



# [Echoes of the Empire]

*Energy Experts Working for You*

## EMPIRE ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION'S 2018 ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

The June 14, 2018, annual meeting took place at the Empire Electric Association community room. Seventy-one registered members attended and received a \$10 credit on their electric bills.

General Manager Josh Dellinger welcomed attendees, introduced special guests and thanked law enforcement officers and military personnel for their service.

Attorney Shay Denning reported on the voting procedures. She reported that only one candidate for District 3 submitted a written petition and announced that William Bauer is elected as a matter of law.

Secretary-Treasurer Jerry Fetterman presented the Official Notice of the Annual Meeting as published in the area newspapers in accordance with the bylaws of the cooperative.

Vice President David Sitton called for approval of the minutes of the June 15, 2017, annual meeting.



**General Manager Josh Dellinger reports on the 2017 highlights.**

Fetterman reported on the solid financial performance of EEA. He noted several factors that affected 2017's finances, including increased load from Kinder Morgan, the automated metering infra-



**Tiffanie Vialpando tries out the virtual reality experience presented by Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association.**

structure update project, moving from a 35-year to a 15-year depreciation schedule for metering equipment and a Rural Utilities Service refinance that will provide a long-term benefit.

Denning reported on the legal issues her firm is working on with EEA, including a general upgrade and standardization of processes and systems, the joint use agreements for entities that attach to Empire's poles, contracts for independent contractors and a renewable energy project to install solar panels on the property it owns by Totten Lake.

Dellinger reported on the following 2017 highlights:

- Solar project at Totten Lake is on hold presently due to pricing changes and Tri-State Generation and Transmission



**Renewable Randy (cutout in back) joins the fun at the 2018 Annual Meeting along with (left to right) Denise Moore, Bobbe Jones, Michelle Pastor and Andy Carter.**

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## SEPTEMBER CO-OP PHOTO CONTEST WINNER



**Country Road in the Fall by Scott Twilley**

## CO-OP CALENDAR

### SEPTEMBER 3

Labor Day

### SEPTEMBER 9

National Grandparents Day

### SEPTEMBER 11

Patriot Day

### SEPTEMBER 14

Empire's board meeting begins at 8:30 a.m. at its headquarters in Cortez. The agenda is posted 10 days in advance of the meeting at [eea.coop](http://eea.coop). Members are reminded that public comment is heard at the beginning of the meeting.

### SEPTEMBER 21

First day of fall

### ANNUAL MEETING RECAP *[continued from page 7]*

- policy changes. With those changes, Empire cannot get the project to make financial sense.
- Empire completed refinancing federal debt in 2017, which was a major milestone. Refinancing improved cash flows and streamlined operations, and will result in lower overall borrowing costs in the long term. The refinance included a prepayment penalty, but even with the penalty net margins were strong enough to meet loan covenants. Recognizing the entire penalty all in one year means that it will not put pressure on rates in future years.
  - Metering upgrade is providing Empire Electric with faster outage recognition and more granular data that can be provided to members.
  - Empire donated \$150,000 to community causes with \$50,000 going to local scholarships.
  - Empire upgraded its system capabilities and can backfeed most of its system with alternate circuits.
  - Empire sold the old warehouse property. The subdivision process involved the

county, city and Colorado Department of Transportation. Empire advertised, took sealed bids and awarded the property to highest bidder.

Dellinger also reported on upcoming projects:

- 1) offering a prepay option to allow members to prepay for electricity at their own convenience
- 2) addressing the 2,000 idle services on Empire's system
- 3) continuing improvement of member communication efforts, particularly outage communications.

Tri-State Senior Vice President of Transmission Joel Bladow reported:

- Tri-State's job is to serve its membership.
- Key goals are affordable rates and reliability, and to make sure work is done safely.
- There are difficulties involved with building transmission lines and Tri-State's plans for adding transmission.
- The results of a membership survey from directors and managers showed that affordability and management of

costs to keep rates stable were a top priority.

- Tri-State is financially sound and no rate increase was required in 2018 and likely for the next few years.
- Over 30 percent of Tri-State's wholesale power comes from renewable resources. Sitton called for questions or comments on the reports presented. Additional information was provided in response to member questions.

Sitton called for unfinished business to be presented before the meeting. There was no unfinished business.

Sitton called for new business to be presented before the meeting. There was no new business presented.

Sitton called for questions, comments or suggestions from the audience. Three members responded. Mike Conne voiced opposition to the Totten solar project as his property borders the proposed location. Rebecca Samulski discussed several topics: transparency of the Totten Lake solar project, net-metering generation, appreciation of reliability improvements, stability of rates and tree-trimming crews.

## 2018 Continuing Education Scholarship Recipients



Jessalyn Bay-Voit



Kayleen Bowie



Easton Bowring



Ryan Jens Brewer



Cortney Cashner



Cassie Finley



Corissa Guynes



Jessica Guynes



Judy Ha



Randy Haley



Zachary Hartle



Nichole Kibel



Danika Lunnon



Colton Reynolds



Larissa Umberger

### ANNUAL MEETING RECAP [continued from page 8]

Mark Walker asked about the viability of battery storage.

Sitton addressed the transparency concern raised by Samulski. He said that Empire's doors are wide open, all members are invited to attend board meetings and the only time members are excluded is executive sessions. All other discussion is open and public and in the minutes. Empire doesn't have anything to hide — the board is part of the membership and it believes it is transparent. To Samulski's point where she wished members would have known about the Totten property sale, this topic was discussed at every annual meeting from the time before the co-ops built the operations center. It was well-known that Empire had a goal of selling the Totten property as a way of offsetting the costs of the operations

center. It was publicly posted for sale with a local real estate company for four or five years before it finally sold, so there was talk about this for a long time.

Dellinger addressed Samulski's comment about increased rates. He acknowledged that it seems like rates go up every year, but the fact is EEA had one residential rate increase in last five years. Dellinger noted that the board takes rate increases seriously and if EEA does need a rate increase it is publicized through *Colorado Country Life*, the website and bill messages.

Corporate Operations Manager Chris Snyder conducted the general prize drawing.

Sitton adjourned the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

## MY CO-OP EMPLOYEES



**Congratulations to Chanda Hurst** on her new position as the engineering and operations secretary beginning on July 23, 2018. Chanda started with Empire Electric on April 4, 2016, as a consumer services representative.

**Correction from July 2018 Co-op Employees:** Tiffanie Vialpando started on December 17, 2012, as a consumer services representative and accepted the accounting clerk position beginning on May 29, 2018.

## MY CO-OP ADVANTAGE

### LED Bulb Rebates are Available!

You receive an \$8 credit on your account for each purchased LED bulb with 500 lumens or greater. There is a limit of 50 bulb rebates per year. Instructions and forms are available at [eea.coop](http://eea.coop).

## MY CO-OP ADVANTAGE

### Camp Teaches Leadership, Teamwork, Inclusiveness: the Pillars of a Cooperative

Fitting in and being part of the group can be challenging for anyone, especially high school students. It is this sense of belonging, of being part of something bigger, that sets electric cooperatives apart from other utilities. The Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp (CYLC) in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, aims to bring high school students together in a collaborative setting to learn the cooperative principles while cultivating the students' leadership and teamwork skills.



Britton Brewer, Monticello High School student, learns about raptor protection during a presentation at CYLC.

This year's CYLC hosted 45 Colorado and Wyoming high school students and other hand-picked scholars from Kansas and Oklahoma from July 13 to 19. Empire Electric is pleased to have sponsored Kale Hall (Montezuma-Cortez High School), Madilyn Hankins (Dove Creek High School), Emily Cole (Mancos High School), and Britton Brewer (Monticello High School) for this leadership opportunity.

At CYLC, the youth gained a greater understanding of how their electric cooperative operates by creating their own cooperative. The students learned leadership and teamwork skills while participating in daily membership meetings, establishing committees and electing a general manager and board of directors. They also learned about power generation by touring both Trapper Mine, a surface coal mine, and the neighboring Craig Station power plant.

To be selected for this trip, students were chosen by Empire Electric through an application process where students share why they want to attend the camp and create a presentation promoting themselves.

"Students are selected based on their leadership potential," said Bobbe Jones, member service manager. "This includes their academic achievements and community and extracurricular activities, along with their attitude when faced with adversity."

While at camp, students participated in group activities and educational sessions while learning the importance of inclusivity and collaboration. Even the scheduled leisure activities offered learning opportunities as the students worked together maneuvering their river rafts down the Colorado River, competing in a volleyball tournament and showcasing their entertaining skills at the annual talent show. The students also toured downtown Steamboat Springs and enjoyed an evening dance and swimming during their free time.

Established in the 1970s, the CYLC is sponsored by Empire Electric and coordinated by the Colorado Electric Educational Institute. For more information on next year's camp, please contact Empire Electric at 970-565-4444.

## BE ON THE HUNT FOR SAFETY

Wearing a bright orange vest, keeping your finger off the trigger until you're ready to shoot and only pointing at your target are some of the safety measures associated with hunting. Electrical safety should be added to the list.

Never shoot near or toward power lines, power poles, transformers or substations. A stray bullet could not only damage equipment, potentially interrupting electric service, but could also be deadly to the shooter. Damage to the conductor could drop the line to the ground, causing a threat of electrocution to those nearby.

Safe Electricity urges hunters to follow these safety tips while hunting:

- Familiarize yourself with the location of power lines and equipment on land where you shoot.
- Be especially careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be as visible.
- Take notice of warning signs and keep clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles. Energized lines and equipment on the poles can conduct electricity to anyone who comes in contact with them.
- Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment. Anything attached to a pole, except for utility equipment, is an obstruction and poses a serious hazard to utility workers.

Don't force linemen to hunt for problems you have created in a hunting area.

Sometimes damage isn't noticed for several weeks or months, or unless an outage occurs. Keep yourself and your utility safe this hunting season.

For more electrical safety tips, visit [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org).

