

September 25, 2019

Co-op Annual Meetings

NOVEC Annual Meeting Shows Co-op in Strong Position

NOVEC members re-elected a director, and learned about the co-op's successes and its **plans for the future** during a **well-attended** annual meeting on **September 18**.

More than **400 members** filled the auditorium at **Battlefield High School in Haymarket, Virginia**, with another **7,000-plus** participating by proxy as they returned **Brent George**, a consultant and former Navy pilot, to the **District 2 director** slot for a **four-year term**.

Before the business session, members enjoyed a complimentary **dinner**, perused **exhibits** explaining various facets of NOVEC's operations, viewed an **outdoor live line power display**, and listened to the **Bull Run Troubadours**, a barbershop harmony chorus based in **Prince William County**.

Among the guests was **Jim Matheson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)**, who said he appreciated the lively session because he seldom has the opportunity to visit distribution-level co-op annual meetings.



NOVEC crews conduct a live line demonstration for members as part of the annual meeting.

Lisa Hooker, NOVEC's vice president of public relations, welcomed participants and gave a shout-out to the **co-op's employees**, about half of whom were present in highly visible neon green shirts.

"The **employees** that serve you are among the **best in the industry** and the **best in the country** at keeping the lights on," Lisa said.

Attorney Dexter Odin, who is **counsel to the board of directors**, conducted the business meeting, including election by acclamation of **Brent George**, who then spoke to the membership. "I've enjoyed serving you just as the cooperative serves its customers," said Brent, adding that he enjoys working with members on service-related questions. "Make sure you thank the office staff and the linemen."



Wade House, chairman of the NOVEC Board of Directors, reports during the business session that 2018 was an excellent year for the Manassas-based co-op.

Board Chairman Wade House introduced other directors. He told the members the co-op had an **excellent year** in 2018 despite **record wet weather** that made keeping the lights on challenging. "The board is very happy with what's taken place," he said, noting that NOVEC now has about **172,000** member accounts on its books.

Wade also noted that NOVEC earlier this year announced plans to secure **300 megawatts of solar capacity** and associated energy by **2023** at a favorable rate as part of an arrangement with **D.E. Shaw Renewable Investments (DESRI)**, which is developing the solar projects. That's enough power for about **73,000 homes**.

President and CEO Stan Feuerberg outlined many of the co-op's accomplishments in 2018 and 2019. NOVEC continues to grow its customer base at about a **2 percent** annual clip, Stan said.

He said NOVEC added **113 miles of line last year** and upgraded an additional **23 miles** for a total of **7,365 miles of line**, more than two-thirds of it underground, in the **651 square miles** it serves across six counties, a town and a city. It now has about **\$1 billion in assets**, Stan noted, including its waste wood-to-power generation plant in **Halifax County**.

Stan said NOVEC continues to perform well in the annual **J.D. Power** customer satisfaction survey, **ranking first in Virginia, first in the mid-Atlantic region, and eighth nationally**. Among Washington D.C.-area electric utilities, the co-op has been **tops in reliability for 20 years in a row**, as measured by the **system average interruption duration index (SAIDI)**.

Another factor in customer satisfaction is keeping rates under control, and Stan noted NOVEC has **not increased base rates since 1991**. Additionally, the co-op's **power cost adjustment** will save members **\$7.3 million in 2019**. Its **"CashBack"** program has contributed another **\$309 million** since 2000.



President and CEO Stan Feuerberg explains how NOVEC will incorporate a large amount of solar energy into its portfolio.

Stan's presentations emphasized how NOVEC reaches out to the community through the annual **Youth Tour, Operation Round Up**, its **NOVEC HELPS program**, and support for **Camp Easterseals USP**, a cause near to his heart.

After Stan fielded questions from members, the co-op awarded prizes to many lucky attendees.

Congratulations to NOVEC on a successful year and annual meeting!

-Report by Steven Johnson, VMD Association Director of Member & Public Relations.

Powell Valley Celebrates Members at Annual Meeting

It was, General Manager/CEO **Randell Meyers** said, a day to celebrate the members of **Powell Valley Electric Cooperative**. Several hundred members from PVEC's territory in **Southwest Virginia** and **Northeast Tennessee** gathered **Sept. 21** at **Thomas Walker High School** in **Ewing, Virginia**, as they wrapped up the co-op's **80th year in business**.



General Manager/CEO Randell Meyers congratulates Porter Campbell, a member who will turn 100 in November. Campbell won a prize for being the oldest participant at the annual meeting.

Outside, kids and adults enjoyed **rides in two PVEC bucket trucks**, getting a look at the ground from the perspective of a lineworker. The co-op's youngest members enjoyed **face painting, games and coloring books**, while others sat inside the high school auditorium to appreciate the **bluegrass music of Dark Ridge**, examine **exhibits** and participate in a **health fair**.

"We hope you enjoy this day that is set aside just for you," Randell said.

Board Chairman **Roger Ball** welcomed members and guests, while co-op employee **Danny Sexton** opened the formal meeting with a prayer before Randell took the microphone. **John McDaniel**, records engineer, gave the

secretary-treasurer's update on the co-op's financial condition, which is very strong. PVEC had about **\$62 million in revenues** in 2018, expenses of about **\$58.9 million**, and maintains a **\$3.2 million margin**.

Randell said PVEC remains in a **strong financial position**. "Our mission remains the same, to keep rates low and the lights on," he noted, adding that PVEC recently completed a five-year financial forecast. To that end, he said the co-op "more than likely" will **not need to implement a rate increase** within the next five years.

Further, Randell said members will see a **2 percent reduction** in their bills starting in October thanks to the power supply relationship between **TVA** and **PVEC**. "We just signed a good, long-term contract with TVA that provides for a decrease in our wholesale power costs," Randell explained.

Randell also reported that the co-op plans to build a new office in **Sneedville, Tennessee**, to replace the current facility and will also add a warehouse. In **Jonesville, Virginia**, he said that PVEC will renovate the current district office to make it "more member-friendly," while also building a new warehouse and garage there. Randell also reported that, the co-op gained **155 new members** in the last year. "All in all, it's been a great year. There are many very positive things happening at Powell Valley and it's exciting to be a part of it," Randell said.

Randell also brought department leaders to the front of the gymnasium so they could introduce the employees who serve co-op members every day. Three representatives of PVEC to the annual **NRECA Youth Tour** — **Caleb Daniels**, **Brandon Meadows** and **Blaine Caylor** — briefly shared their experiences about the co-op trip to Washington, D.C., which they regarded as the thrill of a lifetime.

Other speakers included **Trent Scott**, vice president for corporate strategy at the **Tennessee Association of Electric Cooperatives**; **Robbie Ansary** of the **Tennessee Valley Authority's** customer service division; and **Richard G. Johnstone Jr.**, president and CEO of the VMD Association. Richard noted that PVEC plays an important role in the association even though its headquarters is closer to the capitals of seven other states than it is to Richmond. "We're proud to represent you in Richmond before the General Assembly," he noted. "We're pleased to save you the seven-hour drive to get there," he added with a smile.

Among the prizes handed out was a \$25 gift to the **oldest member** in attendance. That happened to be **Porter Campbell** of New Tazewell, Tennessee, **who will turn 100 on Nov. 29**. After enjoying a complimentary lunch, the membership re-elected three unopposed directors to the nine-member board: **Allen Parkey** of Tazewell, Tennessee, representing District 4, **Dr. John Short** of Sneedville, Tennessee, representing District 5, and **Gary Russell** of Jonesville, Virginia, representing District 9.

Congratulations to PVEC on a successful year and annual meeting!

-Report by Steven Johnson, VMD Association Director of Member & Public Relations.

United We Light

VMD Lineworkers Return Home After Bringing Light to Bolivian Villages

United We Light: Project Bolivia was a big success! **Fifteen electric cooperative lineworkers** returned home **Sept. 21** after bringing power to several communities in the **Oruro region** of the **South American nation**.



These Bolivian girls will be enjoying NNEC flying discs thanks to the co-op's Craig Loving.

The journey was truly an exceptional one. To get to the project site, the lineworkers endured **three flights** and a **long bus ride of six hours over rugged terrain**. From the get-go, they were behind schedule because a key road was blocked off so the Bolivian president could speak at a small mountain village. One day, the bus transporting the workers got **stuck in mud** and had to be pulled out by a tractor.

Once they got to their worksites, poles were in place, but there were **no bucket trucks** in the area, so the **lineworkers climbed and strung line by hand**. They **finished secondary lines** so the local utility could go in and **connect meters**. And on the return trip home, a battery died in the bus they were driving so they **crammed into vans** to catch a flight.

They also took time to **meet the locals** who were **seeing power for the first time** and mingled with children, handing out toys and gifts. Crew members included **Bernie Hastings** of A&N Electric Cooperative; **Cody Minter** of BARC Electric Cooperative; **Jason Purvis**, **Josh Golladay** and **Allan Thacker** of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative; **Mike Johnson** of Choptank Electric Cooperative; **Craig Loving** of Northern Neck Electric Cooperative; **Dillon Sheads**, **Jake Michael**, **Cody Lockhart** and **Patrick Ambrose** of Rappahannock Electric Cooperative; **Mike Alexander**, **JT Jacobs** and **Roger Pace** of Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative; and **Scott Diggs** of Southside Electric Cooperative.

John Medved of REC was team leader of United We Light: Project Bolivia, while **Ryan White** of REC produced **daily photos and videos** for the Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/UnitedWeLight/>.

On Sept. 19, **Kent Farmer**, president and CEO of REC; **Greg White**, president and CEO of NNEC; **Butch Williamson**, president and CEO of ANEC; and **Alan Scruggs** of the association joined the crews for an inauguration ceremony celebrating the accomplishment of **five projects** connecting **52 households** to the grid. The inauguration celebration took place at the village of **Achoco** with locals from the villages of **Puqui**, **Lagua Cruz**, and **Jalsuri**, as well as the **governor of the Oruro state**, at the event.



Several lineworkers team up "old-school style" to string wire and bring power to Bolivia.



Members of the United We Light: Project Bolivia team pose with Bolivian locals in the village of Jalsuri.

-Report by Steven Johnson, VMD Association Director of Member & Public Relations.

“The people that we are serving are so grateful for something that we take for granted. It’s one of the most emotional, heart-wrenching things I’ve experienced,” said **Roger Pace** of SVEC.

Congratulations on a job well done! These lineworkers embody the **seventh cooperative principle** and we hope their work will inspire others in the association as we consider follow-up trips.

Co-op News

Co-ops Work to Join Forces, Bring Fiber Broadband to Southside Virginia

Officials with **Buggs Island Telephone Cooperative (BIT Communications)** in Bracey and **EMPOWER Broadband Inc.**, a subsidiary of **Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative (MEC)** in Chase City, have announced that the boards of directors of the two organizations have executed an agreement for **EMPOWER to acquire BIT**.

This merger would advance the deployment of **high-speed fiber broadband internet** and **telephone services** to BIT’s service area and across **Southside Virginia**. Discussions have been ongoing since 2017 between the boards of directors of both entities and the senior management teams, while **extensive due diligence**, including legal, financial, telecommunications plant and staffing evaluations, has been conducted.

The agreement states that **EMPOWER Broadband would acquire BIT**, and its resources would be combined with EMPOWER’s to accelerate efforts in deploying services. The merger is **contingent** on the **approval of the BIT membership** and determined by vote of the BIT members. The voting period will run from **October 7 to November 13**, and members can cast their votes **electronically or by mail**.

According to **Michele Taylor, general manager of BIT**, members of the 65-year-old cooperative have been contacted by letter and email, notifying them of the agreement and **recommending their approval**. “The board of directors and management staff of BIT encourage members to vote ‘YES’ to the proposal because this merger will be very beneficial to our members as deployment of **long-awaited broadband internet service** will gain momentum,” Michele said.

John C. Lee Jr., president and CEO of both MEC and EMPOWER, agreed that the addition of BIT to EMPOWER will **benefit members** of both organizations. “Deploying fiber is costly, and **rural Southside Virginia** lacks the population density required to interest large investor-owned companies in meeting this need,” John said. “BIT and MEC have worked alongside each other as **sister cooperatives** for decades to meet the **electric and telephone service commitments** made to our common memberships. We’ll continue to meet both those responsibilities and there is no doubt that joining forces puts us in a stronger position to deliver a third critical service to our members ... **world-class internet access**.”

-Report by Debbie Blue Winn, Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative Member and Public Relations Specialist.



The boards of directors of Buggs Island Telephone Cooperative (BIT) and EMPOWER Broadband have signed an agreement that would allow EMPOWER Broadband to acquire BIT and merge their resources upon an affirmative vote by BIT’s membership. Both boards of directors and senior management staffs gather to sign the agreement. From left, seated are EMPOWER President & CEO John C. Lee Jr.; Vice Chairman Frank Myers and Chairman David Jones; and BIT President Linsey Carroll, Vice President Randolph Hite and General Manager Michele Taylor.

Personals

News About Members of the VMD Cooperative Family

The cooperative family was saddened by the death of **Garnett Ray Turner** of **Fulks Run, Virginia**, a **former director** at **Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative** and a **past recipient** of the **VMD Association's Unsung Virginian Award**.



Garnett Ray Turner

Garnett died **Sept. 9** at the age of **94**. He was born July 11, 1925 to Lloyd and Ruth Turner, enlisted in the **U.S. Navy** during World War II and served on the **USS Carter Hall** in China.

Returning home, he was appointed **postmaster of Fulks Run** in 1947 and opened **Fulks Run Grocery** two years later. The business has been operated by the **Turner family for 70 years**.

In 1949, Garnett married Lena V. Albrite. They started **sugar-curing hams** in their **basement**, and the experiment became **Turner Hams**, now the **Shenandoah Valley's only ham-curing operation**.

Garnett was a **director at SVEC from 1985 to 1992**. He received the **Unsung Virginian Award in 1998**. He also was a **director of First National Bank of Broadway from 1959 to 2004**. With his **brothers**, Garnett was a familiar figure known for **riding bicycles backwards** in the annual **Apple Blossom Parade**.

An avid **croquet player**, he won the **Virginia state champion** title two years and **state doubles** champion title one year.

He wife preceded him in death; Garnett is survived by four daughters and one son. Memorial gifts may be made to **Chimney Rock VFW Post 9660**, of which Garnett was a charter member, **P.O. Box 847, Broadway, VA 22815**.



Help Us Keep You Informed!



If you have story ideas, news or information of interest and benefit to other members of the electric cooperative community in our three-state area, please contact:

Steven Johnson at sjohnson@vmdaec.com (804) 297-3644 or
Phyllis Long at plong@vmdaec.com (804) 297-3161