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Co-op updates members at 2023 Annual Meeting

GRANTS, N.M. – Highlights of Continental Divide’s 2023 Annual Meeting included the expansion of broadband internet service to Pueblo of Zuni residents and an update on the co-op’s new headquarters.

Continental Divide Board President Keith Gottlieb called the meeting to order at 8 a.m., Sat., April 29, inside the new gym at Grants High School. Registration of the members began immediately at that time, along with the annual Cibola General Hospital Health Fair.

During the co-op’s business meeting, Gottlieb explained that the energy industry is on the verge of significant change, driven by the growing interest in electric vehicles, expanded use of smart household appliances and the push to renewable energy. “The success of all these developments hinges on safe, reliable, affordable electric service,” he said.

Guest speaker Elda de la Peña, of Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, said Tri-State’s energy strategy mirrors that of Continental Divide.

She outlined the four strategies of the wholesale power provider’s Responsible Energy Plan, in order of priority, as reliability, affordability, member flexibility and responsibility (clean energy). “To sum it up, we believe the path forward in this challenging time is together...with our members... And whatever the future holds, we will power it together,” de la Peña said.

Continental Divide Chief Executive Officer Robert E. Castillo, in his report, described the co-op’s new headquarters at 1821 Clif Lear Ave., in Grants, as “a very necessary and significant accomplishment.”

“Our old facility – built in 1958 – could no longer meet the needs of our expanding energy and telecommunications services and related workforce requirements,” Castillo said.

(more)

When he started at the co-op in 2010, Continental Divide had 66 full-time employees. Today it has 82. Part of that increase can be attributed to the co-op's burgeoning internet and digital phone service Red Bolt Broadband. "Today we are up to 3,400 customers and growing," he said.

The co-op's present Red Bolt expansion includes San Mateo, San Fidel, Cubero, Seboyeta, Bibo, Moquino, Ramah and Oso Ridge. Service to about 2,200 Zuni households will be completed later this year. "Broadband has always been a byproduct of us trying to improve our electric system and bring it into the 21st century," Castillo said.

Continental Divide did not take any official business actions during the business meeting. The co-op registered 443 members, and it needed 540 to establish a quorum.

"It's unfortunate that we did not have a quorum," Gottlieb said. "We were looking for a bylaw change. We wanted to restructure our districts."

Co-op members were asked to vote on a proposed bylaw amendment to allow the co-op's governing board to periodically revise voting districts. Three current board members retained their seats: Gottlieb, the At-Large director, Wes Malcolm, District 2 director and Joe Hoskins, District 7 director.

Ty Harpenau, a CPA with auditor Bolinger, Segars, Gilbert & Moss, LLP, reported a clean bill of financial health for CDEC with total revenue of \$64.7 million in 2022, compared to \$59.9 million in 2021. Total expenses last year were \$63.6 million, compared to \$59.4 million in 2021.

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