

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

1. GENERAL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER. The Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc. Board of Trustees met in general session March 27, 2025, with PRESIDENT PAUL DESCHEEMAERKER calling the meeting to order at 12:43 p.m. JANINE RIFE DIDIER was scrivener. The Board Members in attendance were BRAD ARNTZEN, TERRY FROST, CATHY KOMBOL, BRETT MAXWELL, and JASON SWANZ. BOB EVANS attended virtually. Other attendees included GENERAL MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY, LINE SUPERINTENDENT BRET OPHUS, 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, BRAD ARNTZEN moved to approve it. TERRY FROST seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

3. MINUTES APPROVAL. After reviewing the minutes of the February 27, 2025, general board meeting and discussing them, CATHY KOMBOL moved to approve them. JASON SWANZ seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD. No one from the public appeared.

5. PLANNING.

a. 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW - ENGINEERS. The staking engineers provided a well-designed PowerPoint presentation to accompany their detailed oral reports on the work the co-op completed in 2024. STAKING ENGINEER SCOTT OLSON covered pole changes and pole testing. He talked about line patrol priority 1 and priority 2 tickets and tree trimming. OLSON reported on the miles of overhead and underground line added and the new connects and new services in 2024. STAKING ENGINEER DAN BALSTER, PE reported on year 2024 and prior years' loads by year and by substation. BALSTER reported on the substation's maximum demands. He covered the recloser replacements that occurred in 2024, reported on the sectionalizing that had occurred and addressed the benefits of the equipment. STAKING ENGINEER MELANIE FORAN, PE reported that in 2024 construction was completed on 24 miles of transmission line to Winifred from Hilger. FORAN gave a thorough report on the multiple power outages that occurred in 2024 and reviewed the cost-of-service analysis and the 2025 rate change. MANAGER SWEENEY reported that the engineering team had put a lot of effort into preparing for their presentation. The Board complimented and thanked the staking engineers for their fine work.

b. 2024 YEAR END FORM 7 - SALLY. OFFICE MANAGER SALLY HORACEK reviewed the 2024 long-form year-end Form 7 report and welcomed questions from the Board.

c. ANNUAL MEETING PREPARATION. OFFICE MANAGER SALLY HORACEK reported on the initial meeting she and MANAGER SWEENEY attended with the Nominating Committee members. The district 1 candidates are incumbent PAUL DESCHEEMAERKER and PAUL BRADY. The district 6 candidate is incumbent JASON SWANZ. The 87th Annual Meeting is set for June 5, 2025. MANAGER SWEENEY reviewed Bylaws Section 4.15 Qualifications, Election and Tenure.

6. FINANCIAL AND OTHER MONTHLY REPORTS. Staff presented financial and other monthly reports to the Board for discussion.

a. OPERATING AND RATIOS REPORTS. OFFICE MANAGER SALLY HORACEK reviewed the February 28, 2025, Form 7 operating report. JANINE RIFE DIDIER reviewed the February 28, 2025, ratios report.

b. OPERATIONS AND SAFETY REPORT. LINE SUPERINTENDENT BRET OPHUS reported that on March 5, MECA SAFETY INSTRUCTOR BURKE BROWN presented Generator Procedures for Substation Control Shacks; Slips, Trips, and Falls; Ladder Safety, PPE, Spill Prevention Control, Hazardous Communication, Safety Data Sheets, Hearing Conservation, Near Misses and Safety Manual review. The April 2 meeting will cover First Aid and CPR.

OPHUS reported that MARK SCHWOMEYER was promoted to foreman, effective March 26, 2025. Congratulations MARK. OPHUS reported that with the retirement of LINE SUPERINTENDENT DALE RIKALA, he and ASSISTANT LINE SUPERINTENDENT TYSON RUFF are finding their way in their new positions. OPHUS reported that Generac Generators have been selling quickly. All 39 of the 22 KW generators have sold, plus, another 11, totaling 50 sold in 2025. OPHUS said that the staking engineers are getting requests for line replacements and extensions, many of which are above normal lengths. Lewistown has about 30 requests for new services with jobs being in every degree of readiness, from just contacted to ready to build. Roundup has 7 requests for line extensions. JJ KANE has taken pictures of equipment for an auction in April. The line truck build is projected to start in the middle of April and be delivered at the end of June. Big Bucket starts in October and will hopefully be delivered at the end of December. There is a service truck on order that is budgeted for 2026 with similar dates as the big bucket. OPHUS said that the co-op is waiting to hear about the new chassis from Terex that was estimated to arrive in April. OPHUS reported on the crew work being done in various areas. MANAGER SWEENEY said that he wants a much more vigorous tree trimming program implemented going forward. SWEENEY said that with fire protection in mind, ROW GROUNDMAN JACOB deROSIER will be more vigilant about trimming trees in 2025 and beyond.

- a. **INVENTORY OF WORK ORDERS.** After reviewing Inventory of Work Orders No. 637-637X for \$5,486.56 dated February 28, 2025, BRAD ARNTZEN moved to affirm them. BRETT MAXWELL seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- b. **POWER OUTAGE REPORT.** LINE SUPERINTENDENT BRET OPHUS reviewed the February 2025 Outage Report prepared by STAKING ENGINEER MELANIE FORAN, PE.

7. POLICIES.

a. Eliminated:

- i. **105 – STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONS OF FINANCE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE.** The Board reviewed Board Policy 105.

b. Eliminated:

- i. **106 – STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONS OF EXECUTIVE AND POLICY COMMITTEE.** The Board reviewed Board Policy 106.

After a period of discussion, JASON SWANZ moved to eliminate Board Policies 105 and 106, in light of retaining Board Policy 104, STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONS OF COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES. BOB EVANS seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

8. REPORT OF CORPORATE COUNSEL. CORPORATE COUNSEL KRIS BIRDWELL reported that he worked with the engineers and the front office staff on various matters of importance to the cooperative. BIRDWELL reported that he was making good progress on the CHS project.

9. MANAGER'S REPORT. GENERAL MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY said that MECA had excellent success with HB 490 Wildfire Liability bill which unanimously passed the House on third reading. The bill now proceeds to the Senate Judiciary Committee. SWEENEY reported that CENTRAL MONTANA ELECTRIC POWER COOPERATIVE, INC. GENERAL MANAGER DOUG HARDY announced he will be retiring November 2025. HARDY would like his replacement hired by November 2025 and he would be willing to stay through year end. SWEENEY said that the operations team and he met with Forest Service personnel in Stanford to discuss upcoming vegetation management work in 2025. The Forest Service is open to more aggressive tree removal than in the past. Fergus has been working through details to update our existing right-of-way permits with the Forest Service. ASSISTANT LINE SUPERINTENDENT TYSON RUFF and ROW GROUNDMAN JACOB deROSIER will meet with the Forest Service onsite north of White Sulphur Springs in the coming months to determine tree removal options.

10. MEETING REPORTS. PRESIDENT PAUL DESCHEEMAER said that the Members 1st board meeting March 17 in Sheridan, Wyoming was quick because of a pending storm.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION.

- a. At 4:10 p.m., BRETT MAXWELL moved to go into executive session. BRAD ARNTZEN seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- b. At 5:10 p.m., BRETT MAXWELL moved to return to regular session. CATHY KOMBOL seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- c. The Board discussed Bylaws Article IV, Section 4.15(a), containing the phrase "Bona Fide Resident of the Particular District." The Board agreed that Bona Fide Resident should include owning or renting in the district, having an actual place to stay overnight/reside, mailing address in the district, voting in the district, and a driver's license address in the district.
- d. **ESTATE CAPITAL CREDITS.** The Board reviewed the list of estate capital credits for March 2025 totaling \$14,098.61, which were prepared by SENIOR BILLING CLERK ERIKA MATTALIANO. JASON SWANZ moved to affirm the estate capital credit retirement and TERRY FROST seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- e. **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.

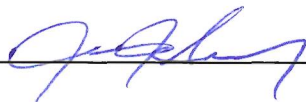
14. FUTURE MEETINGS.

- a. Safety Meeting; April 2, 2025
- b. FEC Board Meetings 2025:
 - i. April 24 - 12:00 p.m.
 - ii. May 29 - 12:00 p.m.
 - iii. June 24 - 12:00 p.m.
- c. MECA Spring Board Meeting: Great Falls, MT; April 8-9
- d. NRECA Legislative Conference: Washington, DC; April 26-30
- e. Fergus Annual Meeting; June 5
- f. Fergus Reorganization Meeting; June 5
- 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 DESCHEEMAER adjourned the meeting at 5:20 p.m.

SECRETARY



ATTEST: PRESIDENT

