

Issues Raised at the Annual Meeting

Every year AVEC's villages hold meetings to conduct cooperative business and elect delegates to represent their community at AVEC's annual meeting. During the Suggestions for Improvement session each delegate is given an opportunity to voice their concerns.

The board members hold a work session after the annual meeting to discuss issues raised by the delegates. Improving communications with our members is high on the list of their priorities.

Communications can only be improved if both parties make an effort, so please feel free to contact AVEC if you have any concerns that need to be addressed. Especially if you are from one of the communities that did not hold a village meeting.

You are our eyes and ears in your communities. For example, we don't know if poles are leaning or street lights are burned out unless somebody notifies us. Then we are able to respond to make required repairs.

A couple comments made by delegates this year were that AVEC is "all talk and no action" and "they want to see information in writing." We listened and the following is an update on some issues that are shared by our communities.



Deep snows blanketed many communities and AVEC's power plant facilities, including this tank farm in Savoonga.

Village Meeting Quorums

Each year we hear that villages have problems getting enough people to attend their meetings and conduct cooperative business and elect chairmen and delegates to attend AVEC's annual meeting. Delegates have suggested we provide more door prizes as an incentive to increase attendance at the meetings.

The board of directors discussed this issue during their post-meeting work session and decided to revise the annual meeting door prize policy. We plan to purchase small give-away items to be used as door prizes and each village will receive a goodie box when the annual meeting packets are mailed out. We are also reviewing quorum requirements and the board will consider Bylaw changes to allow for smaller quorums than the 25% now required.

Village Meeting Packets

Comments were made about how late the village annual meeting packets were mailed out, which was mid December. This made it more difficult for the chairmen to organize meetings before the February 15 deadline, especially since mail gets delayed due to inclement weather and nobody wants to meet over the holidays. The packets will get mailed in early October from now on and will also be posted on the AVEC website.

Deep Snow and Floods

Numerous delegates mentioned strong concerns about flood damage due to heavy snowfall this past winter. Some communities located along rivers sustain damage nearly every year during spring breakup when rivers run high.

AVEC staff continually monitors breakup and water conditions and try to be prepared for floods as much as possible. Flooding was bad this year and many

residents lost their homes (see story on page 4), but fortunately AVEC's facilities only suffered minor damage. Best of all, we were able to keep the electric power on, with minimal power outages.

Bill Collections and AMR Meters

Members ask about the timing of the collector visits and ask why the collectors can't go to the villages during Permanent Fund Dividend time, when money is available to pay bills. Electric bills are issued every month and are due every month, not just during October.

We recently made it easier to pay your electric bill by adding an online bill paying option to our Website. Using the latest technology to improve service to our members gets mentioned more frequently, so we are constantly making improvements to our Website.

AVEC is also installing electronic meters with remote connect/disconnect features in every community. After they are installed we will not need collectors to travel to the communities and do disconnects as we will be able to perform disconnects from the office. The electronic meters automatically provide meter reading information to the office.

We are looking at in-home displays our members can purchase to track their in-home electricity usage and make adjustments to reduce their bills.

Detailed information about AVEC's collection policy and procedures was printed in the June issue of Ruralite Magazine. Information about the electronic meters was printed in the April issue.

Bulk Fuel Purchases

Joint fuel purchasing between AVEC and other organizations to reduce costs is another topic that regularly gets mentioned. We join with the school districts to purchase bulk fuel but we aren't able



Streetlights are a frequently mentioned topic.

to pursue joint fuel purchases with other entities, like the cities, because of credit issues. A statewide group is trying to help streamline bulk fuel purchases for rural communities to reduce costs.

Streetlights

Streetlights are a perennially famous subject. Villages are not charged for non-working streetlights once AVEC is notified. Call AVEC and give them the pole number so the light can be fixed. Let us know if a streetlight is faulty or if new streetlights are needed. The city has to request and pay for any new streetlights.

PCE pays for much of the cost of streetlights so they are a minimal burden for the community benefits they provide. Information about AVEC's streetlight policy was included in the May issue of Ruralite Magazine.

Leaning Poles / Low Wires

When wires become loose or too tight due to pole movement caused by shifting permafrost, let the power plant operator or AVEC know as soon as possible so repairs can be made. Leaning poles are a constant problem as the freeze/thaw process moves poles around. If a pole tilts 15 degrees, that's not a problem. But if a sharply leaning pole is detected, call the city office or AVEC office and we'll schedule a lineman to fix it.

Low-hanging wires on poles get mentioned. Be aware that most of our poles also have phone or TV wires, which are usually

the low wires and they aren't AVEC's responsibility. Please call the telephone/TV company to address the issue too.

More Linemen

There has been lots of discussion about having local linemen and electricians to do work in the villages, but it's not practical to have such technicians for each village as there simply isn't enough work to keep them employed full time. Scholarships are available for technical training. It would be great to have linemen and electricians available on a regional basis.

Home Wiring

Home wiring is another important issue mentioned frequently, but AVEC's responsibility ends at the outside of the house. AVEC continues to encourage other agencies to help with interior wiring needs. Contact local and regional agencies to get help with potentially unsafe home electrical systems.

Information about connecting to AVEC's electric service, household wiring, meter tampering and how to operate a portable generator safely was printed in the June issue of Ruralite Magazine.

PCE Program

The PCE program was fully funded for last fiscal year and the current fiscal year. The Endowment Fund suffered a 40% loss in the current market downturn. The cost ceiling was raised to \$1/kWh last year and we worked successfully to have the higher ceiling extended indefinitely, instead of dropping back down to 52 cents.

Denali Commission Projects

As Denali Commission funding becomes available, we work on projects based on the statewide priority list, which was included in the delegate packet. Unfortunately the Denali Commission program had an 80% reduction in funding since 2007 and this has had a huge impact on AVEC's ability to plan and build projects.

Removal of Old Tanks

Removing old tanks is another perennial

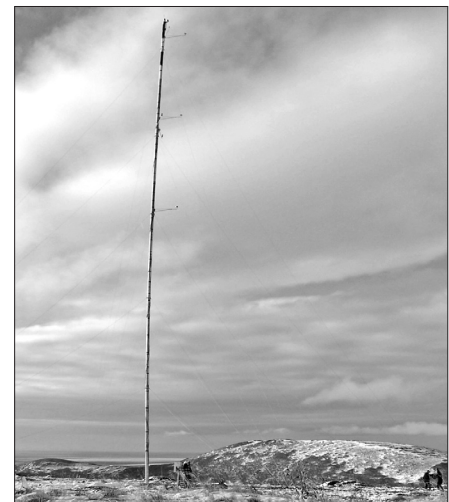
issue, throughout the state. The Denali Commission only provides funding for new facilities, not for removing and restoring the old facilities. There have been numerous work sessions to figure out a solution, as it would cost several million dollars. We submitted a request for \$5 million in federal funds that may be available through the stimulus program for backhauls.

Cleaning up old facilities and tanks is very expensive, but it's a high priority as there are now 1,000 derelict tanks throughout the state from Denali Commission projects. Senator Begich has agreed it's a high priority and said he would try to help find solutions.

Renewable Energy

Lots of delegates mention their communities would like to have renewable energy installed to help reduce their electric bills. We have installed successful renewable energy projects in several villages and are receiving increased recognition for our wind generation program. Wind turbines will soon be installed in, Gambell, Chevak and Mekoryuk and several villages are being evaluated for potential wind and solar projects.

AVEC monitors current technology to see what might work in our communities and provide the best value. Securing funding is necessary to build renewable-energy projects if they are determined to be feasible. ■



Meteorological towers collect wind data.