

My Turn

'Efforts to derail the recall are totally out of control'

PETER J. ADANG

A number of concerned Kit Carson Electric Cooperative members finally had enough of the mismanagement, imperiousness and lack of transparency at the cooperative and initiated the extraordinary measure of a recall of nine trustees.

This is a right granted to members in Kit Carson's bylaws.

The names of 10 petitioners appear on the recall petition.

There could have been 50 or more but, because the bylaws require the name and address of each charging member on each page of the petition, any more names would have made the petition unwieldy and impractical.

The responses to the petition have been astonishing. On the member side, hundreds of signatures have already been obtained. That is heartening, and those who have had the courage to step up and be counted are to be commended.

The response from the targeted trustees has been equally astonishing but for a different reason. It has been notable for its negativity, amply demonstrating the character of those hurling the charges.

Instead of letting democracy take its course, the targets of the recall have embarked on a sleazy campaign to de-legitimize it. Any thinking person has to question why the nine trustees sought to be removed are resorting to mendacity, threats and other strong-arm tactics to save positions that are voluntary and uncompensated.

Is it because, in reality, they are rewarded with benefits in the form of meeting fees and expensive trips for themselves and their families? Is it because some of them are receiving sweetheart deals on their electric rates or other under-the-table benefits?

One ardent critic of Kit Carson Electric Cooperative suggests that the total cost to the membership of all the benefits and side deals for trustees is at least \$200,000 per year. If that is the case, then it explains the hysterical overreaction to the recall effort.

The initial response was to label the initiators of the recall as "sour grapes liars with an agenda." The only agenda is a genuine desire to get Kit Carson under the management of competent people who will divorce it from money-losing side ventures and restrict it to providing electricity.

The so-called "lies" we have been charged with are either unspecified or invented in order to

give them talking points. In psychology, there is a phenomenon called “transference” or the tendency to ascribe one’s own negative characteristics to others.

I cannot help but think that when Kit Carson trustees and administration label those who oppose them as liars, they are really labeling themselves. Thus, when they go on the radio and assert that the propane disaster has only lost \$160,000, ask yourselves what happened to \$7 million in cash reserves that disappeared since 2008 and why at least \$4 million in propane losses have been acknowledged. The campaign to undermine the recall has recently taken on a more sinister aspect.

Comments are popping up on *The Taos News* website to hurl negativity at the recall. Some of their charges are absurd, others are slanderous.

It is common knowledge that several of the commenters are either employees of Kit Carson or their relatives or friends.

Next, certain subjects of the recall began threatening to sue the petitioners. Sue for what?

For using a procedure permitted in the bylaws? For exercising the constitutional rights of free speech and to petition for redress?

I suppose such juvenile threats are to be expected from a group led by a chairman who, in a round table meeting, professed not to understand the fundamental democratic concept of each person’s vote having an equal weight.

If the trustees want to make such threats, I say fine — bring it on. Just make sure that you don’t use member money to finance your petty vendetta.

According to informed sources, the latest incident in this saga involved calling together the cooperative employees, making them take a loyalty oath and forcing donations for an advertisement in support of the trustees. Loyalty oaths? Forced contributions?

What in the world is going on? Are we witnessing the creation of a mini-police state in the cooperative?

One cannot blame the employees because their jobs are at risk. But the effort to use them under such circumstances is cynical.

The frantic efforts to derail the recall are totally out of control. They demonstrate a level of paranoia that requires treatment.

The best treatment would be to get the trustees out of office and start over with substitutes who will extricate Kit Carson from the diversification mess and make it adhere to the business for which it was created, i.e., providing electricity to its members at a reasonable price.

Peter J. Adang has been a resident of Ranchos de Taos for five years.

Editor’s note: *The Taos News* does not release the identities of those who comment on its website.

