

PEC takes action to minimize effect of outdoor lighting on night skies

8/17/2011 2:52:51 PM

Pedernales Electric Cooperative's Board of Directors approved a resolution at its Aug. 15 meeting affirming the Co-op's commitment to "protecting the beauty of the night skies." PEC will work together with landowners, businesses, residential communities and public entities in an effort to reduce the use of outdoor light fixtures that hinder Hill Country residents' ability to enjoy the night skies.

"I am very proud that PEC is working to be at the forefront of this effort," said District 6 Director Larry Landaker.

Engineering Manager Robert Peterson reported to the Board that PEC had been working to limit light pollution for over a decade. More than 10 years ago, PEC discontinued the use of mercury vapor lamps and open bulb fixtures, and it has been transitioning to fixtures that direct light downward. Recently, the Co-op approved adding shields to the fixtures to further reduce light trespass.

"We try to respect the wishes of neighbors who don't want to see the glare from lights and limit reflected light as much possible," Peterson told the Board.

Also at the Aug. 15 meeting, the Board addressed some questions regarding the LINKS project. "LINKS is the operating system. It's the brain of PEC," Landaker explained. "It is what integrates billing, operations, meter reading, virtually everything the Co-op does."

District 3 Director Kathy Scanlon noted that LINKS has been in development for three years, and the first phase of the project will go live Sept. 6. "LINKS is going to change the entire way the Co-op handles just about everything," Scanlon said. "It's a pretty amazing, very major overhaul."

As part of CEO RB Sloan's reorganization of the management team, he announced that Luis A. Garcia, formerly the Co-op's General Counsel, had accepted the newly-created position of Corporate Services Manager. Sloan said this position will focus on providing services across the Cooperative in the areas of information technology, human resources, safety, support services and records management.

With Garcia accepting the new position, the Board appointed Aisha Hagen as acting general counsel effective immediately. Hagen will return to her position as in-house counsel once a new general counsel is hired. To expedite that process, the Board approved a resolution forming a General Counsel Search Committee. The Board appointed District 7 Director Dr. Patrick Cox, District 5 Director Ross Fischer and Landaker to the committee, with Landaker acting as chairman.

In other business, the Board:

- Approved a resolution to create a Communications Committee comprised of Landaker, Cox and District 1 Director and Board President Cristi Clement. Landaker will serve as interim chairman.

- Discussed the progress of an initiative to save paper and money by upgrading to paperless, electronic versions of Board and Committee meeting agendas. PEC will still provide printed copies of agendas and supporting documents to members who attend the meetings.

The Board also received an update on the upcoming historical marker dedication to honor former President Lyndon B. Johnson and the role he played as a United States Congressman in bringing electricity to the Hill Country. The dedication ceremony, which is open to the public, will begin at 10 a.m. on Friday, Aug. 26, on the grounds of the E. Babe Smith Headquarters Building in Johnson City.

The next regular Board meeting will be held at 10 a.m. on Monday, Sept. 19, at PEC headquarters. The Board also scheduled a special meeting for Wednesday, Sept. 28, at the PEC Training Center in Johnson City.