

Wednesday, December 23, 2009

Electric Co-op Hires Attorney Number Three

*By John Severance
Mountain Mail*

SOCORRO -- The Socorro Electric Co-op called an emergency meeting Monday night and what it discussed was not entirely clear.

Trustee president Paul Bustamante called the meeting to order and Leroy Anaya moved that the co-op go straight into executive session to discuss attorneys for the co-op. The motion was immediately seconded by Herman Romero.

Trustee Charlie Wagner said, "Can we discuss this?"

Anaya responded, "It's a personnel matter. It's cut and dry."

Wagner then asked, "Do we have an attorney?"

Bustamante said, "I don't know. That's why we are going to executive session."

About a dozen people left the proceeding, including three incoming Trustees who were elected in October but will not take office until Jan. 1.

People gathered outside the closed door. Then co-op general manager Polo Pineda came out the door and said, "They instructed me to tell you to go all the way outside."

One of the trustees then yelled, "Tell them to get the hell out."

Outside, Donald Wolberg, who will be a Trustee on Jan. 1 along with Priscilla Mauldin and Luis Aguilar, was visibly upset.

"It irritates me greatly," Wolberg said. "This is an open personnel matter."

Wolberg made a plea to members to attend the general meeting next year.

"The annual meeting is going to be important," Wolberg said. "It is vital for the public to show up because there are some important resolutions that have to be discussed."

Wolberg and the two other incoming Trustees were not informed of the meeting and have been kept in the dark about the co-op's business.

"It's just a matter of common courtesy," Wolberg said.

Fifteen minutes later, trustee Harold Baca walked out of the meeting.

Wagner then came out and said, "They are supposed to tell you that they are out of executive session. They passed a motion to hire another attorney."

When asked who it was, Wagner said, "It's a secret."

That means the co-op now will have the services of three attorneys.

The next meeting is scheduled for Dec. 28 and the new attorney is scheduled to be present.

One mystery was solved, though. According to the minutes of the Nov. 16 meeting, the board adjourned to executive session at the request of attorney Joanne Aguilar. That was the meeting that the Socorro police were called to because of an altercation between Wagner and Wade.

When the board returned to regular session, a motion was made and seconded to employ Aguilar as counsel for the SEC on issues involving contracts, employment and regulatory matters. A motion was made and passed to utilize the services of Paul Kennedy for matters involving redistricting, bylaw and policy issues.