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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2010

SEC Trustee Introduces Voting by Mail

By Patrick Jason Rodriguez Mountain Mail Editor

If one trustee has his way, the Socorro Electric Cooperative will someday use mail-in ballots to elect new board members.

The idea was brought forth by trustee Charlie Wagner at the Board of Trustees' regular public meeting on Monday, Nov. 22.

In his proposal, Wagner presented materials used by other electric cooperatives from across the country, including samples of mail-in ballots produced by two separate companies – Survey and Ballot Sytems (SBS), based out of Eden Prairie, Minn., and Automated Election Services, based out of Rio Rancho.

Wagner claimed that it isn't always feasible for cooperatives member owners who live in rural areas to travel to larger population centers to vote.

Currently one-third of electric cooperatives across the country have implemented a voting by mail system, according to Wagner.

Although a majority of the board members agreed with Wagner's argument that it isn't

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always possible for cooperative member owners to travel to larger population centers to vote, some had problems with the wording of the term "voting by mail'. "Mail is a vague term," said Trustee Donald Wolberg. "What does that mean? Email? The U.S. Postal Service? FedEx?"

Other board members said that they are concerned about possible voting fraud, and the monetary cost of conducting voting by mail.

Wagner agreed with Wolberg that the term "voting by mail" should be better defined, saying that there are ways to avoid such problems. He failed, however, to provide an answer to the question of voter fraud and the monetary costs of voting by mail addressed by his fellow board members.

Even if Wagner's idea does come to fruition, there would be major hurdles still left to be dealt with.

A current New Mexico state law outlaws cooperatives from holding elections through mail.

Rep. Don L. Tripp (R-Socorro), who presented to the board at the Monday regular meeting, might have a solution. He said that he would introduce a bill to the House during the 2011 legislative session that would change state law so that voting would be allowed through mail.

In other Socorro Electric Cooperative news, member owner Richard Esptein presented a case for the removal of cooperative president Paul Bustamante. Esptein claimed to have the required signatures – ten percent of the cooperative's member owners – to have Bustamante removed from his seat representing District 2. Cooperative Attorney Dennis Francish argued that the signatures would need to be

verified and that even in the event of Bustamante's removal from the board, the seat would remain vacant until the next election and member owners in District 2 would not have board representation.

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Forecast Radar Cameras

GOVERNMENT LINKS

Alamo Navajo Chapter

American Recovery &

Reinvestment Act official site

BLM Socorro office

Breakdown by county of

stimulus funds

Catron County

City of Socorro

Middle Rio Grande

Conservancy District New Mexico Attorney General's office New Mexico courts New Mexico Department of Health New Mexico Environment Department New Mexico Legislature New Mexico Public Education Department Socorro County Chamber of Commerce Socorro Electric Cooperative Socorro Soil and Water **Conservation District** U.S. Census Village of Magdalena

SCHOOLS

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Quemado Schools

Reserve Schools

Socorro Consolidated Schools

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Animal Protective Association of Socorro Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge El Camino Real International Heritage Center Fur and Feather Animal Assistance **Gila National Forest** Hammel Museum Keep Socorro Beautiful London Frontier Theatre Company Magdalena Ranger District (Cibola National Forest)

Magdalena Ridge Observatory New Mexico Activities Association New Mexico Cattle Growers Association New Mexico Foundation for **Open Government** New Mexico Tech Golf Course NRAO Very Large Array Save Our Bosque Task Force SCOPE (Socorro County Options, Prevention and Education) Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge Socorro Animal Shelter Socorro Civitan Club Socorro Community Theater Socorro County Extension office, 4-H Socorro General Hospital Socorro Mental Health Socorro music scene Socorro Public Library White Sands Missile Range

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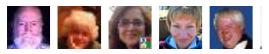
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