

Press Release March 15, 2004

Golden Valley Electric Association finally makes minutes of board meetings freely available to the membership through the internet

By Gary Newman, GVEA member

Gary Newman, an active member of Golden Valley Electric Association since the 1970's, announces that, after what became a nearly six year crusade to get GVEA to make minutes and agendas of board meetings more readily available to the membership, these are now available on the GVEA website www.gvea.com/community as far back as January 2000.

This effort received the critical push with the advisory vote passed by the membership at the GVEA annual meeting in April 2003 requesting this to happen. Newman was very appreciative of the membership support for the resolution and has remained puzzled at the reluctance of the board to make this happen earlier. Newman said, "Chugach Electric (www.chugachelectric.com), the largest electrical cooperative in Alaska, has offered this service for a number of years, yet GVEA remained unwilling to provide these basic documents to members without a substantial effort on the member's part and approval of management for each access."

Newman said he was pleased at this first step to making what is the largest cooperative in Interior Alaska more open to the membership. He also hoped that GVEA will find it a useful resource by which they can expand the offerings to include items such as special meetings or presentations to the board. He pointed to a couple of positive examples of developed organizational websites, one at the University of Alaska Board of Regents website at www.alaska.edu/bor and another at the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly, Boards and Commissions website at www.co.fairbanks.ak.us.

Newman, who maintains a citizen-utilities website at www.chena.org/utilities, said, "I encourage the membership to check out your cooperative's new resource to see what the board and your electric cooperative does. I think you will see that the board deals with a wide range of issues, some dry, some less so, but are all activities and decisions made on behalf of the membership, for better or worse. It has always seemed to me that the board members act without much direct input and involvement from our members. I hope this new resource will stimulate more two way communication between the members and the board as I believe that a better informed membership makes for better decisions."

With recent actions of Golden Valley Electric Association to both increase electric rates by 7% as well as the offer to purchase the mothballed experimental 50 megawatt coal fired electrical generation plant in Healy for \$70 mm, member education and access to the decision-making documentation of their board is perhaps quite timely.

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