

Members can voice input at annual SEC meeting

John Larson - Apr 24, 2014

Every spring, the Socorro Electric Cooperative holds its annual meeting to conduct business that will affect every member for the coming year — this year's is set for Saturday, April 26 at Finley Gym.

The registration will be from 1 to 3 p.m., and the business meeting will follow, from 3 to 5 p.m.

If your name is on your electric bill, you are a member of the co-op.

Anne Dorough, president of the SEC's board of directors, encourages everyone to attend.

"This is (the members) opportunity to express themselves and participate in what goes on in their co-op and be a part of it," Dorough said. "Three percent of the membership constitutes a quorum."

According to the co-op's Human Resources manager, Eileen Latasa, the co-op has approximately 10,000 members, placing at roughly 300.

"We won't have an exact figure until Friday," Latasa said. "People move to town and people leave during the year, so we don't do a count until the day before."

Dorough said she couldn't emphasize enough the importance of attending to achieve a quorum.

"A quorum is absolutely necessary. The more people that go to the meeting, the better off they are," she said.

The necessity for a quorum was made clear last year after the annual meeting was stalled for lack of a one; a second annual meeting was then scheduled, but it too did not have a quorum.

A matter of contention at the monthly Board of Trustees meetings was the argument from District 2 Trustee Charlie Wagner that since a vote was not allowed on bylaw changes because of the lack of a quorum, the changes should, as a matter of course, be placed on the ballot at this year's meeting.

According to Dorough, those proposals cannot be voted on this year.

"Those were passed at the District 5 meeting in October 2012, and the bylaws say the proposed amendments passed by the district meetings are considered at the annual meeting," Dorough said.

The debate, she said, is as to whether "considered" means "voted on" or "discussed."

"The more conservative view is that they should be discussed, because otherwise, one district is making a decision and the others don't have any say about it. But if you discuss it at the annual meeting, then everybody has input on the change," she said. "On a bylaw amendment, whatever you decide is going to be the final amendment has to be pre-notified to the entire membership before it can be voted on."

This, Dorough said, means that after going through the discussion process at the annual meeting, members can vote to have it put on the ballot for the next annual meeting.

"This gives you the opportunity to pre-notify all the membership the details of the amendment," she said.

And the membership has the opportunity to "massage," or "perfect" the amendment, Dorough said. And, if there is a quorum, the members can approve it.

She said it then goes on the ballot for the following year or the members can call a special meeting if they want to speed up the process. And an additional quorum count may be taken at any time during the meeting.

"If at any time the chairman looks out across the room and doesn't think he's got a quorum, it's the chairman's duty to call for a quorum count. That's a part of Robert's Rules of Order," Dorough said.

Members, she said, can also make a point of order for a quorum count.

The rules for the order of business are laid out in the bylaws.

"An order of business tells you how the order of items have to be listed," she said. "The order of business is specified in the bylaws and you can't suspend that."

Dorough said often, people say "I don't want to sit though the meeting, I just want to register my vote."

And she said, depending on who you ask, if there's not a quorum at the start of the business meeting, their vote doesn't count.

"This is something we're trying to fix," she said "It's not right. But we need to change the bylaws to clearly explain that ... the balloting is separate from the business meeting."