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THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 2010

EDITORIAL: Members can not show apathy toward the SEC

By John Severance

Editor

It's been a week since the Socorro Electric Cooperative unveiled proposed bylaw changes on its web site (<http://www.socorroelectric.com>).

On Saturday, the SEC will hold an informational meeting at Finley Gym for its member-owners to discuss the upcoming resolutions that will be voted on April 17 at the annual meeting at the same facility.

Trustee Donald Wolberg, who attended all the committee meetings and has been an advocate for trying to turn around the SEC trustee image, said the process was pure when it came to the discussion and the wording of the proposed resolutions.

Wolberg insisted there have been no shenanigans or ulterior motives when the committee met to come up with the board-sponsored resolutions. And Wolberg also is well aware that member-owners may have other views besides the status quo and what members in District 3 and District 5 passed.

The process might have been pure and I am all for democracy and giving people

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choices.

But it does not take much brainpower to realize that the majority of the SEC trustees would like nothing better than to keep business as usual.

The biggest issue that members will vote on will concern the number of trustees on the board. Originally, the two options were to keep the same amount at 11 or a member-sponsored resolution of having five trustees run the co-op. That sounds simple enough. But the board decided to give the members two more options. The other two options would be to have seven trustees or nine trustees.

With two more options, that would give the SEC a better chance of splitting the vote and keeping the status quo.

The board did the same thing with the trustee compensation issue. Originally, the two choices were for no change and the member-sponsored resolution called for a \$10,000 limit on trustees and \$15,000 for the president. The board added an Option C, which would be a \$20,000 limit for trustees and a \$25,000 for the president.

But here is the real kicker that indicates to me the majority of the SEC trustees want to keep things the same.

When it comes to the resolution about how the board conducts its business, check out Option A, which is a board-sponsored resolution.

It reads: "First item of business at meetings of the board shall allow members and the press to be present and address the board after which members and the press must leave while the Board conducts its business."

The member-sponsored resolution, passed in District 3 and District 5, states that this meeting shall be open to member/owners and representatives of the press with timely notice of the meeting advertised in monthly bill mailings and local newspapers. A section of the meeting agenda shall be reserved for member participation during which member/owners may address the Board without prior approval of the board.

When the board unveiled its changes, the committee split the member resolution into two parts on the ballot. So instead of two options on this resolution, there are now

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three.

There should be plenty of questions to be asked of the trustees at Saturday's informational meeting. And they will have answers. Whether members like the answers remains to be seen.

But the most important meeting members have to attend is the annual one in April. That is when they can decide how their co-op is run. And it's important for the members to make informed decisions.

It's also imperative the members show up and vote because if not enough do, there will not be a quorum and the co-op will keep the status quo.

And if that happens, the members have nobody to blame but themselves.



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