

Membership, Meters, and Voting



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In last year's report I wrote about "Husbands & Wives as Members." The recent zone election for the Lyman County Municipal Director held in Kennebec this year pointed out the need to touch on some other aspects of membership and voting.

To begin with, many people confuse "membership"

with "meters." An individual may have several meters, but is limited to one membership. The term "membership" refers to a legal relationship with the cooperative. You either have a legal relationship with the cooperative, or you don't. You don't have more than one. Meters are tied to service locations, and you can have as many meters as you have service locations.

The bylaws provide that membership is based on a "membership agreement" and the acceptance of service in some form from the cooperative. You need both to qualify.

As pointed out last year, state law and the bylaws give husbands and wives the opportunity to share a single membership, referred to as a "joint membership." While a husband and wife may share a joint membership, it is still a single membership, and has only one vote. The vote may be cast by either husband or wife, but not by both.

Even though husbands and wives may share a single joint membership, they are not required to. Either the husband or the wife can maintain a separate membership in their own name alone -- as long as they have a separate service location to go with it. That separate service location may be a home, a business, or even a well site. The couple may choose to have all of the service locations served under the husband's individual membership, or the wife's individual membership, or they may split the service locations between them.

Because voting is by membership, how a couple elects to set up multiple service locations can result in only one of them being entitled to vote, or both having a right to vote. If all service locations are maintained under the individual membership of one spouse alone, only the member spouse will be entitled to vote. If the husband and wife each maintain separate service locations and memberships, both will be entitled to vote. If any of the memberships is a "joint membership" that member-

ship is considered the primary membership and only one is entitled to vote.

Another form of shared membership is an "entity" membership. Examples are corporations, partnerships, associations, churches, or some other legally recognized group. Under the law and bylaws, any of these entities may be a member and entitled to one vote. Since a legal entity can only act through a representative, there is a procedure to allow an actual person to vote for the entity. But, remember, the bylaws prohibit giving more than one ballot to one individual. For that reason the representative named should be somebody who is not going to vote in any other way.

Unfortunately, every time West Central has an election a small number of people are turned away without being allowed to vote, either because they are not a member, or because they

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were not properly authorized to vote by an entity.

The first problem is often caused by members failing to return their membership/service location agreement when they add an additional service location or move from one location to another. Problems with entity voting usually are caused by a failure to complete and register the necessary authorization form. Finally, some members with multiple service locations in more than one zone forget which zone their membership is registered in.

If you have questions about your status, ask ahead of time. Don't just assume because you are getting electricity you have the right to vote or that you are registered in the proper zone. You have to be a member to vote, and it is your responsibility to make sure that you are properly registered.

And remember, there is no voting by proxy. Like most things in life, you have to actually show up to vote.

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Members West Central Electric Cooperative., Inc.

October 4, 2006

The Annual Meeting of the members of West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. was held at the Oacoma Community Center, City of Oacoma, Lyman County, State of South Dakota, pursuant to due notice to the members, commencing at 5:30 o'clock PM, CDT on Wednesday, October 4, 2006.

The meeting was called to order by President Charles Oller who announced that a quorum was present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

The Manager introduced the directors from the various zones. He then recognized past directors of West Central.

The president introduced Steve Reed, West Central Manager, David Larson, Attorney, and Vik Simmons, Manager of Rushmore Electric Power.

The business meeting commenced with the reading of the official notice of the meeting by Secretary Mike McQuiston. Manager Reed read the proof of mailing.

President Oller announced that the minutes of last year's Annual Meeting were published in the *Cooperative Connections* and asked if the members wished to have them read, or is there a motion to approve the minutes as published. A motion was made, seconded and upon being placed before the membership, the motion was approved. Thereupon the president declared the motion carried and the minutes approved.

President Oller announced that the Financial Report, the President's Report and the Manager's Report were published in the *Cooperative Connections* and asked if the members wished to have them read, or is there a motion to approve the reports as published. A motion was made, seconded and upon being placed before the membership, the motion was approved. Thereupon the president declared the motion carried and the reports approved.

President Oller and Manager Reed gave brief reports.

President Oller then called upon the Legal Counsel for West Central, Mr. David Larson of Chamberlain, South Dakota. Mr. Larson reported on the legal status of West Central Elec-

tric Cooperative, Inc., as follows:

From a legal point of view, the past year has been relatively uneventful. The cooperative has not been sued, is not suing anybody else, and we are unaware of any claims being made against the cooperative.

A review of the minutes indicates that all actions taken during the past year comply with the by-laws, articles of incorporation, South Dakota Law, and RUS regulations.

David Larson, Corporate Attorney, announced the results of the Director election process. The Directors were elected earlier through the zone meeting process as defined in the Cooperative's By-Laws. This year three Directors were elected, each to serve a three-year term, and they are as follows:

Jones County	Town Director	Zone 2
	Ray Vik	
Jackson County	Rural Director	Zone 3
	Jim Willert	
Stanley County	At Large Director	Zone 5
	Shad Riggle	

President Oller then called for new business.

Vik Simmons, Manager of Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative, gave a brief address.

Manager Reed then recognized the employees.

Joe Connot conducted prize drawings at intervals throughout the meeting.

There being no further business to come before the board, President Oller declared the meeting adjourned.

Approved: _____

Attest: _____



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