

## Another Take On The Co-op

**By Debbie Leschner  
For the Mountain Mail**

*Editor's note: Mountain Mail correspondent Debbie Leschner made the drive from Quemado to attend last Wednesday's Socorro Electric Cooperative meeting. Here is her report:*

There are always two sides to every issue but there is only one side when the truth of the June board meeting of the Socorro Electric Cooperative is told. The meeting was called to order. A co-op member brought his camcorder and was filming the meeting. There was a confrontation between the trustees about the NM Open Meetings Act, if it applied or not to the meeting. Mr. Bustamante wanted the camcorder removed. Charlie Wagner objected on the basis of the NM Open Meetings Act which requires that provisions be made for recording devices.

Mr. Bustamante called for an executive session. In turn Mr. Wagner objected as executive sessions are tightly controlled under NMOMA and not allowed. It was very obvious that the board did not want to conduct any business with the co-op members present.

A vote was taken and passed to go into executive session. At this point the members began to voice their objections and did not leave the room. Mr. Bustamante called a recess as someone called the police to have the members removed. He was told that the police were on a fire call. The trustees at this point were yelling at one another, even some swearing was done. Mr. Wade was calling Charlie Wagner names. Mr. Wolberg even called the members in attendance "idiots". With no arrival of the police, the board then called for adjournment and told everyone to leave the building as they themselves started to leave.

The 20 or so members, representing all five districts, sat in utter astonishment. One of the members had their young grandson with them. He was amazed at the meeting and asked if they (the board) were adults and why were they acting like this. Charlie stated that the members were going to hold a meeting whether or not the board was in attendance. He invited any trustees that were interested to stay. Mr. Aguilar and Ms. Mauldin remained. Civility and calmness returned to the room.

The police officer arrived asking who was causing a problem and where the disturbance was, as he entered the room. Mr. Bustamante said that the members had to leave the building because they were disruptive. Mr. Wagner said the members were holding a peaceful meeting in a building owned by the members and that they did not have to leave. The policeman asked the members to leave.

The members said no and sat still insisted upon their rights as member/owners to hold a short meeting. Arrest was threatened and the members still stayed seated. The officer asked if there were still trustees present in the room. Receiving an affirmative answer, the officer stepped outside and the discussion among members continued. Several minutes later, the police officer again appeared and asked if the meeting was about over. The members having spoken their concerns agreed and left the building. Mr. Wagner asked for a guarantee that the building would be closed after they left. The officer agreed.

Several of the members were concerned that the board would try to reconvene once they left. They were told that the board can not call for another meeting this month (June) under the proposition that restricts the board to one meeting per month.

It is important for all co-op members to know what happens at board meetings. Please consider attending one or more of these meetings.

It is a member owned co-op.