



# THE TAOS NEWS

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## My Turn

### When will the co-op stop its foolishness?

**Jerome Lucero**

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Once again we as consumers of the Kit Carson Electric Cooperative find ourselves in familiar territory.

According to *The Taos News* article published Nov. 5, the average consumer of 500 KWHRS will see an increase of 19 percent if Kit Carson's proposed rate increase is approved by the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission.

It has been approximately five years since the last increase and while there is clear evidence that the cost of doing business in this town continues to be a challenge.

Here is one more reason why it is becoming more and more difficult to live here. If you look at the empty store fronts in town and the small amount of new home building permits being issued it is a reflection of the costly operating environment in this town/county.

The management of the coop insists that the reason is a reduction of power sales to more efficient appliances and equipment. It also attributes the reduction in sales to the closing of the Questa Moly mine. While this is definitely true the co-op continues to refuse to admit that its costly practice of venturing into businesses that it has very little or no experience is a factor.

The last time that we as interveners, of which I was one of 600, protested, the \$6 million losses by the propane company were formalized and acknowledged. If you think that there are no electric funds used for these outside ventures I have a bridge over the Rio Grande that I want to sell you.

Case in point the last time we went through this the propane business was operating out of the main electric building which was built with revenue from the electric system. The gas operation was then moved across the street to its own building hopefully being paid with revenues from the gas business.

Today where is the headquarters for the new broadband business??

It's in the old call center which was not constructed with funds from the broadband revenues. And there is no cross subsidization? In the late '80s and early '90s the general utility industry ventured into non-traditional work but they soon got out because it lost significant money. I am only going to comment on how this increase will affect me because I don't own a business. But the proposed rate increase will affect the commercial service as well. In my case I will see a 19 percent increase. This in my mind is excessive as the last time we protested the PRC awarded a 7 percent increase. It is my belief that the 22,000 residential class is being asked to replace the revenue that was generated by the Questa Mine with no regard for the efficiencies that have been demonstrated by this same class of customers.

The house that I inherited from my family is wired for electric heat but as has been the case a for quite some time. I don't/won't to use electricity to heat my home because its too costly, My next move is going to be that I will light my house with *lamparas de acete* to minimize my use of energy at night for lighting purposes. Additionally, if the co-op management is truly considering a TriState contract buyout for \$37 million, God help us!

The last thing that I want to say is that every customer of Kit Carson Electric Co-op as owners of the business have a remedy to this continued disrespect for the use of consumers' resources and that is to protest this rate increase to the PRC. All it takes are more than 25 protests submitted to the PRC within 20 days of the company's filed rate increase.

If you want to file a protest, you can access the proper forms by getting on your computer and going to the PRC's website [nmprc.state.nm.us](http://nmprc.state.nm.us). Scroll down the page to a category highlighted as quick links. At this point you click on that line and the current protest forms can be accessed.

It is also important to give credit where credit is due and I would like to acknowledge the co-op management for including in its rate proposal the \$3 credit in the customer charge for La Heap customers.

I would like also inform you as a consumer that the vote at the board meeting was far from unanimous as there were three board members who did not attend the meeting and as has been published Virgil Martinez was the only actual no vote.

*Jerome Lucero is a resident of Taos*