

MINUTES
GENERAL BOARD MEETING, NOVEMBER 25, 2025
FERGUS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

- 1. GENERAL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER.** The Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc. Board of Trustees met in general session November 25, 2025, with PRESIDENT TERRY FROST calling the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. JANINE RIFE DIDIER was scrivener. The Board Members in attendance were BRAD ARNTZEN, PAUL BRADY, BOB EVANS, CATHY KOMBOL, BRETT MAXWELL, and JASON SWANZ. Other attendees included GENERAL MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY, LINE SUPERINTENDENT BRET OPHUS, OFFICE MANAGER SALLY HORACEK and CORPORATE COUNSEL KRIS BIRDWELL. The attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.
- 2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA.** After reviewing the November 25, 2025, meeting agenda, BRETT MAXWELL moved to approve it. BRAD ARNTZEN seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- 3. MINUTES APPROVAL.** After reviewing the general board meeting minutes of October 30, 2025, and discussing them, BRETT MAXWELL, moved to approve them. PAUL BRADY seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- 4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD.** No one from the public appeared.
- 5. PLANNING.**
 - a. 2027 FERGUS FACILITY MAINTENANCE.** GENERAL MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY reported that he had enlisted the help of LOCATION DIRECTOR, SHANNON CHRISTENSEN, PRINCIPAL of the architectural firm Cushing Terrell in Billings, MT regarding the need for maintenance on the exterior and interior of Fergus Electric's headquarters facility. SWEENEY listed the windows in the entryway, exterior wood fascia and soffit, new flooring, new paint on walls, and updating the front office layout as a few of the items he asked Cushing Terrell to address. SWEENEY will provide the Board with the cost estimates from Cushing Terrell when he receives them.
 - b. 2026 EXPENSE BUDGET APPROVAL.** MANAGER SWEENEY reviewed several items on the 2026 expense budget that had been thoroughly reviewed during the board meeting held September 25, 2025. VICE PRESIDENT JASON SWANZ move to approve the 2026 Expense Budget. BRETT MAXWELL seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
 - c. 2026 CAPITAL BUDGET APPROVAL.** MANAGER SWEENEY said that staff had done a good job covering the 2026 capital budget items during the board meeting held October 30, 2025. After a brief discussion, BRETT MAXWELL moved to approve the 2026 Capital Budget as presented. PAUL BRADY seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
 - d. WILDFIRE MITIGATION PLAN APPROVAL.** MANAGER SWEENEY talked about the Wildfire Mitigation Plan and the planning that had gone into drafting the plan. SWEENEY said there is no way to prevent all wildfires. The plan meets all requirements of House Bill 490 and would reduce the co-op's insurance liability. BOB EVANS moved to approve the Wildfire Mitigation Plan. BRAD ARNTZEN seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
 - e. MECA BOARD MEETING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING.** MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY talked about topics that will be discussed during the upcoming MECA Winter Board Meeting and Strategic Planning Session. PRESIDENT TERRY FROST mentioned that MECA members have again suggested relocating the MECA office to Helena and allowing CEO MARK LAMBRECHT to reside in Helena. MANAGER SWEENEY told the board that the rest of the MECA staff are not willing to relocate to Helena. The general consensus of the Fergus Board was that the MECA office should maintain its current location and that MARK LAMBRECHT should reside in Great Falls, based upon his prior commitment to do so. PRESIDENT FROST will not be able to attend, so MANAGER SWEENEY will fill in for him at the Strategic Planning Session. BOARD DIRECTOR PAUL BRADY will accompany MANAGER SWEENEY.
- 6. FINANCIAL AND OTHER MONTHLY REPORTS.** Staff presented financial and other monthly reports to the Board for discussion.
 - a. FINANCIAL REPORTS. FINANCIAL REPORTS.** OFFICE MANAGER SALLY HORACEK reviewed the October 31, 2025, Form 7 operating report. HORACEK noted that the co-op's real estate taxes were \$29,000 more than last year. JANINE RIFE DIDIER reviewed the October 31, 2025, ratios report.

- b. **OPERATIONS AND SAFETY REPORT.** LINE SUPERINTENDENT BRET OPHUS reported that the Safety Meeting November 13 was led by MECA SAFETY INSTRUCTOR BILL DOTY. Training included Mayday exercises, and instruction on confined space and trench excavation. The crew engaged in a good conversation about accidents and near misses prompted by reviewing Federated Insurance's report on close calls. Fergus Electric's new hire GROUNDMAN LINEMAN BRYCE ALEXANDER began work November 3, 2025. In early February 2026, JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN ELIJAH DYE will begin work. One candidate was interviewed to date for the Roundup engineer, but the position has not yet been filled. Line extensions have finally begun to slow down. Engineers have been compiling the work to be completed by end of 2025. Pole testing is finished for the year in Lewistown. Roundup has about 500 poles left to test in the Lavina area. The Roundup crew will finish them in early December. Roundup is also working on 5.5 miles of underground wire changeout in the Musselshell area. Maintenance tickets from drone patrol are all but done. There are a few system-wide issues yet to clean up. Crews in Lewistown will be working on sectionalizing in Straw, Ruby Gulch, and Hilger areas. Next week, we will be reorganizing the warehouse materials. In addition to sorting and reorganizing, the materials will be barcoded, which will provide efficiency in tracking, ordering and keeping our supply chain in order. The next Safety Meeting will be held on December 17, 2025. It will be an in-house safety meeting, performing slings and chains inspections.
- c. **INVENTORY OF WORK ORDERS.** After reviewing Inventory of Work Orders No. 644-644X for \$35,010.07 dated October 31, 2025, CATHY KOMBOL moved to affirm them. JASON SWANZ seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- d. **POWER OUTAGE REPORT.** LINE SUPERINTENDENT BRET OPHUS reviewed the October 2025 Outage Report prepared by STAKING ENGINEER MELANIE FORAN, PE.

7. POLICIES.

a. Review / Amend:

- i. **210 – ANTI-NEPOTISM.** The Board reviewed Board Policy 210.
- ii. **211 – AWARDS AND RECOGNITION OF MERITORIOUS SERVICE.** After discussion regarding Board Policy 211, SECRETARY/TREASURER BRAD ARNTZEN moved to accept the changes as presented to increase the cost paid for 25 years of service by fifty dollars every 5 years and to increase the cost paid at retirement and/or full disability by fifty dollars every 5 years. The year 2030 will be the next year costs will increase. BRETT MAXWELL seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

8. REPORT OF CORPORATE COUNSEL. CORPORATE COUNSEL KRIS BIRDWELL reported that it was a typical month. BIRDWELL said that he and OFFICE MANAGER SALLY HORACEK had briefly discussed the new form being used to bequeath capital credits to heirs upon death of the co-op member. HORACEK said that the co-op recently processed the capital credits of an individual who had completed the form and retiring his estate was clearcut.

9. MANAGER'S REPORT. GENERAL MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY covered items included in his written report. SWEENEY reported that he worked with the MECA hiring committee to interview candidates for the Government Relations Director position. SWEENEY said that he had participated in a union contract negotiation class held at Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative with 14 Montana directors and managers. The class included mock negotiations throughout the last day of class. SWEENEY said that he met with a team of architects from Cushing Terrell to discuss ideas for office improvements. The skylight windows in the atrium need replaced. The staff has outgrown the crew room where monthly safety meetings are held. Options to improve boardroom space and the lack of privacy in the manager's office are being considered. The architects will provide several ideas and an estimate of constructions costs for consideration.

10. MEETING REPORTS.

- a. **CFC INDEPENDENT BORROWERS EXECUTIVE SUMMITT (IBES): NOVEMBER 17-19, 2025.** GENERAL MANAGER CARSON SWEENEY reported that he attended CFC's meeting in Florida and the speakers were good. SWEENEY also participated in the Members 1st meeting online, while in Florida. No updates to report.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION.

- a. **ESTATE CAPITAL CREDITS.** The Board reviewed the list of estate capital credits for November 2025 totaling \$32,097.23, which were prepared by SENIOR BILLING CLERK ERIKA MATTALIANO. BRETT MAXWELL moved to affirm the retirement and BRAD ARNTZEN seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- b. **DELINQUENT STATUS, NEW MEMBERS.** The Board reviewed the delinquent accounts showing accounts paid in full and accounts still owing.

12. OTHER BUSINESS. PRESIDENT TERRY FROST asked the board meeting attendees if everyone was still good with the start time of 10:00 a.m. Hearing no opposition, FROST said the meetings will continue to start at 10:00 a.m.

13. NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS.

14. FUTURE MEETINGS.

- a. Safety Meeting; December 17, 2025
- b. FEC Board Meetings 2025 and 2026:
 - i. December 19 - 1:00 p.m.
 - ii. January 29 - 10:00 a.m.
 - iii. February 24 - 10:00 a.m.
- c. MECA Winter Meeting: Great Falls, MT; December 2-3
- d. MidWest Electric Consumers Association Annual Meeting: December 9-11; Denver, CO
- e. Members 1st Board Meeting: December 15, Gillette, WY
- f. Fergus Electric Cooperative Christmas Party, December 19, Yogo Inn, Lewistown, MT

15. NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS.

ADJOURNMENT. PRESIDENT TERRY FROST adjourned the meeting at 1:22 p.m.

SECRETARY Bradley Arntzen ATTEST: PRESIDENT Terry Frost