

SEC bylaw meeting plans finalized despite objections

by [John Larson](#) | April 2, 2015 | Filed under: [News](#)

The Socorro Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees has finalized plans for the membership-wide meeting with the approval of the agenda for the April 25 in Finley Gym. The purpose of that meeting is to approve the new set of bylaws which were introduced on Jan. 27 at Macey Center.

By a 3-1 vote, the board chose Ramon Garcia as the first choice for a food vendor at the April 25 meeting, with Subway as an alternate caterer.

Objecting was District 2 Trustee Charlie Wagner who reiterated a point that he brought up at the last board meeting which he argued was not legal, therefore anything decided at that meeting was not binding, mainly any decisions concerning the April 25 membership-wide meeting.

The board approved an agenda for the April 25 meeting, 3-2. Objecting were Wagner and District 3 Trustee Melissa Amaro, who both registered similar minority opinions.

In her minority opinion, Amaro stated that she believes “approval of bylaw amendments is reserved to the members and that right includes the right to amend any proposed language or provision before voting,” and that “democratic member control requires that members be allowed to select or reject any provision or part thereof which is found to be objectionable and that being deprived of the right to amend is not in the best interest of the cooperative but is opposed to its best interest.”

Wagner stated, in his minority opinion, that he believes approval of bylaw amendments is reserved to the members and that right includes the right to amend any proposed language or provision before voting, and that democratic member control requires that members be allowed to select or reject any provision or part thereof which is found to be objectionable and that being deprived of the right to amend is not in the best interest of the cooperative but is opposed to its best interest.”

Wagner also wrote that he is “convinced that the repeal of several of the current bylaws which were recently imposed by the members for controlling excessive compensation and expenses of trustees and the measures assuring transparency and access to records, documents as well as member lists by members, will not be respected under the Christensen proposed plan.”

He also argues that the “proposed seven districts are unreasonably disproportionate in member population when a more reasonable equal as near as possible, representation is easily achievable.”

In the public comments section, Magdalena Schools’ Superintendent Mike Chambers presented five of the high school’s basketball team. He requested that the co-op consider donating to the team’s fundraiser for state championship rings. Dorough said the item would appear on the next monthly board meeting.

Also speaking during public comment was Greg Miller, who requested that the special meeting be rescheduled to a date after the annual membership meeting.

Miller said that the co-op is still operating under the current bylaws “that have a substantial backlog of amendments a resolutions. In my opinion that backlog should be considered prior to new bylaws.” Miller also asked the board to consider presenting the new bylaw package vote “in some manner other than all-or-nothing.”

Another co-op member commented that he felt the issue was not the bylaws but its “lack of trust in the Board,” and “lack of trust in leadership.”

In an interview after the meeting, Co-op Board President Anne Dorough said she encourages all members to consider attending the meeting.

“I would hope that everyone would try to read the bylaws for themselves before taking the word of someone else and rejecting them,” Dorrough said. “We need bylaws that are workable.”

“A major bylaw revision is not one of those things that can be done by cafeteria style choices, at least not successfully,” she said. “It is a complex document by-which the co-op will be governed and all parts need to work well together. That is part of the problems with current bylaws.”

Dorrough also responded to the objections to the re-districting plan. “Since the districts will no longer be used for voting purposes, we were striving for reasonably equitable area representation,” she said.

Recently critical of the governance of the co-op, Socorro Mayor Ravi Bhasker said he supports passage of the new bylaws.

“I’m in favor of getting this thing done, and don’t want to pick out parts of it,” Bhasker told El Defensor Chieftain. “We don’t want to continue stirring the pot.”

He said the proposed redistricting would give the city of Socorro better representation.

“First, the new bylaws are more democratic,” Bhasker said.

“The second thing is, I’d wish they’d put in more provisions for alternative energy. Other co-ops are doing that,” he said. “I’ve visited throughout state and other municipalities such as Deming, Silver City and T or C have been incorporating alternative sources for electricity. In Taos, Kit Carson Co-op is working very hard, including broadband and solar. I want the Socorro co-op to be open to those things.”

Bhasker said the co-op should accommodate people who “want to go ahead with using the regular electric source, but also want to add solar energy to their homes. If nothing else, show that the co-op supports them.”

“Of course, we have that general membership meeting to go through,” he said. “I want (the meeting) to go on and accomplish something productive.”