

## **Kit Carson trustees: \$7,651 for attending rate hike hearings**

**By J.R. Logan**

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Members of the Kit Carson Electric Cooperative Board of Trustees requested a combined total of \$7,651 in compensation for attending a contentious rate hearing last month. Though all 11 trustees were present for at least part of the proceedings, only one trustee spoke on the record in the case. The hearings were held over five days last month at the Public Regulation Commission in Santa Fe. Under the co-op's compensation policy, trustees were eligible for \$150 per meeting day, plus 50 cents for each mile traveled to attend the hearings, as well as a \$26-a-day meal allowance.

The question of whether trustees would be compensated for attending the hearings came up during testimony at the PRC last month. As such, hearing examiner Lee Huffman asked that the coop provide trustee reimbursement requests for July and turn them in as a part of the case.

Co-op CEO Lu's Reyes said he had not yet asked for compensation from the hearings. Reyes said he would provide *The Taos News* with an accounting of his expenses when he did ask for repayment.

Board president Bobby Ortega was the only trustee to speak during the five-day hearing. In a brief statement made before testimony began July 6, Ortega said the board had voted for a rate increase after considering the burden ratepayers are under. "We are very sensitive to the fact that we're in a difficult economy, a hard economy. An economy like we've never seen probably since the '30s. We're sensitive to all of those matters, but the bottom line is that this (rate increase) is necessary. This is necessary for this organization to provide the critical and essential services that we do," Ortega said. "Everyday that we're here, everyday that this continues, it's costing the organization and consequently it's costing the ratepayers," Ortega said.

Ortega told *The Taos News* in an interview Tuesday (Aug. 9) that he felt the compensation for attending the hearing was justified, especially in light of how important the rate increase is for the co-op. "As chairman of the board, I feel like I need to be there to weigh in on things," Ortega said. "In terms of the other board members, I think they were there representing the people that elected them to the board."

Ortega said trustees often met with co-op attorneys during breaks in the hearing to discuss strategy. Ortega also said he and other trustees wanted to be there because of concerns about how the rate approval process was being handled by PRC staff.

Below is a breakdown of trustee compensation requests related to the rate hearings as provided by the co-op. To download the complete compensation requests for July, visit

[www.taosnews.com/downloads/coopcomp.pdf](http://www.taosnews.com/downloads/coopcomp.pdf)

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