cooperative's Board President Anne Dorough, who led the meeting, was quick to respond favorably to the vote.

"I want to thank the members of the Socorro Electric Cooperative for providing the Board with a workable set of tools with which to govern the cooperative," Dorough said. "I think these bylaws are off to a good start."

Before announcing the results of the vote, Dorough reported that 407 members were registered at the meeting, which was 44 percent more than the 282 that was needed for a quorum. Three percent of the membership – 9,386 as of Friday, April 24 – was needed for a quorum.

In breaking down the numbers, of the 407 registered at the meeting only 371 cast ballots.

"The difference for that is because 36 of those registered had already voted by mail," said SEC's Executive Assistant Eileen Latasa. "They registered to meet quorum requirements," she added.

Of those voting at the meeting, 151 voted for and 220 were against.

Of the mail-in ballots, it was 802 for and 577 against.

Dorough commented after the meeting that "1,750 members exercised their right of democratic control and participated in this decision. I hope (they) will continue to stay engaged in this manner."

The passage of the bylaw package will necessitate the election of two additional board trustees and some minor redistricting. The most notable change is District III, which will encompass the Socorro city limits and be represented by three trustees. The other four districts will retain their current one trustee per district.

Socorro Mayor Ravi Bhasker said he was pleased with the results.

"It's good that the city will have its own district again and be represented by three trustees," Bhasker said. "This is something we can work with and move forward."

Another departure from the previous bylaws the five districts will not have equal numbers of members. As an example, while District I (Polvadera, Veguita) has 1,973 members, District III (City of Socorro) will have 3,587. Likewise, District II (Magdalena, Alamo) has 1,201; District IV (Lemitar, San Antonio, Bingham) has 1,222; and District V (Datil, Quemado) has 1,995.

In concert with the new district layout and number of trustees, the bylaws allow members to vote for all trustees, regardless of district boundaries.

According to the bylaws' framer, consultant Aaron Christensen, among other things, the implementation of at-large trusteeships is intended to encourage trustees to serve and be responsive to all members without regard to the member's residency; and allow any and all members, regardless of residence, to campaign and vote against any sitting trustee who is perceived to be acting contrary to the best interests of the co-op.

A feeling of distrust appeared to continue among members of the self-titled "reform group," spearheaded by District II trustee Charlie Wagner. An outburst by one member during an otherwise orderly meeting included accusations of malfeasance of office toward three board trustees.

After adjournment, Wagner said it was conceivable that a lawsuit could be filed questioning the legality of Saturday's meeting. Wagner has argued at board meetings that the special board meeting to schedule the special membership meeting was not properly advertised.

In another objection to the "up or down" vote Saturday, Wagner said in his opinion members should have been able to amend the wording of several of the new bylaws before approving or disapproving the package as a whole.

Wagner also argued that the special bylaws meeting should have been scheduled on a date after the annual meeting on May 16 so that proposed bylaw changes could be heard by the entire membership.

"There were 60 people at the last District II meeting and the bylaw changes that were approved at that meeting were invalidated by three people," he said. "I don't call that democratic control."

The three to which Wagner referred are his fellow trustees Dorrough, Leo Cordova and Dave Wade. Those three were the majority in the vote to choose April 25 as the date for the special members meeting. Wagner and trustee Melissa Amaro cast the no votes.

"While those resolutions passed at district meetings which propose amendments to the old bylaws are no longer valid, general resolutions directing the board to take action will be addressed at the annual meeting if a quorum is present," Dorrough told El Defensor Chieftain.

She also laid out the timetable to elect two more trustees for the Socorro district.

"We have 120 days to put together a Credentials and Elections Committee made up of at least seven cooperative members whose duty will be to oversee the election for the two new trustees in District III," she said. "We will have more information at the Annual Members' Meeting on May 16 to be held at Macey Center."

Registration for that meeting will start at 1 p.m. and the business meeting will begin at 3 p.m.

The regular monthly board meeting, normally held on the fourth Wednesday of the month, has been rescheduled to convene immediately following the Annual Members' Meeting. The agendas will be available 72 hours prior to the meetings.