

Claverack Electric members elect three to board of directors

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative members voted in one new director and re-elected two incumbents at the utility's 2008 annual meeting, held Saturday, July 19, on the Wysox Fire Department's recreational grounds.

Although there were no contested director election races this year, Claverack did seat a new director, Dr. Robert Faux of Tunkhannock. Faux assumed the Zone 2 post that had been held by Albert J. Wyda of Harveys Lake for 24 years. Wyda resigned from the post in April due to health issues and family commitments.

Incumbents Kevin B. Barrett of Towanda and James W. Zick of Kinglsey were re-elected to serve Zones 1 and 3, respectively. Claverack seats three of its nine board positions annually. Directors are elected to three-year terms.

Approximately 2,500 people turned out for the outdoor meeting, known as the Claverack picnic, to hear election results and business reports from the cooperative's management team and directors. Bobbi Kilmer, Claverack's president and chief executive officer, updated members about the cooperative's activities and achievements of the past year. She also told those on hand for the 71st annual gathering that, despite the challenging economic climate, they can expect continued stability in their electric rates. "With the dramatic increases in our costs for materials, equipment and fuel, I hesitate to say that a rate increase is impossible," Kilmer said, "but our current information leads us to believe that we can operate through at least 2009 with no significant increase in our distribution rate."

Generation and transmission costs for the cooperative are also expected to remain stable for the next two to three years, she said. By 2011, however, members are likely to see an increase in the generation component of their electric bills due to higher market prices for power. "I can't give you an exact amount, but rest assured," she said, "it won't be the 50 to 70 percent increases that you're hearing about from other utilities," including PPL and Penelec, which operate under state-imposed rate caps set to expire at the end of 2009 and 2010, respectively.

Guest speaker for the meeting was Bryan Singletary, owner of Practical Energies, a Florida-based utility consulting firm. Singletary encouraged members to take the initiative in reducing energy consumption through conservation and efficiency measures, and to be prepared for higher energy costs in the future. During a reorganizational meeting immediately following the annual meeting, Thomas J. Elliott of Towanda was re-elected chairman; Steven T. Sliwinski of Troy won re-election as vice chairman; Michael Coleman of Montrose was re-elected board secretary/treasurer, and Kevin Barrett was elected to his first term as vice secretary/treasurer.

Unlike investor-owned utilities, Claverack is a non-profit organization, owned by its consumer-members. A democratic organization by nature, the cooperative conducts an annual meeting each July to update consumer-members on the progress made during the year. Annual meetings also provide consumer-members with the opportunity to offer input and voice concerns before the board of directors and management staff.

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, with headquarters in Wysox, provides electricity to more than 18,000 members in Bradford, Susquehanna, Wyoming, Tioga, Lycoming, Sullivan, Lackawanna and Luzerne counties.