

**MINUTES**  
**GENERAL BOARD MEETING, DECEMBER 01, 2023**  
**FERGUS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.**

- 1. GENERAL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER.** The Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc. Board of Trustees met in general session December 1, 2023, with PRESIDENT PAUL DESCHEEMAER calling the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. JANINE RIFE DIDIER was scrivener. Board members in attendance were BRAD ARNTZEN, BOB EVANS, TERRY FROST, CATHY KOMBOL, JASON SWANZ and BRETT MAXWELL. Other attendees included GENERAL MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY, LINE SUPERINTENDENT DALE RIKALA, OFFICE MANAGER SALLY HORACEK, and CORPORATE COUNSEL KRIS BIRDWELL. The attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.
- 2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA.** After reviewing the meeting agenda, BRETT MAXWELL moved to approve it. BRAD ARNTZEN seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- 3. MINUTES APPROVAL.**
  - a. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING.** After reviewing the minutes of the October 31, 2023, general meeting and discussing them, BRETT MAXWELL moved their approval. CATHY KOMBOL seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- 4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD.** No one from the public appeared.
- 5. PLANNING.**
  - a. NEW RATE STRUCTURE – MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS.** MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY reported that he had mailed letters to ninety-three members explaining how the new rate structure affects their monthly bill. Of the ninety-three letters, SWEENEY has received two phone calls. SWEENEY said that the engineers have only received a handful of calls from the letters sent to the entire membership, mostly on the heat rate. BRETT MAXWELL commended SWEENEY for his efforts to communicate with the membership.
  - b. STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION AGENDA.** MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY advised the Board that the 2021 Strategic Planning Session is attached to the Call to Order board app and suggested the Board review it prior to attending the 2023 Strategic Planning Session in December 2023.
  - c. INDUSTRIAL MEMBER RATE REVIEW.** MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY provided an Excel worksheet demonstration showing new industrial rates that he and CORPORATE COUNSEL KRIS BIRDWELL have developed to use for all the industrial members instead of using the individual industrial rates that are in use currently: monthly base charge, energy charge, demand charge, and delivery charge on a twelve-month rolling maximum kW. BRETT MAXWELL moved to accept the new Industrial Member rate with a delivery charge. BRAD ARNTZEN seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
  - d. 2024 CAPITAL BUDGET REVIEW.** MANAGER SWEENEY reviewed the income statement budget proposed for 2024 and he reviewed the capital budget proposed for 2024. After a discussion period, BRAD ARNTZEN moved to approve the 2024 Expense and Capital Budgets as presented. JASON SWANZ seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- 6. FINANCIAL AND OTHER MONTHLY REPORTS.** Financial and other monthly reports were presented to the Board for discussion.
  - a. OPERATING AND RATIOS REPORTS.** OFFICE MANAGER SALLY HORACEK reviewed the October 31, 2023, Form 7 operating report. PAYROLL ADMINISTRATOR JANINE RIFE DIDIER reviewed the October 31, 2023, ratios report.

- b. **OPERATIONS AND SAFETY REPORT.** LINE SUPERINTENDENT DALE RIKALA reported that MECA SAFETY INSTRUCTOR, JERRY LEMM, presented Towing/Recovery, PPE, Hazard Assessment and Slips, Trips and Falls at the November 1 safety meeting. At the December 21 safety meeting, Fergus Electric line crews will test grounds, hot sticks, and chains/slides. The safety committee will plan to meet that day to prepare the agenda for the 2024 safety meetings. RIKALA reported that Red Rock Power has set poles up to Christina, which puts them over halfway on the project. They are currently ahead of schedule. RIKALA provided an update of the Roundup facility. The electricians will be installing the service panels, lights, and outlets this week. Also, this week, the HVAC contractors, painters, and plumbers will be busy working on the building. RIKALA reported that the line crews have completed testing poles for 2023. A total of 7,297 poles were tested with a 2.7 percent failure rate. Crews tested poles in the Carters Pond, Winnett, Grass Range and Benchland areas in 2023. RIKALA reported on the 2023 physical inventory count. RIKALA reported that JASON MILLS accepted the mechanic position and started employment with Fergus Electric on November 27. MILLS previously worked at Torgerson's LLC in Montana and Wyoming, Burnips Equipment Co., Inc. in Hudson, Michigan and at New Holland of Belgrade. MILLS' education includes both a master's and a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Montana State University. JASON DEFFINBAUGH will train JASON MILLS for a month before transferring to his new position as a groundman.
- c. **INVENTORY OF WORK ORDERS.** After reviewing Inventory of Work Orders No. 621-621X for \$7,657.08 dated October 31, 2023, BRAD ARNTZEN moved to affirm them. JASON SWANZ seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- d. **POWER OUTAGE REPORT.** LINE SUPERINTENDENT DALE RIKALA reviewed the October 2023 Outage Report prepared by STAKING ENGINEER MELANIE FORAN, PE.

7. **POLICIES.** No policies this month.

8. **REPORT OF CORPORATE COUNSEL.** CORPORATE COUNSEL KRIS BIRDWELL reported he had worked on various items of importance for the co-op.

9. **MANAGER'S REPORT.** GENERAL MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY reported that NORVAL MANAGER GRETCHEN BOARDMAN informed the co-op that they would like to sell all the Keystone XL Pipeline material they have been storing. SWEENEY said that Fergus Electric is interested as it would save the co-op to acquire the material for upcoming substation and transmission projects that Fergus Electric plans to construct. SWEENEY reported that SALLY HORACEK and JANINE RIFE DIDIER are helping Beartooth Electric Cooperative during an interim period while they get the new financial person on staff. SWEENEY reported that he and four other MECA members traveled to Washington DC and were able to meet with four of Montana's congressional delegation, SCOTT CORWIN CEO of American Public Power Association, and Deputy Chiefs of the Forest Service. SWEENEY said the meetings were worthwhile and beneficial to our statewide organization.

**10. MEETING REPORTS.**

- a. **MEMBERS 1<sup>ST</sup>.** MANAGER SWEENEY reported on the November 21<sup>st</sup> meeting he attended via a Zoom call.

**11. EXECUTIVE SESSION.**

- a. **DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS/NEW MEMBERS LIST.** The Board reviewed the delinquent accounts showing accounts paid in full and accounts still owing.
- b. **ESTATE CAPITAL CREDITS.** The Board reviewed the list of estate capital credits for November 2023 totaling \$21,696.35, which were prepared by SENIOR BILLING CLERK ERIKA MATTALIANO. BOB EVANS moved to affirm the retirements and BRAD ARNTZEN seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

**12. OTHER BUSINESS.**

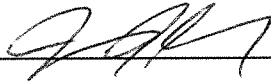
**13. FUTURE MEETINGS.**

- a. Safety Meetings:
  - i. December 21
- b. FEC Board Meetings:
  - i. December 29 - 10:00 a.m.
  - ii. January 30 - 10:00 a.m.
- c. MECA Winter Meeting: Great Falls, MT; December 5-6
- d. MECA Strategic Planning: Great Falls, MT; December 6-7
- e. Fergus Electric Strategic Planning: December 11-13
- f. Mid-West Electric Consumers Association Annual Meeting: December 12-14
- g. Members 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting: Sheridan, WY; December 18-19
- h. NRECA PowerXchange: San Antonio, TX; March 1-6, 2024
- i. NRECA Legislative Conference: Washington, DC; April 21-24, 2024
- j. CFC Forum: Indianapolis, IN; June 17-19, 2024

**14. NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS.**

**ADJOURNMENT.** PRESIDENT PAUL DESCHEEMAERKER adjourned the meeting at 4:58 p.m.

SECRETARY



ATTEST: PRESIDENT

