



THE TAOS NEWS

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Co-op rate hike suspended; PRC hearing set Jan. 10

By J.R. Logan

The Taos News

The New Mexico Public Regulation has suspended a proposed rate hike from Kit Carson Electric Cooperation and will hold a public hearing to determine the validity of the more than 200 protests that were filed by co-op members.

The Public Regulation Commission discussed the matter during a regular open meeting Tuesday (Dec. 14) in Santa Fe. The board voted unanimously to suspend the rates and scheduled a public hearing for Jan. 10 at 9:30 a.m.

In order for the commission to conduct a formal review of the rate increase, at least 25 member protests must be deemed valid.

If the commission determines that there are not enough valid protests to warrant a review, the new rates go into effect.

Gerald Garner Jr., a spokesman for the commission, said that those who have filed protests can submit a written response.

But it was recommended that protesters be at the hearing to represent themselves, Garner said.

Though this is not the first time the commission has ordered that a protest review be conducted, Garner said this was by far the most voluminous.

Before Tuesday's meeting, attorneys for the co-op filed a statement of intent with the commission arguing that the protests needed to be reviewed to see if they meet the statutory requirement for "just cause."

Co-op CEO Lu's Reyes was present at the Tuesday meeting, as was Taos County Commissioner Andrew Chávez.

Reyes said after the meeting that he guessed that about 90 percent of the protests were related to issues such as diversification and debt— issues Reyes says are unrelated to the electric rate increase.