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Albemarle Sounds

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Incumbents Re-elected

Three directors who ran unopposed for seats on the Albemarle Electric Membership Corporation Board of Directors were re-elected by acclamation at the co-op's recent Annual Meeting.

The following directors will serve three-year terms on the board: Glenn Carey, representing Camden County; John Spence, Pasquotank County; and Virgie Whitehurst, all counties.

In addition, the board of directors elected officers. John Spence was elected president, Glenn Carey was elected vice president, and Charles Mathews was elected secretary/treasurer.

After serving more than 30 years as president, L.A. Harris, Jr. decided not to seek another term as president. He will remain a board member.

"Mr. Harris' service as board president for that length of time was a tremendous accomplishment," said Gary Ray, general manager of Albemarle EMC. "We are grateful for the leadership and direction he has provided through the years."

Delivering his last speech as board president, Harris spoke to the 239 members in attendance about the significance of Albemarle EMC reaching its 70th anniversary.

"It is special for a company to remain in business for that length of time," Harris said. "From humble beginnings, Albemarle EMC has grown into a multi-million dollar business that has become an integral part of northeast North Carolina's success. Your co-op now has more than 12,000 meters, 1,400 miles of line, a state-of-the-art office building and a highly trained, professional group of employees."

Harris also congratulated the membership for their part in helping the co-op reach this important milestone.

"Albemarle EMC is our collective legacy; it is the inheritance that was entrusted to each of us," Harris said. "And when it comes time for us to pass this co-op down to the next generation, I think all of us can rightly say that we will have left the co-op better than we found it."

Also addressing the audience, General Manager Gary Ray talked about improvements to the co-op's system, which includes the installation of transformers at the Snowden delivery point to improve reliability for Currituck members. Also, the co-op is working on a new substation to serve the New Hope Road area of Perquimans County. Ray finished his speech with a video explaining the level of dedication it takes to be a co-op employee.

"It takes a special kind of person to do this work," Ray said. "We don't get snow days."



From left: John Spence, Virgie Whitehurst and Glenn Carey were re-elected to three-year terms on the Albemarle EMC Board of Directors.

**Albemarle
EMC will be
closed Nov.
26-27 for
Thanksgiving.**

Members Enjoy Annual Meeting



Willie L. Jones, Sr. receives \$50 for being the most senior man in attendance..



Christine Berryman receives \$50 for being the most senior woman.



Nick Simmons provided music prior to the start of the business meeting.



Members receive a tote and a \$2 bill.



Rep. Bob Steinburg (left) talks with Albemarle EMC board directors L.A. Harris, Jr. (center) and Charles Mathews.



Sen. Bill Cook enjoys the Albemarle EMC Annual Meeting.



Members patiently wait to register for the Annual Meeting.



Members enjoy hotdogs, drinks, snacks and popcorn. A special prize drawing was held prior to the start of the meeting.

Members Surveyed at Annual Meeting

To get a better idea of how to serve members, a survey was conducted at the recent Albemarle EMC (AEMC) Annual Meeting.

A total of 154 surveys were received back. Listed below is each question with the answers:

Did you enjoy coming to the Annual Meeting? 151 members responded **yes**, and no one responded **no**.

How was the overall amount of time spent for the meeting? 126 responded **okay**; nine—**too long**, and one—**too short**.

Members were asked to rate the location, entertainment and food as excellent, good, fair, poor or don't know. For Location, 99 members responded **excellent**, 51—**good**, one—**fair**, 0—**poor** and 0—**don't know**. For Entertainment, 36 members responded **excellent**, 79—**good**, nine—**fair**, five—**poor**, and four—**don't know**. For Food, 42 members responded **excellent**, 77—**good**, 12—**fair**, two—**poor** and eight—**don't know**.

What is the primary reason you came to this meeting? 114 members responded **learn how AEMC is doing**, 88—**win a door prize**, 80—**because you're an owner of AEMC**, 69—**mingle with fellow members**, 43—**vote for a director**, 42—**refreshments**, 31—**to see the entertainment**, and nine—**to speak to an AEMC director or employee**.

Will you come to next year's meeting? 146 members responded **yes**, and one responded **no**.

How many Annual Meetings have you attended? 42 members responded **two to four**, 41—**five to ten**, 30—**first one**, 19—**ten to 20**, and 18—**21 or more**.

If you could choose a power provider, would it be AEMC? 140 members responded **yes**, one—**no**, and eight—**maybe**.

How did you hear about the Annual Meeting? 120 members responded **Carolina Country**, 28—**telephone message**, 19—**fellow member**, 11—**newspaper**, 5—**co-op employee**, and 0—**AEMC website**.

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How Albemarle EMC works to provide its members with the highest-quality service possible.

Thankfulness Abounds in November

It would certainly be appropriate for Albemarle EMC members and employees to include the co-op's longevity in the list of things they are thankful for this Thanksgiving.



A couple sits down to dinner in a rural house that does not yet have electricity. Prior to electricity, kerosene lanterns provided light.

For seven decades, the co-op has served this region, providing the power that has enabled a modern way of life that is all too easy to take for granted.

Members who attended our recent Annual Meeting were treated to a variety of events recognizing the co-op's 70th anniversary.

Chief among those events was the showing of an anniversary video produced by Albemarle EMC employees working in conjunction with Elizabeth City State University. For those who were unable to attend the meeting, the video looked back to the co-op's roots and the impact it has had through 70 years of service. In producing this video, the co-op is fortunate to have some members of the board of directors, former employees and a member who recalled life during

Albemarle EMC's early years.

Virgie Whitehurst, an Albemarle EMC director since 1988, shared her memories of life before electricity. She described using a washboard and tubs to do laundry. She also recalled how, as a young girl, the duty fell to her to wait for the ice man. Ice was essential to keep food cool prior to refrigeration.

"I just remember lights; we had lights, we can see clearly now lights have come," Whitehurst said in the video. "And we were just so happy to have electric lights."

I think we started off with a refrigerator because before then we had to wait for the iceman. We had an icebox. The iceman would come down three times a week. Somebody had to be at home when the iceman came. And when we weren't in school, that was usually my responsibility; I was the oldest."

We had two big tubs, and one tub you put your clothes in and you had a washboard, and you washed using the washboard, going up and down up and down."

Tom Bateman, a board member since 1989, described how his cousin worked on a line crew to build co-op lines.

Jimmie Keeter, retired manager of operations for Albemarle EMC, talked about how linemen had to work prior to the use of hydraulic bucket trucks.

"The biggest change I saw taking place was equipment," Keeter said. "We had no bucket trucks when I went to work there, no bucket trucks at all. Everything was climbing poles. We called them wood walkers. We had to pull transformers up by hand. We had to tote them in the field by hand."

The electrification of rural America is largely due to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal program. The Rural Electrification Administration was created to bring electricity to areas throughout the country that were underserved. The agency made low-interest loans available to the co-ops, which were then tasked with coming up with their own methods of building the co-op and providing the power. Within four years, following the close of World War II, the number of rural electric systems in operation doubled, the number of consumers connected tripled, and the miles of energized line grew more than five-fold. By 1953 more than 90 percent of the U.S. farms had electricity.

From its humble beginnings, Albemarle EMC has grown into a technological leader in its industry. Smart meters now communicate information automatically, billing systems have been modernized, the co-op's electrical infrastructure is constantly improving and co-op employees are better trained and more capable than ever before.

I don't think it's possible to watch that video and not have a profound sense of gratitude that we all live in a time with modern conveniences and abundant, affordable electricity. As we all sit down to a Thanksgiving dinner with friends and families, we should be thankful that no wood had to be chopped to cook the turkey. No ice had to be hauled to keep the congealed salad cool. And no water had to be hand-pumped to wash the dishes. Now that's something we can all be thankful for.