

HIGHLIGHTS

from the Slope Electric
Cooperative annual meeting
held June 6, 1949



Appliance display by Gardner
and Zeren Hardware.



C.M. Christensen, Calvin Woodruff
and A. Enloe count ballots.



Another door prize presented by
Norman Cross.



Member registration, supervised by
M. Gardner, Bob Waller and D. Wolf.



Board meeting with, from left: **Norman Cross, J.Q. Jacobs, M.S. Byrne, Lee Johnson, M. Gardner, L.K. Morland, E. Powell, J.R. Holzemer, L. Steiner and A. Enloe.**



Norman Cross presents **Mrs. Steiner**
with a door prize — an electric mixer.



Members in attendance.



This year's annual meeting will be held
Thursday, June 4, at Four Seasons
Pavilion in Bowman. Come and celebrate
our historic 75th anniversary, and learn
about our rich history and progress.

Slope Electric Cooperative, Inc.

OUTLOOK

116 E. 12th St. • New England, ND 58647 | 701-579-4191 • www.slopeelectric.coop

In this issue:

- Run for a Slope Electric board position
- Co-op receives statewide honor
- Newspapers begin to thrive thanks to new ownership, local news
- A phone survey may await you
- Meeting minutes and more

Nominating/Resolutions Committee

Slope Electric Cooperative's 75th annual meeting will be held June 4 at Four Seasons Pavilion in Bowman.

Three directors' terms will expire in 2020 – one director from Adams County and two directors from Hettinger County.

Board members will be elected to serve three-year terms. The bylaws of Slope Electric Cooperative, Inc. state in Article IV, Section 4, directors can be nominated one of three ways:

1. **Through the Nominating Committee.** The committee's first meeting was held Feb. 19. Members reviewed procedures, responsibilities and qualifications for directorship. The

The following members have been appointed by the board of directors to serve on the Nominating/Resolutions Committee for 2020:

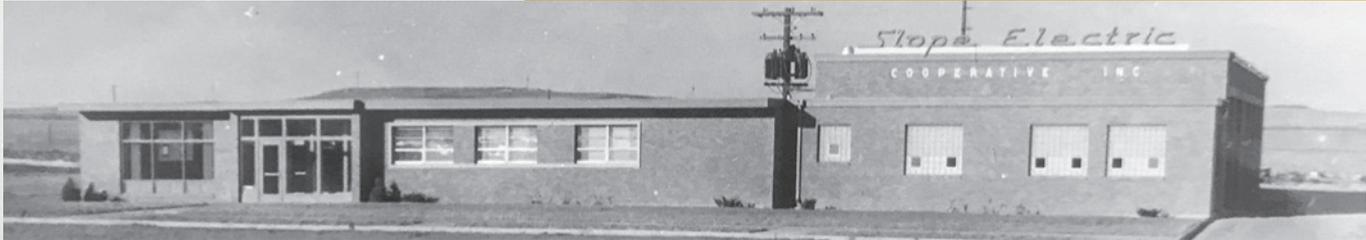
Robert Yohe	804 9th Ave. N.W., Hettinger, ND 58639.....	701-853-2413
Kevan Stafne	1106 7th St. N.W., Hettinger, ND 58639.....	701-853-2207
Todd Fink	301 4th St. S.E., Hettinger, ND 58639.....	701-567-4464
Michael Schneider.....	7501 156th Ave. S.W., Rhame, ND 58651	701-279-6927
Lavonne Wegner.....	7507 142nd Ave. S.W., Bowman, ND 58623	701-523-5558
Trevor Steeke	8506 162nd Ave. S.W., Rhame, ND 58651.....	701-279-6859
William Freymiller.....	13606 84th St. S.W., Bowman, ND 58623	701-275-8776
Sandra Hoffman	8649 82nd St. S.W., Mott, ND 58646.....	701-824-2016
Raymond Greff.....	6035 88th Ave. S.W., Mott, ND 58646	701-823-2494
James Pahlmeyer.....	10540 57th St. S.W., Regent, ND 58650	701-563-5123
Robert Martin.....	9309 Hwy. 21, Mott, ND 58646	701-824-2485

second meeting will be held March 26 to nominate candidates for the ballot and to approve resolutions.

2. **Members can also be nominated by filing a petition with 15 signatures.** Filing must be done 30 days prior to the annual meeting on June 4 and posted at the office of Slope Electric Cooperative.
3. **Members can also be nominated from the floor at the annual meeting.** This method means your name will not be preprinted on the ballot, but it can be written in by your supporters.



HISTORIC ANNUAL MEETING
JUNE 4, 2020
FOUR SEASONS PAVILION, BOWMAN



Slope Electric employees attend annual AT&S Conference

The North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) hosted the 56th annual REC Apprenticeship Training and Safety (AT&S) Conference Jan. 15 to 17 at the Ramkota Hotel in Bismarck. The conference is sponsored by the NDAREC AT&S program, with cooperation from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship.

The conference drew representatives of NDAREC

member-cooperatives, students of the Bismarck State College lineworker program and the electric industry for classroom sessions, equipment evaluations and awards ceremonies. Training topics included fault locating, self-rescue, reasonable suspicion, personal protective grounding and bonding, 200/600-amp product evolution and application, cutouts, and how safety empowerment is the key to preventing disasters.

Christina Roemmich, director of

safety services for NDAREC, says the AT&S conference provides an opportunity to reflect on current issues in the industry, and to recognize the accomplishments the linemen have made in training and safety throughout the year.

Slope employees who attended this year's conference included Operations Manager Dean Volk and Line Technicians Chris Backhaus, Cody Braaten, Lyle Kovar, Jon Lawhead and Drew Madler. ■

A phone survey may await you

Members: Slope Electric Cooperative will be completing a random residential telephone Member Satisfaction Survey. Performed by Odney Advertising and conducted by the University of North Dakota, this survey will take place in March.

If you receive a call from Odney Advertising or UND on behalf of Slope, please take time to answer the questionnaire. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes. By participating in the 2020 Member Satisfaction Survey, Slope receives better insight into how we can better serve you, the member-owner.

SPRING AHEAD!



ON **SUNDAY, MARCH 8**, DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS. REMEMBER TO SET THOSE CLOCKS FORWARD ON SATURDAY, MARCH 7, BEFORE YOU RETIRE FOR THE EVENING.

SAFETY@SLOPEELECTRIC.COOP

Slope is an advocate of working safely. In fact, it is our way of life; the culture of your cooperative. We look out for the safety of ourselves and others — before, during and after work.

Did you know that members also play a key role in keeping our system safe? At times, you are our eyes in the sky and on the ground. Should you see a power line issue that may need Slope's attention, please call the office at 701-579-4191 or 800-559-4191, or send us an email at safety@slopeelectric.coop with your concern. This correspondence should include the description of the location, your name and complete contact information, and a photo if possible. Working together helps ensure the safety of all!



**'A town without a newspaper
is a town without a heart.'**

~ Jim Fuglie, former Hettinger resident
and Adams County Record subscriber

Building loyalty one headline at a time

Newspapers begin to thrive thanks to new ownership, local news

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CARMEN DEVNEY

Local papers are supposed to cover local news: who brought the winning steer to the county fair; who won Homecoming King and Queen; who entered a float in the community parade.

Jill Friesz, owner/publisher of the *Grant County News* and *Carson Press*, has been producing news in the Mor-Gran-Sou Electric Cooperative service area for 24 years. By covering local events and printing highlights, she is recording more than community happenings — she is preserving history.

"I enjoy doing it for my communities," she says.

When she learned two weekly newspapers in the Slope Electric Cooperative service area were closing, she wondered where local people would get their news.

Steve Andrist, executive director of the North Dakota Newspaper Association, called to ask if she would consider purchasing *The Herald* and *Adams County Record*. She wondered, if those weekly papers couldn't make it without her, what would change with a change in ownership?

To find the answer, she drove to Mott and visited with residents and business owners. She asked if they subscribed to a weekly newspaper, and if not, why. The resounding answer she heard was no; there is no local news and it costs too much money.

She continued her research in Hettinger at the *Adams County Record* office, where she met employees Cassidy Blade and Frank Turner.



PHOTO COURTESY CASSIDY BLADE

Cassidy Blade and **Frank Turner**, employees of the Adams County Record and Hettinger County Herald.

“They are fantastic ... young, excited, and they love the profession. I thought, ‘I can’t let this go,’” she says.

The employees agreed with area feedback that indicated people wanted more local news. That, Friesz knew, she could fix.

“I took a leap of faith and jumped in wholeheartedly,” she says.

Less than one week after she took her road trip, Friesz called the publisher and made an offer to purchase the two papers. It was accepted.

While subscribers never missed an issue of their respective papers, the transition was a nightmare for Friesz. She worked long hours writing copy and laying out pages, and visited residents and businesses, trying to increase subscriptions and sales. She knew she needed help.

“I have a strong faith. I always feel that things will be provided if you believe,” she says. “If you open your eyes and pay attention, something happens. And it has happened to me tenfold just in January alone.”

Luann Dart, Elgin resident and longtime writer/editor for the *North Dakota Living* magazine, approached Friesz and said, “If you can take on extra work, I can,

too.” The friends became business partners, and Dart started traveling to cover the local news of southwest North Dakota. Meanwhile back in Hettinger, Frank Turner said he was interested in taking on ad sales, in addition to reporting. Then, a few people stepped forward and said they’d like to contribute photos. Another person offered to sell ads. And just like that, every need Friesz had was filled.

“I wholeheartedly believe those people were sent exactly where and when I needed them,” she says. “I talked to my husband about all those coincidences, and he said, ‘It’s not a coincidence. That’s God working in a very special way.’”

Winning them over

Friesz knew building a reader base and increasing ad sales would take time, when people didn’t know or trust a new publisher.

“I am still working to win them over; to show them we are local, and we are going to cover local news,” she says.

Others expressed gratitude quickly, including Slope Electric member Francie Berg, who emailed Friesz to thank her for ‘stepping up to the plate’ and purchasing the *Adams County Record*.

“It will be nice that we can have a smooth transition and continue under your leadership,” she wrote. “We know it will be good, and could hardly get along without a newspaper!”

Former Hettinger resident Jim Fuglie agreed. Now living in Bismarck, Fuglie has subscribed to the *Adams County Record* for more than 50 years to keep in touch with his hometown. During his years in the Navy, his subscription followed him all over the world.

“Every week, when the mail plane landed on the deck of the USS Oriskany aircraft carrier floating around the Gulf of Tonkin, I’d grab my copy of my hometown paper to remind me what it was back there in ‘the world’ that made what I was doing worthwhile,” he says.

When he learned in December the paper was closing, he says his heart sunk. One week later, he says, “a lady rode in on a white horse from Grant County and saved it.”

“I sent her a letter that said, ‘God bless you, Jill, because a town without a newspaper is a town without a heart,’” he says. “You’re keeping that heart beating.”

Friesz continues to tour the Slope Electric service area on a regular basis, stopping to take photos, have a community presence and hold candid conversations

with residents — asking them what they want to see in their papers. The resounding answer is to cover more sports and school events, and lower the cost of the paper.

“In January, we had one new subscriber a day. That was huge!” she says. “We didn’t start with a great base, but people are interested. We are moving in the right direction.”

Lowering the cost

Now the publisher of four weekly papers, Friesz says she wanted to make the pricing more consistent across the board. She felt if she lowered the price of *The Herald* (now known as the *Hettinger County Herald*) and *Adams County Record*, more people would subscribe and the economics would level out. Eventually, she hopes to worry less about the bottom line.

Friesz knows people prefer to get their news in different places. All four papers offer online subscriptions that cost \$33 a year.

While the online subscription eliminates the expense of purchasing paper, and printing and distributing the final product, it still takes labor to produce the content.

To subscribe to any of the weekly papers, visit www.gspublishing.net/ and click the respective business you wish to support.

Reaching more people

To promote upcoming stories or to live-stream breaking news, Friesz turns to Facebook. She also uses the medium to publish the photos she takes at community events.

“When I cover a county fair, I’ll take 2,000 pictures over the weekend. I can only print about 40 in the paper, so I upload all the photos on Facebook to share. People love to see themselves!” she says.

To like and follow the papers on Facebook, search for “Grant County News and Carson Press,” “Adams County Record” and “New England Herald.”

Friesz also targets younger readers by publishing a senior spotlight. The mother of three teenagers, Friesz noticed they flipped to the sports section first. She designs the senior spotlight in proximity to the sports, and says in addition to students learning about their friends and accomplishments in the news, they are getting the feel of the paper in their hands.

“When they go off to college, we hope they will



Jill Friesz, owner of GS Publishing LLC, the parent company of *Grant County News*, *Carson Press*, *Adams County Record* and *Hettinger County Herald*, is a strong advocate for local news. When reporters from all parts of the state covered the white supremacists who briefly took over Leith, Friesz says her coverage was likely the most intimate because her take was local. “Even though several media outlets came here to report, I still got to cover it in my own way,” she says. “I really don’t think local newspapers will ever die. We are way too important to the community to go by the wayside.”

subscribe and stay in touch with what’s going on back home,” she says.

Focusing on a promising future

Following the purchase of the two papers in southwest North Dakota, Friesz started the business GS Publishing LLC. It is the parent company of *Grant County News*, *Carson Press*, *Adams County Record* and *Hettinger County Herald*. Taking care of the details consumed a lot of time, but now that the four papers are streamlined, Friesz says she has more time to grow the business.

She still writes, edits, builds ads, designs pages, and works to grow the number of advertisers and subscriptions. As she slowly shifts some of the work and independence back to staff at the respective papers, she sees progress being made in focusing on local.

The papers hire local employees, fuel local economies and feature local news — everything needed to help rural areas in North Dakota thrive.

Friesz says saving the two papers, and receiving emails from people thanking her and wishing her well, reignited her passion to share the news.

“I would do it all over again!” she says. “To know you are appreciated and that people do care, and they do want the newspaper, that’s enough for us to do what we do.” ■



PHOTO BY NDAREC/LIZA KESSEL

Slope Electric recognized for community development efforts

The North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives conferred the coveted Cooperative Community Development Award to Slope Electric Cooperative at its annual meeting banquet on Jan. 21. The award recognizes the cooperative’s collective contributions in community leadership and economic development.

“Slope Electric Cooperative has impacted southwestern North Dakota through its countless contributions,” says NDAREC General Manager and Executive Vice President Josh Kramer. “The cooperative — together with its employees and board members — promotes job creation and workforce development, provides assistance with essential

services, and offers economic development tools to support community development. It is an honor to celebrate their efforts.”

Slope participates in the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program, which helps rural businesses expand. Over the years, the cooperative has secured several zero-interest loans that were used to fund remodeling and construction projects for businesses in the co-op’s service area, from health care to animal care.

Slope also utilizes rural development tools to advance area communities. By leveraging resources available through the Rural Development Finance Corporation, the cooperative has helped keep essential services in its communities, including a grocery store and dental office.

In addition, Slope operates a revolving loan fund that has provided zero-interest loans to community businesses.

Slope also encourages employees to be involved in our communities. They serve on the city council, ambulance board and Chamber committees, and volunteer with local fire departments, church and 4-H groups, and schools.

North Dakota’s electric cooperatives congratulate Slope Electric Cooperative on receiving this prestigious award. ■

Report from

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JAN. 27, 2020

Approved minutes of the Dec. 19, 2019, Board Meeting, capital credit estate retirements and special equipment.

The Co-General Managers/CEOs gave an update, and reported on several meetings they attended the past month.

Heard reports from Directors who attend various meetings throughout the month.

Approved RUS Form 219 Inventories of Work Orders, which will now be submitted to RUS so Slope can draw funds from its loan.

The Board selected committee members to serve on the 2020 Nominating/Resolutions

Committee. The committee will meet mid-February and again in March to make actual nominations for the election to be held at the cooperative’s annual meeting, and to approve resolutions to be printed in the annual meeting report.

Reviewed topics for the 2020 Annual Meeting Resolutions to be brought before the Nominating/Resolutions Committee for their review and approval.

Reviewed and approved the Audit Engagement Letter for Brady Martz to perform the annual audit.

Reviewed and approved the Mutual Aid Agreement among electric cooperatives

in the State, which sets guidelines to be followed when Slope provides aid or receives aid to another co-op.

Reviewed, terminated and approved several Board Policies.

Discussed plans for the 75th Annual Meeting of Slope Electric to be held on June 4.

Heard reports from senior staff, including the financial report for December.

The next Board Meeting is set for 10 a.m. MT on Feb. 27, 2020.

Held Executive Session.



PHOTO BY NDAREC/LIZA KESSEL

John Lee Njos (center), longtime board director for Slope, accepted the NDAREC Community Service Award from **Josh Kramer**, NDAREC general manager and executive vice president, and **Connie Bitz**, NDAREC secretary and board director for Dakota Valley Electric Cooperative.

Longtime director John Lee Njos recognized for community service

Also during the annual meeting banquet, NDAREC recognized John Lee Njos, former director of Slope Electric Cooperative, with the Community Service Award. Njos served on the Slope board of directors for 24 years and the Innovative Energy Alliance Cooperative board for 11 years. He also served as a director for Operation Round Up, Slope Services and 3C Construction, LLC.

Njos was instrumental in the formation of the alliance. Elected its first president, he served on the board from its formation until his retirement.

Roughrider Electric Cooperative Board President Roger Kudrna

recommended Njos for the award. He says, "John Lee was one of the early supporters who said we could set any differences aside, work together on behalf of our diverse memberships, and create a cooperative that would allow the respective boards to retain local control, yet do things that would be unattainable if we remained separate. For more than a decade, John Lee guided the path and progress of the alliance, which continues to grow by evolution."

Congratulations, John Lee, on receiving this recognition, and thank you for your service to our cooperative and area communities. ■



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SLOPE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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Steve Wegner, Vice President
Anthony Larson, Secretary
Jerome Caron, Treasurer
Angela Carlson, Director
HJ "Chip" Fischer, Director
Dale Hande, Director
Charlotte Meier, Director

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Donald A. Franklund
CO-GM/GEO

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