



## Be a part of the change

It is an exciting time to be a board director for an electric cooperative. From powering grain-drying to charging smart devices and other electronics, Slope Electric members are using more technology and more energy.

We are changing, in part, because your needs are changing. The directors of Slope Electric are here to ensure we provide you with safe, reliable and affordable electric service. That is the heart of the cooperative business model. We do not exist to make a profit; we are here to serve our member-owners.

The electric utility industry is changing quickly, due to our members' needs changing, technology improving, demand for energy growing, and lawmakers implementing regulations. These are some of the drivers that are prompting us to add diversity to the energy mix, reduce our carbon footprint, and give members options in the way they use and pay for energy.

Technology is changing quickly in our industry, too. Carbon capture and storage projects are being developed and making strides, as is battery

storage. The price of electric vehicles is coming down and the number of charging stations is growing — even in North Dakota.

Interest in wind and solar generation also continues to grow. Instead of building miles of power lines to serve a remote pasture well or seasonal site, we see a time when some members will turn to distributed energy, as technology and pricing improves.

As energy and technology develop, our members still need reliable electric service built with lines and poles. Our linemen and support staff are just as relevant today as they were 75 years ago in meeting our members' needs.

Slope Electric's board of directors will play a pivotal role in navigating these issues and guiding our cooperative into the future. Now is the time to think about vying for a seat on the board! In this quarterly newsletter, learn about director duties — and how you can be part of the change. ■



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### SLOPE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Lauren Klewin, President  
Steve Wegner, Vice President  
Anthony Larson, Secretary  
Jerome Caron, Treasurer  
Angela Carlson, Director  
HJ "Chip" Fischer, Director  
Dale Hande, Director  
Charlotte Meier, Director

### MANAGEMENT

Donald A. Franklund, CO-GM/CEO  
Travis Kupper, CO-GM/CEO

[www.slopeelectric.coop](http://www.slopeelectric.coop)



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*Slope Electric Cooperative, Inc., is an equal opportunity provider.*

## Directors represent your interests

Slope Electric Cooperative is overseen by a board of directors elected by the member-owners of our co-op at the annual meeting. Serving as a director from the counties of Adams, Bowman, Hettinger and Slope, each director represents the members and is a co-op member.

Directors represent your interests. They study changes in the electric utility industry and determine how they may affect the

Slope Electric membership.

Directors have a fiduciary responsibility to the cooperative. Because they are also owners of the cooperative, they treat the business like their own.

Serving Slope Electric and our area communities can be a rewarding experience! ■



**LAUREN  
KLEWIN**

## Meet your director: Lauren Klewin

In this question-and-answer section, Chairman Klewin answers frequently asked questions about the role directors serve in the board room and beyond — and why members should consider running for a position on the board.

**What are your co-op roots?** I live on a ranch northwest of Amidon.

**How long have you served on the Slope Electric board?** 23 years.

**Why did you seek election?** Doug Nordby, a veteran director of Slope Electric, planned to retire. He asked me to run for his seat. I greatly respected him but I told him no. He asked me to think about it. My mother reminded me how she and dad grew up in harder times. Power came to our ranch in 1951. That was a big deal. My parents appreciated having electricity and attended all the annual meetings. She wanted me to think about how much electricity meant to them. I did and decided to seek election.

**What are the greater responsibilities of a board member?** The directors serve the function of fiduciary responsibility, and set cooperative goals and objectives.

**What happens in the board room?** During monthly meetings, we start with Call to Order, and listen to reports from the managers and senior staff. We hear reports from directors who attended meetings. We discuss rates and power supply, and what is going on at Upper Missouri Power Cooperative, Basin Electric Power Cooperative and Western Area Power Administration. We learn legal and financial updates, and hear what's going on in our Innovative Energy Alliance Cooperative family. We also discuss bylaws and policies that may need updating.

**What are some challenges Slope faces?** Our growth is the same as it was in 1970. There is no membership growth. We have more meters, but we have the same amount of members. That's a concern. Also, to find people to serve on the board and stay. It takes years to understand the industry and the co-op network. It's nice to have a historical perspective to go forward and



make decisions, when you can look back and say, how did we approach this before and how do we retool? We need a good board to take initiative, solve problems now, and be aggressive in finding solutions to future problems. We also have a hard time getting members to attend the annual meetings, and are trying to find new ways to reach them.

**What are some short-term goals?** To maintain the power lines and substations, and keep the system reliable.

**What are some long-term goals?** To determine what to do with aging line; whether to replace overhead or build underground. Also, to firm up rates. We are planning to do a Cost of Service study that will illustrate the needs of our small base membership, which covers a lot of miles but not meters, and our oil load. We have to consider all of our members and not get into cross-subsidization.

**When you look to the future, what do you see on behalf of Slope?** How much can the membership bear as far as rates, to maintain and upgrade the system? Also, politics affect everything based on the current administration. We're in good shape now, but who knows what will happen with regulations in the future.

**How did you learn about the industry?** I listened and asked questions. Management and veteran board members always responded and helped. I also took classes through the national Credentialed Cooperative Director program that covers director duties and liabilities, understanding the electric business board roles and relationships, strategic planning and financial decision-making.

**What is the time commitment required in serving?** We meet every month, in addition to representing Slope at other meetings and events. On average, there can be about 25 days per-year of commitment depending on a director's role. Slope Electric also has representation on other boards including Innovative Energy Alliance Cooperative, 3C Construction, West Dakota Utility Services and Maintenance Solutions Cooperative. We also have representation on the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives and Upper Missouri Power Cooperative boards. There are more opportunities on a national basis. One includes the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC). We've been fortunate to have two directors, Terryl Jacobs and Anthony Larson, elected to the CFC board.

**Are directors compensated?** Yes, on a per-diem basis.

**What are the travel requirements?** We attend Slope's monthly board meetings and annual meeting, as well as some annual conventions. We also attend the annual meetings of regional cooperatives, to show support and stay on top of changes in the industry. There is opportunity to travel for those who are interested.

**What is the most important thing our members should understand about being a board member?**

I am a member and I pay the same rate. If there is a service, we can't pick and choose who we want to charge; everyone is treated fairly. There is not one director on our board who wants to raise rates. When members express frustration with their rate, I explain that Slope Electric has about 3,300 miles of power lines and 18 substations. At 1.25 meters per-mile of line, we rank as the fourth-lowest co-op across 840 electric cooperatives in the United States. Investor-owned utilities average 40 to 60 meters per-mile of line.

**What gratification do you receive from serving on the Slope board?**

The education I have received, and the opportunity to share it. I feel like I'm contributing. For me, the most important commodity that I pay for on the ranch is the switch on the wall. I understand how that switch gets its power and how it goes out; that's my gratification. I would like others to understand it, as well.

**Tell members about the team effort it takes to keep Slope moving forward.**

I give credit to the people who are keeping the lights on and taking care of the real nitty gritty at our cooperative. It's the employees. Our managers bring information to the table, and the board decides what they want to do. The employees carry out what is set in the board room. When you have good people who go to work here every day, and they know what's going on, that puts us in good shape.

## Interested in serving?

For information on the nomination process, call 701-579-4191 or 800-559-4191, read the March local pages of *North Dakota Living*, email [comments@slopeelectric.coop](mailto:comments@slopeelectric.coop), or visit [www.slopeelectric.coop](http://www.slopeelectric.coop).



## Slope Electric Board of Directors



**Lauren Klewin**  
President  
Slope County



**Steve Wegner**  
Vice President  
Adams County



**Anthony Larson**  
Secretary  
Adams County



**Jerome D. Caron**  
Director  
Bowman County



**Henry "Chip" Fischer**  
Director  
Bowman County



**Dale Hande**  
Director  
Slope County



**Angela Carlson**  
Director  
Hettinger County



**Charlotte Meier**  
Director  
Hettinger County

## See you at the annual meeting

As a member of the cooperative and community, you have a perspective that is valuable – and we invite you to share it. The annual meeting is where you will vote for new board members who will represent you – the members of the co-op. Board members are local consumers, like you.

Also at the annual meeting, members learn cooperative

priorities and challenges, the financial health of our organization and priorities for years to come.

The annual meeting is an opportunity to visit with you and receive your feedback and perspective, so please plan to attend on Thursday, June 4, 2020, at Four Seasons Pavilion in Bowman. ■