

MINUTES
GENERAL BOARD MEETING, FEBRUARY 27, 2025
FERGUS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

- 1. GENERAL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER.** The Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc. Board of Trustees met in general session February 27, 2025, with PRESIDENT PAUL DESCHEEMAER calling the meeting to order at 12:38 p.m. JANINE RIFE DIDIER was scrivener. The Board Members in attendance were BRAD ARNTZEN, and BRETT MAXWELL. BOB EVANS and CATHY KOMBOL attended virtually. TERRY FROST, JASON SWANZ and OFFICE MANAGER SALLY HORACEK were not in attendance. Other attendees included GENERAL MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY, LINE SUPERINTENDENT DALE RIKALA, ASSISTANT LINE SUPERINTENDENT BRET OPHUS 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.** After reviewing the minutes of the January 28, 2025, general board meeting and discussing them, BRETT MAXWELL moved their approval. BRAD ARNTZEN seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- 4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD.** No one from the public appeared.
- 5. PLANNING.**
 - a. NOMINATING COMMITTEES AND MEETINGS.** MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY reported that area meetings for Fergus Electric Co-op Trustee candidate selection for District 1 and District 6 are set. District 1 (Rural Lewistown Area) Nominating Committee Members are JOE BARTA, MARK FABIAN, CHAIRMAN and MIKE McREYNOLDS. District 1 meeting will be held at the Central Montana Brewery, Lewistown, March 26 from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. District 6 (Judith Gap, Shawmut Area, Ryegate and West of Roundup) Nominating Committee Members are LARRY BERG, CHAIRMAN, JOE ECKHARDT and RUSSELL LODE. District 6 meeting will be held in the County Commissioner's office at the Wheatland County Courthouse, Harlowton, April 3 from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Announcements of the district meetings will be published in local newspapers and posted on Fergus Electric Co-op's Facebook page and its website.
 - b. UPDATE ON USDA FUNDS FOR CMMC.** MANAGER SWEENEY reported on the arduous process of getting the money from USDA. SWEENEY said that CMMC CEO CODY LANGBEHN has provided language for a plaque recognizing Fergus Electric for helping the hospital get two million dollars for the purchase and installation of a linear accelerator for Central Montana Medical Center's new cancer center. The board respectfully approved the language as presented, stating that accepting recognition for helping CMMC secure funding for the purchase and installation of equipment for the cancer center does not infer that the co-op would participate in a similar role in the future.
- 6. FINANCIAL AND OTHER MONTHLY REPORTS.** Staff presented financial and other monthly reports to the Board for discussion.
 - a. OPERATING AND RATIOS REPORTS.** GENERAL MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY reviewed the January 31, 2025; Form 7 operating report prepared by OFFICE MANAGER SALLY HORACEK. JANINE RIFE DIDIER reviewed the January 31, 2025; ratios report.
 - b. OPERATIONS AND SAFETY REPORT.** ASSISTANT LINE SUPERINTENDENT BRET OPHUS reported that an in-house safety meeting was held on February 19. Topics included a May Day exercise, minimum approach distance, safety/work procedures, safety manual review, inspection of ladders and personal tools, Sno-Cat and the new wire/hydro bed training, plus close calls. The engineers provided a thorough review of the work completed in 2024. At the March 5 Safety Meeting, MECA SAFETY INSTRUCTOR BURKE BROWN will review OSHA required topics, PPE, Lock Out Tag Out, and Hazardous Communications and/or SDS. OPHUS was called away, so LINE SUPERINTENDENT DALE RIKALA reviewed the list of trucks and equipment that will be included in a J.J. Kane auction. RIKALA reported that Lewistown and Roundup crews were slowed first by cold weather and deep snow and

now by muddy and flooding conditions. Lewistown crews have kept busy clearing snow, cleaning trucks and warehouses, adding shelving to the cargo trailer, changing poles, which are accessible, and adding a few new services. Roundup has completed its annual inspections of chains, slings, ladders, personal tools, hot sticks, grounds, etc. RIGHT OF WAY GROUNDMAN JAKE deROSIER will be training the Roundup crew on pole testing. Roundup will begin testing 1,500 poles in the Lavina area.

- a. **INVENTORY OF WORK ORDERS.** After reviewing Inventory of Work Orders No. 636-636X for \$1,910.59, dated January 31, 2025, BRAD ARNTZEN moved to affirm them. BRETT MAXWELL seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- b. **POWER OUTAGE REPORT.** LINE SUPERINTENDENT DALE RIKALA reviewed the January 2025 Outage Report prepared by STAKING ENGINEER MELANIE FORAN, PE.

7. POLICIES.

a. Reviewed:

- i. **104 – STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONS FOR COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.** The Board reviewed Board Policy 104.

b. Amended:

- i. **207 – MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEES/MEMBERSHIP ASSISTANCE.** BOB EVANS moved to approve amending Board Policy 207 to increase the committee meeting fees to \$125.00 from \$75.00 per meeting. CATHY KOMBOL seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

8. REPORT OF CORPORATE COUNSEL. CORPORATE COUNSEL KRIS BIRDWELL reported that he worked on various matters of importance to the cooperative. BIRDWELL reported that he has not seen the 2025 agenda for the annual law seminar, but he would like board approval to attend the law seminar in 2025. The board approved.

9. MANAGER'S REPORT. GENERAL MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY briefly covered items included in his written report. SWEENEY reported that he and a group of four electric cooperative representatives met with the co-op's delegates in Washington, DC on cooperative issues. SWEENEY reported that they had beneficial meetings with SENATOR STEVE DAINES' office, SENATOR TIM SHEEHY'S office and REPRESENTATIVE RYAN ZINKE'S office. The group was not able to meet with REPRESENTATIVE TROY DOWNING'S office. SWEENEY said they covered Build America Buy America (BABA) requirements, EPA rules, wildfire liability and Lower Snake River dams. SWEENEY reported that each delegate agreed with their concerns and each office mentioned the fluid nature of the new administration. SWEENEY reported on the Basin Manager's Meetings he attended in Sioux Falls, SD. He said that the meeting covered the long-term capital forecast which projects over \$12 billion of investments in transmission and generation infrastructure within the next ten years. Southwest Power Pool (SPP) recently changed generating capacity reserve requirements which triggered Basin to construct an additional 700 MW of generation to stay in compliance. Basin expects ongoing rate increases to cover the investments expenses going forward. SWEENEY reported that he represented MECA in a recent MDT meeting in Helena on BABA requirements pertaining to MDT Highway Utility relocation requirements. Currently there is a BABA exception for manufactured materials until the end of October 2025. As of November 2025, no additional exceptions are expected thus all materials used throughout the relocation process must meet BABA requirements. MECA will be working with material distributors to create a list of materials that cannot meet BABA requirements. MDT will take this list to their national conference to see if other states are running into similar situations. MECA is working hard to keep the wildfire liability bill alive, HB490. Several amendments have been provided to the bill. MANAGER SWEENEY said that Fergus Electric would like to help its members facilitate updating historic meter bases to reduce the risk of fire and improve first responder access to an exterior disconnect switch. Many members throughout the co-op's service territory have outdated member bases on the exterior of their homes. SWEENEY said that the average cost to change out a meter base is approximately \$3,000. SWEENEY suggested having local electricians change out the members' meter base and the co-op would apply the debt on the members' monthly power bill interest free for a maximum term of 36 months. Changing out the meter bases would make a safer work environment for our linemen. SWEENEY suggested the co-op begin with a small pilot project.

10. MEETING REPORTS.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION.

- a. **ESTATE CAPITAL CREDITS.** The Board reviewed the list of estate capital credits for February 2025 totaling \$22,308.44, which were prepared by SENIOR BILLING CLERK ERIKA MATTALIANO. BRAD ARNTZEN moved to affirm the estate capital credit retirement and BRETT MAXWELL seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- b. **DELINQUENT STATUS, NEW MEMBERS.** The Board reviewed the delinquent accounts showing accounts paid in full and accounts still owing.

12. OTHER BUSINESS.

13. NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS.

14. FUTURE MEETINGS.

- a. Safety Meeting; March 5, 2025
- b. FEC Board Meetings 2025:
 - i. March 27, 2025 – 12:00 p.m.
 - ii. April 24 – 12:00 p.m.
- c. NRECA PowerXchange: Atlanta, GA; March 7-12
- d. Members 1st Board Meeting: Sheridan, WY; March 17
- e. MECA Spring Board Meeting: Great Falls, MT; April 8-9
- f. NRECA Legislative Conference: Washington, DC; April 26-30
- g. Members 1st Board Meeting: Sheridan, WY; June 16
- h. CFC Forum: New York City, NY; June 30-July 2
- i. Basin Summer Manager's Meeting: Deadwood, SD; July 23-25
- j. Basin Annual Meeting: Bismarck, ND; August 12-15
- k. NRECA Region 7/9 Meeting: Bellevue, WA; October 6-8

15. NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS.

ADJOURNMENT. PRESIDENT PAUL DESCHEEMAERKER adjourned the meeting at 3:37 p.m.

SECRETARY



ATTEST: PRESIDENT

