On Jan. 22, 2020, the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) presented Vern Dosch, Capital Electric Cooperative member, with the Helping Hand Award. The award recognizes faithful friends and strong supporters of North Dakota’s electric cooperatives.

Former NISC president retires after 45 years

IN THIS ISSUE

• Member profile: Vern Dosch
• Know Your Co-op: How the grid works
• Serve as a director of Capital Electric Cooperative
• Directors represent your interests
• Board minutes
NISC president retires after 45 years of cooperative service

BY KRISTA RAUSCH

For the last ten years, a change of clothes hung on the back of Vern Dosch’s door at National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC), just in case he decided to take an unusual route to the office.

“We live on the river, so I would take my kayak about three miles down the river. And then, on the other side, I had an old Schwinn Mojave chained to a tree. I would unchain my bike, chain the kayak up and ride the rest of the way to the office. And, I’d do it the other way on the way home,” says Dosch.

A longtime member of Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC), Dosch dedicated 45 years of his life to the cooperative movement, impacting the lives of cooperative members in every role he took. Fresh out of college, he got his start in bookkeeping at CEC in 1975. In 1979, he went to work at Basin Electric Power Cooperative, where he started as a business manager and eventually become the head of accounts payable. In 1986, he began working at North Central Data Cooperative (NCDC), a predecessor of NISC. He started as a business manager, before assuming the role of CEO in 1992.

“The truth is I got the CEO job because they felt sorry for me, not because I was qualified,” says Dosch with a laugh.

Two days before his interview, Dosch and a few of
his colleagues traveled to Holyoke, Colorado, to provide a product demonstration. The demonstration required a lot of equipment, so they chartered a plane with Bob Watts of Capital Aviation. The morning after their presentation, they boarded the King Air 200 for the return flight home.

“We got about 150-feet off the ground, and one of the engines failed. We didn’t have the speed to maintain the altitude, so we started going down,” recalls Dosch.

Watts, a World War II pilot, maneuvered the plane to safety, landing in a recently irrigated corn field.

“[The landing] broke out all the windows and tore the landing gear off,” recalls Dosch. “Bob turned around, and he was all cut up, and it looked like someone had thrown a can of creamed corn in his face. But, thankfully, we were all okay.”

Dosch remembers the muddy ground sticking to his feet when he got out of the plane. He believes the wet ground is what slowed the plane and saved their lives.

Dosch’s interview for the CEO position of NCDC was the following morning. With no available flights out of Denver and no rental cars in Holyoke, they rented a used van from a nearby Ford dealership.

“We drove non-stop, switching off drivers through the night. We got to Bismarck at 11 a.m., and I took a shower and went over for my interview,” says Dosch. “I think they felt sorry for me, but it worked.”

Dosch served as CEO of NCDC until the cooperative merged with Central Area Data Processing Corporation (CADP) in 2000, becoming NISC. He served as NISC’s chief operating officer until 2002, when he was named CEO.

Dosch led with humility, practicing the mantra, “Do the right thing, always.” He also led by example, creating a culture of compassion and cooperation, and it didn’t go unnoticed.

At the urging of a friend and colleague, Wally Goulet, Dosch wrote the book, Wired Differently, which demonstrates the impact servant leadership and the cooperative business model can have on an organization. His book has since been developed into a class, taught at the University of Mary, which helps increase awareness of the cooperative business model. A true servant leader, Dosch has never earned a profit from the book. Proceeds go to a benevolence fund that helps NISC employees in distress.

Under Dosch’s leadership, NISC helped electric cooperatives and their members nationwide by providing software solutions specifically tailored to their needs. These solutions enable cooperatives to improve efficiencies, implement new technologies, improve communication and save money — all of which helps cooperatives better serve their members. SmartHub, a NISC application, allows CEC members to manage their account, pay their bill, monitor utility use and receive notifications.

“Vern Dosch has made an indelible mark on the cooperative business model in North Dakota, as well as the entire country,” says CEC General Manager Paul Fitterer. “Under his leadership, NISC has proven that not only can this model be sustained by a fast-paced, world class software provider, but it can be done by partnering with its members to create something very special and sustainable.”

Today, Dosch’s change of clothes hang in a different location — his closet. In January, he began his next great adventure — retirement. Dosch says he looks forward to spending more time with his wife, Lynne, their three grown children and six grandchildren. He also looks forward to crossing a few things off his bucket list.

“I want to hike the Appalachian Trail, the Pacific Crest Trail and the Grand Canyon — from rim to rim. I have a map on my wall of the...
national parks. My goal is — once they get these charging stations built out — I want to visit all of the national parks with an electric vehicle,” says Dosch. “But it’s mainly wanting to be a part of the kids’ lives. I’m really looking forward to that.”

In his final act as president and CEO of NISC, Dosch spoke at the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives 77th annual meeting. In his address, he said, “I feel like the luckiest guy to be able to have a career like I have, to be a part of watching NISC grow up and to be able to do it here in North Dakota. I consider myself to be very, very fortunate.”

Jim Rohn once said, “All good men and women must take responsibility to create legacies that will take the next generation to a level we could only imagine.”

A servant leader, teacher, writer and friend to cooperatives, Dosch has made an incredible impact on many lives. As he enters retirement, he leaves behind a legacy of cooperation and a blueprint on how to lead with humility, integrity and generosity of heart.

CEC congratulates Dosch on his retirement and thanks him for 45 years of dedicated service to cooperatives and their members.
Online voting for directors

Sign up for SmartHub to vote online!

This spring, Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC) will introduce online voting as an alternate means of voting for the co-op’s directors. In addition, traditional voting will still occur at the annual meeting on June 10, 2020.

Online voting will be offered through SmartHub, a web and mobile app that allows members to access their bill, manage their account and monitor electric usage. To register for the free resource, visit www.capitalelec.com and click on “New User? Register to use SmartHub!” at the top of the home page. You will need to enter your billing account number, last name and email address to sign up.

How the Grid Works

BY WES ENGBRECHT

The electric grid is something you hear about on the news, but you may never contemplate what it is or how it works. The concept of an interconnected electrical system spanning much of the North American continent is complex, yet it is an ever-evolving system that should be discussed.

Greg Owen, manager of engineering services at Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC), spoke to CEC’s Know Your Co-op class about the electric grid and other topics relating to the generation and transmission of electricity. As an electrical engineer and former employee of Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Owen has significant experience and insight into these topics.

According to Owen, “The electric grid is a remarkable feat of human ingenuity and determination. From engineers pioneering new concepts, to market analysts finding the best financial combinations of resources, to regulatory agencies ensuring reliability, to the crews building and maintaining the system, the grid operates around the clock to provide reliable and low-cost energy to consumers. Increasing awareness of the interactions between these groups helps us better understand and appreciate what it takes to make this big machine work.”

Nineteen co-op members attended the most recent session of Know Your Co-op. They were eager to learn and had many questions on the history of the grid, how the U.S. Government is involved in regulating the grid, who generates the power for the grid, how that power is managed and much more. They were most interested in what the future holds for the generation and transmission of electricity.

Results from a 2019 member survey reflected our members want to learn more about many electricity-related topics. The Know Your Co-op program is a great way to meet that need, and it allows us an opportunity to interact with members who we are meeting for the first time.

Know Your Co-op is a member education class developed by CEC’s staff with the purpose of engaging co-op members in an understanding of what we do and how things work at the cooperative. There are eight quarterly sessions that cover multiple topics. You are welcome to join the class at any time, all you need to do is contact Wes Engbrecht at wese@capitalelec.com or (701) 712-7923 and add your name to the list.

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Capital Electric Cooperative’s (CEC) 74th annual meeting will be held June 10 at the Bismarck Event Center.

This year, three seats on the co-op’s board of directors will need to be filled. Directors whose terms will expire in June include Dave Charles from District 1, Richard Koski from District 2 and William Patrie from District 3.

The nine members who make up the CEC board of directors set policies and make decisions that guide the cooperative into the future. With the annual meeting just a few short months away, now is the time for members to start thinking about whether they have the time and desire to serve their electric cooperative.

In accordance with Article 4, Section 3 of the co-op bylaws, current members of CEC can have their names placed on the ballot to be voted upon for the open board positions in either of these two ways: 1) accepting a nomination by the CEC Nominating Committee or 2) submitting a petition signed by at least 15 current members of the cooperative, not less than 40 days prior to the annual meeting.

If you are interested in becoming a candidate for the CEC board of directors or wish to have a member considered for nomination, please contact a member of the Nominating Committee listed above prior to April 9. Committee members will have information on the requirements a member must meet in order to serve on the co-op’s board of directors. Pursuant to the bylaws, the Nominating Committee must post a list of nominations at least 35 days prior to the annual meeting.

Official notice of CEC’s 74th annual meeting will be mailed to members in May.

Are you interested in serving as a director for Capital Electric?

Place YOUR name on the ballot today!
Directors represent your interests

Capital Electric Cooperative (CEC) is overseen by a board of directors elected by the member-owners of our co-op. Each director represents the members on the board and each director is a co-op member.

Directors represent the members’ interests. They learn and internalize concerns, expectations and ideas, and take the information into the board room. During board meetings, directors exchange information and strategize for the co-op’s progressive growth.

Directors have a fiduciary responsibility to the cooperative. They exercise care, time and responsibility in reviewing co-op matters. Because they are also owners of the cooperative, they treat the business like their own.

Directors devote a certain amount of time to the cooperative. At a minimum, directors attend a monthly board meeting. To learn about the industry and understand critical issues, directors research issues important to cooperatives and attend state and national meetings.

To help directors with their responsibilities, training is offered through the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC). If directors choose to pursue certification, they must take and complete five courses that cover director duties and liabilities, understanding the electric business board roles and relationships, strategic planning and financial decision-making.

Serving CEC and your community can be a rewarding experience! For more information, contact a member of the Nominating Committee (see C6) or call the co-op at (701) 712-7923 and ask for Wes Engbrecht, director of communications and public relations.

What does it take to be a good board member?

We often get questions in the office from CEC members who are interested in running for a board position. The most common questions are: 1) what does it take to be a good board member? and, 2) what is the time commitment required to do the job well?

A good board member is someone who takes the time to learn about the cooperative business model and understands what it means to the co-op’s member-owners. A director will put time into training classes and individual study of issues the cooperative is dealing with on a regular basis. They will attend board meetings and other related meetings regularly to collaborate with fellow board members on those issues.

The following list of meetings and time requirements will give you an indication of what is generally expected of a CEC Director:

- Twelve regular monthly board meetings, almost all in Bismarck
- One day at CEC’s Annual Meeting, held in June in Bismarck
- Six days at NDAREC and G&T annual meetings, Bismarck and Minot
- Regional and national meetings
- Some CEC Directors serve on other related boards at Central Power and NDAREC, which meet on a monthly or quarterly basis
- Other unscheduled meetings and training classes can add additional days

On average, a CEC director can spend between 25 and 30 days on co-op business each year.

A commitment to the cooperative and the cooperative business model is vital to a director’s success on the board. Focusing on the needs of our member-owners is the common thread that keeps our board operating effectively.
The Board of Directors of Capital Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CEC), held its regular meeting on Friday, Jan. 24, 2020, at co-op headquarters in Bismarck, North Dakota, pursuant to due notice to all directors. All directors were present at the time. Also present were Manager Paul Fitterer, Business Manager Luke Steen, Operations Manager Rick Dressler, Engineering Services Manager Greg Owen, Energy Services Manager Josh Schaffner, Director of Communications and Public Relations Wes Engbrecht and Attorney Carol K. Larson of Pringle & Heritz, P.C., who acted as recording secretary.

Financial Review: Prior to the board meeting, Directors Kyle Hilken and Rex Hollebeck reviewed the December 2019 check register and expenditures. They reported all checks were in order. It was moved, seconded and carried to approve December expenditures in the amount of $4,525,618.03.

Management Reports (Business Department, Operations and Engineering, Member Services and Public Relations, Communications):

Business Department Report: The business manager presented the draft of the December 2019 financial and statistical report to the Board. Total kWh sales for December were over budget by 0.9%. Actual monthly electric revenue is behind budget by 1.1%.

CEC’s load factor was above budget. The total operating margin for December was $197,479, versus the budgeted amount of $277,922. The total margin for December was $2,385,426 compared to the budgeted amount of $955,238, ahead of budget by $1,471,188. The majority of this difference is from credit allocation credits from Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

Total annual sales for 2019 ended below budget by 1.02%. Total annual revenue is behind budget by $46,482. CEC began billing 15 new services in December, bringing active services to 20,095 versus 20,069 at this time last year, or a net increase of 286 over the last 12 months.

The business manager reviewed the comparison of actual to budgeted expenses, cash flow statement and monthly power cost for the month of December 2019. Accounts receivable balances as of Jan. 23, 2020, were reviewed.

Federated Insurance: CEC completed its renewal with Federated Insurance.


Estate Retirements: Following review of the financial condition of the cooperative and recommendation by management, it was moved, seconded and carried to authorize payment of capital credits to the following deceased members’ estates:

- Tammy Lang
- Jennifer Drissler
- $717.99
- $65.88
- $783.87

Quarterly Write-offs: After discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to write off $4,252,36 for the fourth quarter. The total 12-month write-off is $17,927.40.

ERG Loan Write-offs: Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to write off the Energy Resource Conservation (ERG) loan.

RUS Forecast & Loan Application: Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to approve the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) 10-year financial forecast and loan application in the amount of $12.75 million.

CFC Bridge Loan: Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to approve the line of credit agreement from the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC), which carries a maximum of $12.75 million. This facility will be used to bridge the time until the RUS loan is approved and available.

NRECA: The board discussed the resolution authorizing the amendment to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) 401(k) Pension Plan Adoption Agreement “A” and the Retirement Security Plan. Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to adopt the resolution.

Brady Martz: Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to execute the Audit Engagement Letter.

Operations Report: Dressler reviewed the written report from the operations department. CEC crews are performing line inspection. CEC crews are installing Verizon meters in the McClusky/Goodrich and Wilton/Williston areas. There are 715 meters left to be replaced.

There was an outage caused by a VFI opening up in the Gateway Subdivision west of headquarters and outages caused by frost.

Eight of the co-op’s lineworkers attended the annual AT&S Conference Jan. 15-17, 2020. Topics covered included fault locating, reasonable suspicion and grounding.

All line personnel completed their Department of Transportation physicals required for their CDL licenses. Requests for materials quotes have been sent out.

The annual inventory is complete for 2019. In 2019, CEC established reel tracking and quarterly inventory of its underground cable. This has proven very beneficial and has simplified the inventory process at year-end.

Chris Baumgartner and Andy Buntrck, Basin Electric, met with the Board to provide an update.

Engineering Report: Owen reviewed the written report from the engineering department.

CEC completed 38 work orders in December, adding 81 new consumers.

Central Power Electric Cooperative (CPEC) Items: CEC received a full load monitoring incentive credit for December.

SCADA: CEC is prioritizing the replacement and upgrade of supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) equipment in the next few years.

CEC had a conference to generate a quote for upgrading the master system software to the latest version.


Load Control: CEC has installed and tested cellular-based load controllers at its headquarters building as well as a few in the system.

The next test of the pilot program is to automate the load control signal CEC receives from CPEC to integrate with the cellular platform.

Staking Procedures: The staking group has begun an effort to more closely define CEC staking processes and procedures.

Security Plan:Firearm and Weapons Policy: This policy was developed to address the risks of firearms and weapons being brought to CEC-owned facilities. Weapons are to remain locked within a vehicle while on CEC property. Following discussion, it was moved, seconded and carried to approve Policy No. I-20.

A visitor policy is being developed.

A perimeter security plan is in process.

Energy Services Department: Schaffner reviewed the Energy Services Report.

Twenty-one service orders were completed in December. Material inventory has been completed.

EV Charging Station: The City of Bismarck’s electric vehicle charger application for Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) funds has been approved for two Level 2 charging sites. CEC’s joint application with the Lightfoot Energy Council did not receive funding through this session. The co-op will re-apply in the next application period.

Distributed Generation: CEC has started grant applications for three commercial members’ solar system installations. Two of the members would like to proceed with battery storage on their accounts.

Meetings & Training: The board reviewed the fourth quarter Safety Committee meeting minutes. Main topics discussed were Report of Incident & Investigation forms, headquarters security and safety procedures and member safety.

ERC Loans: There are no ERC loan applications for approval this month.

Communications, Public Relations and IT Department: Engbrecht reviewed topics of interest.

Annual Meeting: The annual meeting planning has begun. E-Voting will be open prior to the annual meeting date, which will be June 10.


Know Your Co-op: The next session is scheduled for Jan. 28, 2020 from 6 to 9 p.m.

Safety Report: There were no lost time accidents in December.

CEC sent employees to NDAREC’s Apprenticeship, Training and Safety (AT&S) Conference January 15, 16 and 17.

CEC received a Safety Achievement Certificate at the AT&S banquet for the 2019 Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program audit. The audit is completed every three years. Without objection, the safety report was approved.

CPEC: Director Sheri Haugen-Hoffart reported on CPEC matters.

Haugen-Hoffart was elected delegate and Hilken was elected as alternate to the CPEC Board.

Director Arlene Olson was appointed to the CPEC Resolutions Committee, and Hollebeck was appointed as alternate.

Olson was appointed delegate to CPEC annual meeting, and Hollebeck was appointed alternate.

Statewide Report: Director Deon Vilhauer reported on Statewide matters. Vern Dobis spoke at the meeting. The NDAREC building renovation and lineworker training center were reviewed.


Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the meeting, it was moved, seconded, and carried, to adjourn the regular meeting.

Richard Koski, Pres. ....................................Wing
Arline Olson, V. Pres. ..................................Wilmot
Sheri Haugen-Hoffart, Sec.-Treas. .............Bismarck
Dave Charles, Asst. Sec.-Treas. .............Williston
Kyle Hilken ...................................................Bismarck
Rex Hollebeck ..............................................McClusky
Dwight Wrangham .........................................Bismarck
William Patrie .............................................Bismarck
Deon Vilhauer .............................................Bismarck
Paul Fitterer, Mgr. ........................................Bismarck

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A Touchstone Energy Cooperative