

We need to explore clean renewable energy

Ward McCartney letter to the Chieftain 12/3/18 -

http://www.dchieftain.com/opinion/we-need-to-explore-clean-renewable-energy/article_a37c202a-f349-11e8-ac15-df94bed276d7.html

I recently attended a Socorro Co-op rate increase meeting in Tierra Grande. After Joseph Herrera gave his presentation, I asked why Socorro Co-op hadn't followed Kit Carson co-ops lead and buyout our contract with Tri-State generation and transmission. Also I asked why Socorro Electric Co-op hasn't at least installed the 5 percent renewable energy that it could with the Tri-State contract.

Manager Herrera's response to the audience was that Kit Carson was in financial difficulties with a 28 percent revenue to expense in balance.

I was unaware of this fact, so I called Bob Bresnahan a week later to ask him what the heck was going on at Kit Carson Co-op. Bob's a board member and a member of Taos Renewables.

In order to go solar with 35 one megawatt solar rays around the three County area that Kit Carson services they had to install Broadband fiber optics to interconnect and control the 35 separate solar arrays. In doing so, Kit Carson opened up the high-speed fiber optics network to its Co-op membership expecting about 4,000 members to sign up. So far 7,000 Co-op members now get high-speed internet service and they're expecting another 4,000 subscribers as the construction toward the 35 solar arrays continues. With a completion date of 2022, providing a hundred percent renewable daytime solar energy to Kit Carson's 29,000 Co-op members.

I asked Bob about the looming rate increases that manager Herrera's had alluded to. As Bob explained it's in the books. While co-ops report expenses and that includes the fiber optics installation cost, they only report income from providing electricity to co-op members. So the 7,000 high-speed internet subscribers paying around \$60 per month or \$400,000 a month wasn't in the report.

In fact Bob said while Kit Carson is struggling a bit because it's not selling as much electricity to its members, attributed to LED light bulbs, it doesn't anticipate raising its rates and in fact has about three years left to pay off the \$37 million Tri-State contract buyout.

After which Kit Carson's Co-op members will see a \$6 million rate decrease. Hey that's savings each co-op member \$207 a year.

I know I'll be protesting the Socorro Co-op board's decision to raise our rates. The rate increases placed the majority of the increase on those in our community who are least able to afford it.

The board could have followed Kit Carson's example, thus saving Socorro Co-op members around \$4 million a year without having to raise our rates. However I need at least 24 other Co-op members willing to take the time to file their rate increase protest with a public regulation Commission, the PRC. Socorro co-op needs to install clean renewable energy not only to save the co-op members money, but clean, local job producing renewable energy would also help to address the fossil-fuel driven climate change disasters we're now experiencing.