

Co-op to vet trustee candidates; intervenes in Tri-State case

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http://www.dchieftain.com/news/co-op-to-vet-trustee-candidates-intervenes-in-tri-state/article_3b45ac22-4840-11ea-bf26-0f3d7e1e4d60.html

With two trustee positions up for election at this year's annual meeting of Socorro Electric Cooperative, the Board of Trustees approved at last week's meeting which members will be sitting on the Credentials and Election Committee.

Positions open include one representative in District 2, including Magdalena and Alamo, currently held by Jim Nelson, who was appointed to the position in December 2018 following the resignation of Judith Holcomb.

As well as one position in District 3 within the city limits of Socorro. The position currently is held by Luis Aguilar, who was elected to that position in 2017.

The two trustee positions were announced in the January Enchantment magazine. Those interested co-op members had until last Friday to declare their candidacies.

Named to the vetting committee are Neil Cordova and Sue Moran for District I, John Lee for District II, Peter Gonzales, Priscilla Mauldin, Charles Zimmerly, and Milton Ulibarri for District III, Dennis Harris for District IV, and Bruce Brown for District V.

The committee will decide if a candidate meets the qualifications as outlined in the bylaws:

A Trustee or Trustee candidate must:

- Be a natural person;
- Have the capacity to enter legally binding contracts;
- While a Trustee, and during the five years immediately prior to becoming a Trustee, not have been convicted of a felony, or pleaded guilty to a felony;
- Within three years of becoming a Trustee, and unless excused by the Board for good cause, a Trustee is expected to receive a Trustee's Certificate or similar certification from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association;
- While a Trustee, and during the years immediately prior to becoming a Trustee, not have been employed as an employee of the Cooperative; or been engaged contractually of a firm that contracts with the Cooperative as a prime or subcontractor;
- Unless excused for good cause by the Board or Members, a Trustee shall attend at least two-thirds of all Board meetings during any calendar year; and
- Comply with any other reasonable qualifications determined by the Board, which shall specifically include but not be limited to refraining from engaging in discriminatory or harassing conduct with respect to a Member or other person's race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, veteran status or any other category subject to legal protection under any applicable Federal or State law.

Elections will be held at the annual meeting on April 18.

Tri-State unrest in Colorado

In other action, General Manager Joseph Herrera discussed an issue in dispute between Tri-State Generation and Transmission and the Colorado Public Utilities Commission. The issue concerns two of Tri-State's cooperatives in Colorado; United Power and La Plata Electric Association, both of which plan to sever their relationship with the "cooperative of cooperatives."

It is the most recent sign of unrest among the G&T provider's cooperative members, which are seeking cheaper and cleaner power supplies. This comes in the wake of the recent departures of Kit Carson Cooperative out of Taos and Delta-Montrose Electric Association in Colorado.

Tri-State's largest member, United Power with 95,000 members, has asked Colorado regulators to help set a fair charge to exit the utility's service, rather than letting Tri-State charge what it wants.

Separately, La Plata Electric Association, which has 34,000 members, has also filed a complaint with the Colorado PUC asking regulators to determine its exit charge. According to La Plata, it requested an estimate from Tri-State four months ago but has not received the information.

"In response to the United Power and La Plata Energy filings with the CPUC, Tri-State recently filed a motion to dismiss their complaints because they do not believe that the CPUC has jurisdiction over these matters. Instead, Tri-State claims that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has jurisdiction over their rates, even though their initial application was rejected in October for being deficient and incomplete," claims United Power on its website.

With this in mind, Herrera said Tri-State has asked New Mexico co-ops to intervene in the Colorado PUC case with La Plata Electric Association and United Power.

He said if the Trustees approve of intervening, it will give SEC "a seat at the negotiating table.

"Their (United and La Plata) total loads represent about 25 percent of Tri-State's service," Herrera said. "They're asking the Colorado Public Utilities Commission to determine the buyout numbers from Tri-State," rather than letting Tri-State set its own price for the buyout.

"It's a pretty big deal because if they get a good deal, they could pay less than what Tri-State needs, and the rest of the membership would be left holding the remainder of the bag," he said. "If the Colorado PUC alone determines the cost of their buyouts, that would take everybody out of the negotiation. So, Tri-State has asked its New Mexico co-ops if we could intervene.

"It would show that we have a vested interest in what happens," Herrera said