

Report from the WOEC 2016 Annual Meeting

The West Oregon Electric Co-operative (WOEC) Annual Meeting was held on Saturday, August 17 at the Cabin in Vernonia.

Board of Directors President Robert VanNatta called the meeting to order and introduced the rest of the Board and special guests, State Senator Betsy Johnson and State Representative Debra Boone, along with Guest Speaker Clair Hobson from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). Previous minutes were approved and new members were voted in.

Election Director Chuck Fadeley announced the candidates for the Board: Robert VanNatta for District #2, and Robert Paleck and Nick Galaday for District #5. There were no nominations from the floor and the voting was closed. Later in the meeting it was announced that VanNatta and Galaday had been elected.

Guest Speaker Claire Hobson from the BPA addressed the audience and discussed the operations of BPA and the challenges of competing with, and balancing, the proliferation of other

forms of renewable power like solar and wind. "The changes we've seen in the last five years in the utility industry were far more dramatic than the first fifty years," said Hobson, "and I have no reason to believe that the next ten or fifteen or twenty years are going to be any different. We're going to see lots and lots of changes." Hobson also talked about the aging infrastructure within the BPA and the need for all of it to be replaced in the near future.

Board President VanNatta spoke and discussed some factors that determine WOEC's rates. He addressed the lack of industry that creates a consistent demand in the service area, which VanNatta termed "an undesirable load curve," and how high demand charges increase the cost of power to WOEC. He noted that most utilities in Oregon and the rest of the country have 50% of retail power sales coming from commercial and industrial customers, while WOEC gets about 20-25% from those customers. He also addressed the high

maintenance cost in the WOEC service area due to the high number of trees. VanNatta also stated that, while WOEC rates may seem high, "High rates are relative," said VanNatta, and compared WOEC rates as being comparable to the average rates in California, New York, and New England.

New Financial Officer Dan Huggett explained the billing process and discussed billing options for customers. He also discussed the impact of the weather event that occurred in November/December of 2015 that included heavy rains, wind, and landslides that resulted in damages to the system and long outages in several areas.

Operations Manager Don Rose discussed the weather event last year and the attempt to collect a 75% FEMA reimbursement for the cost incurred by the co-op. He also discussed upcoming upgrade projects scheduled for this year that include pole replacements throughout the system, the replacement of a bad

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The Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC) will be screening Behind the Emerald Curtain on Thursday, September 15, 6:00 pm at the Vernonia Schools Commons, 1000 Missouri Avenue.

This is a documentary by the nonprofit Pacific Rivers. The film examines logging practices in Oregon--especially the hidden impacts of industrial style clearcutting, road building, and pesticide application, all of which are largely hidden behind propaganda and beauty strips.

The UNWC will screen this 30 minute video and then have a conversation. This promises to be an eye-opening look at forestry in Oregon.

For more information contact Michael Calhoun (503) 704-7837.



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