

Home automation provides more control

BY DERRILL HOLLY

Home automation systems are placing the power of control in the hands of co-op members, but many questions remain about the best ways to use that control to save money and energy.

“Most smart home technology is about comfort and convenience. Consumers interested in saving money on monthly energy purchases should look at internet-connected thermostats first,” said Brian Sloboda, program and product line manager for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

“Around half of all thermostats sold today are smart thermostats. These devices can learn your preferences and adjust the thermostat when you are not home,” Sloboda said. “These devices have the potential to reduce air conditioning energy consumption by 10 percent. During winter months, the thermostats could save 7 percent on energy used to heat the home.”

Sloboda has watched home automation systems evolve over the years. He is particularly interested in identifying ways to enhance

efficiency and potential savings for co-op members.

“Laundry, dishwashing and water heating can be set to occur outside of your co-op’s peak demand periods, which typically are during weekday business hours,” Sloboda said.

NRECA is currently working with one of the U.S. Department of Energy’s national laboratories on a demonstration project examining energy-saving options that could time shift some activities, but actual cost savings for the consumer is



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likely to be limited.

“Pool pumps, dishwashers, thermostats and car chargers can learn their owners’ behavior and then communicate with the utility, so the data can be used for demand response,” Sloboda said. “The goal of the work by the lab is to determine if a system like this can be implemented without inconveniencing the consumer, providing energy demand savings to the utility.”

Finding value in energy savings

Security system notifications and

thermostat controls that adapt to home automation are among the most popular options available. But some consumers are tackling other tasks in ways that actually could help them save or manage energy use effectively.

“There are different kinds of smart when it comes to smart appliances and devices,” said Peter May-Ostendorp, principal researcher at Xergy Consulting, which specializes in emerging technologies for energy savings in buildings, including homes.

“For some, smart simply means

‘we connected this thing to the network,’ which adds minimal value to the consumer,” said May-Ostendorp, who also is an energy technology consultant to NRECA. “In other products, smart means that there is some intelligence either built into the product or connected via the cloud that enables a taste of artificial intelligence.”

But not every product using artificial intelligence is designed to save energy. In many instances, energy use is secondary to convenience or connectivity features.

Making connections

“Most smart devices have nothing to do with energy use, grid management or other resource conservation, like saving water,” said May-Ostendorp. “Generally, the benefits – dollar savings to the consumer – have not been proven, with the exception of smart thermostats, grid-connected water heaters and similar devices.”

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), interest in connected or smart appliances is trending upward among consumers, and manufacturers are responding with a growing list of products.

“If you are thinking of purchasing a smart appliance or thermostat, look for one that is ENERGY STAR®-certified with connected functionality,” wrote EPA officials who were asked about the technology. “Those that meet our criteria are designed to encourage interoperability and offer the following features: low energy use, energy use reporting and consumer ownership of all data.”

Besides smart thermostats, the products available now include room air conditioners, refrigerators and freezers, laundry equipment, lightbulbs and fixtures, and power strips.

“While owning a smart product



Today, more than **4,000 smart devices** are available to consumers.

A recent international survey asked people how they are using smart home assistants.

65% check weather and news, and play music
6% control lighting, televisions and other appliances



doesn't automatically save you energy, if YOU are smart about using them, they can make a significant difference in your home," wrote the EPA.

That means making the investment payoff could take a few lifestyle changes. But dashboards, accessible from computers or tablets, and apps available for smartphones can help.

"I don't think many people want infinite control over dozens of appliances and systems in their homes," said Spencer Sator, president and CEO of Crimson Consulting, another NRECA energy efficiency advisor.

"What we really want is 'set it and forget it,' features that we don't have to actively manage," Sator said. "The best devices get installed, adjusted and the consumer can walk away and still potentially save some energy."

According to Sator, consumers are looking for simplicity. That's feeding the popularity of virtual assistant technologies, like Amazon's Alexa and Echo, Google Assistant and Apple HomeKit. Other companies, including Samsung, Logitech and Wink, are also offering home-management hubs and platforms designed to help manage connected technology.

Convenience and programming simplicity are among the most important factors fueling consumer acceptance of what Sator describes as "home ecosystem" products. Home security controls, including locks, alarm systems and lighting, are also popular features.

"We're seeing adoption of the technology not necessarily for energy-saving reasons, but for life-enhancing applications, including some that help elderly consumers maintain independence in their homes," Sator said.

Energy advisors agree that controlling devices from various manufacturers that perform

GET SMART ABOUT ENERGY SAVINGS

"Smart" devices and appliances save time and offer convenience – but not all save energy. The guide below shows how several trendy smart home technologies stack up when it comes to energy savings.

Smart Energy Savers



- Thermostats
- Washing machines and dryers
- Dishwashers
- EV charging stations
- Pool pumps
- Air conditioners
- Light bulbs and fixtures
- Power strips



Just Smart

- Virtual assistants (like Amazon's Alexa or Apple HomeKit)
- Smart locks
- Smart alarms
- Smart video security cameras

different functions with a single system enhances the value of home automation systems.

Command and control

The challenges for consumers are deciding which features meet their expectations and justify the added investment in automation, and how well various products work together under management of a particular hub device or app.

“This is still the Wild West, from a technology value perspective,” Sator said. “When you consider available options and actual performance of the devices available, some gadgets perform well and can save consumers money and energy, while others don’t measure up to the hype.”

With more than 900 manufacturers marketing about 4,100 connected devices, voice command technology is seen as one way to avoid collections of various remotes that typically wind up cast aside in favor of multifunction control devices.

“The Jetsons-like experience – where your Fitbit recognizes you’re awake, tells the coffee to brew, queues up your morning news on a smart speaker, ramps up the heating set point – isn’t really happening,” said Exergy Consulting’s May-Ostendorp. “People have thought that Alexa or Google Home might be the answer, but do we all really want to talk to our home, Star Trek style, to accomplish basic tasks?”

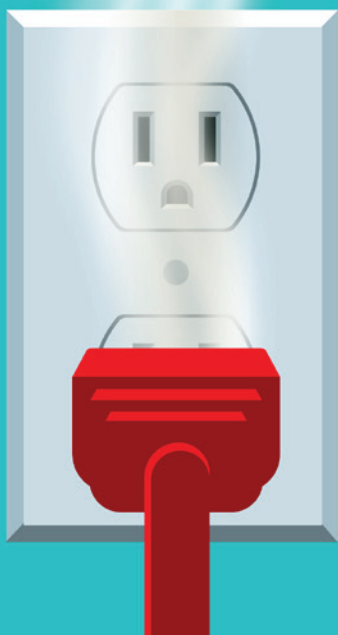
In fact, smart speaker technology is primarily used to answer questions, check the weather, get news updates or play music. According to a survey conducted in five major industrialized nations, including the United States, 65 percent of those asked cited those functions, while only 6 percent reported using the technology to control lighting, televisions or other connected devices.

“No one wants a hodgepodge of technologies that can’t communicate with each other,” said Sator, adding

that the necessary hubs and powered interfaces to connect the devices could actually boost overall energy use. “The technology isn’t very smart if devices can’t work together.”

Derrill Holly writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation’s landscape.

Did you know nearly half of all home fires occur during winter months? Put safety first by taking a few minutes to check your switches and outlets.



ELECTRICAL SAFETY CHECKUP: Switches and Outlets

Are any switches or outlets warm to the touch?

→ That could indicate an unsafe wiring condition.

Are any outlets or switches discolored?

→ It could mean a dangerous heat buildup.

Do plugs fit snugly into outlets?

→ Loose-fitting plugs can cause overheating and fires.

JUNE 15-21, 2019

WRITE A WINNING ESSAY AND

WIN A TRIP OF A LIFETIME!

AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

- To enter the essay-writing contest, you must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative.
- If you have a question, contact Jessica George, Mountrail-Williams Electric, at the address listed below, or call 701-577-3765 during regular business hours.
- The deadline is Jan. 31, 2019. Emailed entries should be directed to jessicam@mwec.com, and hard-copy entries mailed to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative, 218 58th St. W., P.O. Box 1346, Williston, ND 58802-1346.

TOP 3 REASONS

TO ENTER THE ESSAY-WRITING CONTEST

1. All-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., compliments of Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative.
2. A whole week to visit unforgettable historic monuments, museums and the U.S. Capitol.
3. A learning experience you'll never forget.

ESSAY QUESTION:

Electric cooperatives are member-owned and controlled. As a future member-owner of your cooperative, describe ways that smart technologies and social media might be used to communicate with young adults. How might they be used to increase awareness and interest in the many career opportunities with electric cooperatives?

**CHECK OUT THE ESSAY-CONTEST GUIDELINES AT
www.ndyouthtour.com**

HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORES & JUNIORS

North Dakota Electric Cooperative

YOUTH TOUR

CAPITAL CREDIT RETIREMENT

The following people had 2018 capital credit checks returned to Mountrail-Williams Electric due to no forwarding address. If you know the address or status of any of the following people, please notify Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 1346 Williston, ND 58802 or P.O. Box 129, Stanley, ND 58784 or call 701-628-2242, 701-577-3765 or 800-279-2667.

Name	Last known address	Name	Last known address	Name	Last known address
Amon, Stanley.....	Rugby	Hellwig, Candie	New Town	Raad, Laura	Williston
Andersen, Franklin	Garrison	Helstad, Brian.....	Williston	RCK Group LLC DBA	
APEX Energy LLC.....	Tulsa, Okla.	Highland Estates Apt. c/o Sandy Wurgler..	Rugby	Meadowlark RV Park	Stanley
Arnson, Orlando	Williston	Hinman, Lavern c/o Ken Gunderson. Fairview, Mont.		Reynolds, Carrie and Paul.....	Minot
Baker, Darryl.....	New Town	Houle, Angela.....	New Town	Rieniets, Wayne	Drake
Bain, Kimberle	Williston	Hughes, Margaret and Damian	Williston	Robbins, Tracey	Parshall
Bauley, Kip and Alicia.....	Epping	Hystad, Charles.....	Velva	Roehr, Joe and Katherine.....	Bismarck
Baustad, Aaron.....	Bismarck	Illerbrun, Bryon and Kimberly.....	Williston	Rogelstad, Willis	Fessenden
Bauste, Ashley	Williston	Inman, Barry.....	Crosby	Rollins, Mike and Jennifer.....	Idaho Falls, Idaho
Bemer, Howard	Brockton, Mont.	Jacobsmeier, Chad	Grenora	Roseland LLC.....	Williston
Benson, Marilyn	Parshall	Jenex Operating Company.....	Woodlands, Texas	Samedan Oil Corporation.....	Ardmore, Okla.
Big Rock LLC	New Town	Jennings, Jeffrey and Barbara.....	Williston	Samsel, Mike	Alexandria, Minn.
Bingen, Randy	Mandaree	Johnson, Leston	Watford City	Sanderson, Brad.....	Bismarck
Birkeland, Darren and Dawn.....	Williston	Johnson, Sheila.....	New Town	Schimet, Carol.....	Grand Forks
Bittner, Richard.....	Bozeman, Mont.	Jones, Charlotte and Jackson.....	Williston	Schimke, Troy	Harvey
Blake, Charles.....	New Town	Kern, Paul	Dickinson	Schmidtgal, Shane and Burwell, Colby..	Williston
Brensdal, Jeff and Angela.....	Cascade, Mont.	Knell Transport LLC	Lander, Wyo.	Schwan, Bruce and Judy	Minot
Buettner, Lyle	Minot	Kochel, Robert	Williston	Shannon, Shaun and Adriana	Williston
Burkle, Theodore	Williston	Kvernum, Darren.....	Williston	Shaw, Peggy	Bismarck
Busch, Gertrude.....	Bismarck	Lachance, Melissa and Jake	New Town	Shurtliff, Jason and Monique	New Town
Carver, Michael.....	Gillette, Wyo.	Lattergrass, Laurel	New Town	Slocum, Edward and Monica.....	Eagle Butte, S.D.
Comfort, Dash	Bismarck	Lee, Don and Connie	Grand Forks	Smart, Kent.....	Stanley
Connor, Chad and Surran	New Town	Leonard, Ernest.....	Mandan	Solomon, Victor and Russell, Suellen ..	New Town
CHP Construction	Williston	Limberhand, Mike.....	New Town	Sorenson, Clancie.....	Grand Forks
Cowee, James	Williston	Linde, Dwight and Lana	Williston	Spang, Lael.....	New Town
Danks, Jordan	New Town	Lindley, Larry.....	Belfield	Stangeland, Josephine	Williston
Davidson, Kevin	Minot	Lindvig, Dorothy.....	Williston	Stasky, Mark and Sara	Williston
De Regier, Susan	New Town	Lizotte, Mike and Lori	Minot	Steen, Issac.....	Williston
Detloff, Cory	Williston	Lockwood, Toni	Mandaree	Steinke, Sheila	Pueblo West, Colo.
Dickens, Dallas and Benson, Marily ..	New Town	Long, Daniel.....	Williston	Storseth, Isabelle.....	Williston
Dirks, Kevin and Annette.....	Williston	Maisel, Sandra.....	Caldwell, Idaho	Stubbs, Carl	Williston
Dishon, Gretchen	Williston	Maron, R.E.	Williston	Stubbs, Rustee	Williston
Dockter, Mark	Bismarck	Mandan, Joan	New Town	T-BOC.....	Baker, Mont.
Domanski, Laurel.....	Brecksville, Ohio	Mcrae, Tim and Kelly.....	Williston	White Body, Sari.....	New Town
Engmann, Antoinette.....	Spearfish, S.D.	Metcalfe, Joan	Minot	Terry, William	Lillian, Ala.
Erickson, Sandon.....	Minot	Mills, Ivan	Cheney, Wash.	Williams, Tara	New Town
Erickson, Steve and Amber	Williston	Monson, Michael.....	Williston	Spidle Turbeco	Evanston, Wyo.
Evans, Bobby	Bismarck	Mortenson, Bill	Williston	Turcotte, Bradley	Williston
Fischer, Cletus and Lynn	Fort Mohave, Ariz.	Muller, Jerome.....	Williston	Tveter, Roger	Watford City
Fischer, Richard	Hurricane, Utah	Murray, Randall and Tracy.....	Williston	URSA Resources Group LLC.....	Houston, Texas
Fischer, Janet	Minot	Natwick, Wallace	Williston	Vaagenes, Paul.....	Des Lacs
Flegler, Al.....	Williston	Nelson, David.....	Williston	Walther, Frank	Grenora
Fount It Now	Williston	Nelson, John	Powers Lake	Wehr, Lindsey and Chester	Tioga
Gilberg, Neal	Surrey	Ogden, Tracy.....	New Town	Wheeler, Grant.....	Williston
Gold Star Production Services.....	Spearfish, S.D.	Okland, Bradley		White, Francis.....	New Town
Goodbird, Arnold.....	New Town	and Elizabeth.....	Highlands Ranch, Colo.	White Buffalo, Homer.....	New Town
Goody, Joseph	Williston	Olson, Scott	Fargo	Williams, Earl.....	Haughton, La.
GND Equipment Rental LLC.....	Grand Forks	Oxendahl, Taylor and Rebecca	Williston	Williams, Donahue.....	Piedmont, S.D.
Gorder, Rodney	Mesquite, Nev.	Paquette, Chris and Brandi	Douglas, Wyo.	Williston Equipment Sales c/o Dan	
Grinnell, Jessica	Beulah	Parpart, Beth and Craig.....	Williston	Nelson	Williston
Guldborg, Mury and Dora	Butte, Mont.	Pate, Samantha and Russell	Girdwood, Alaska	Wounded Face, Geraldine.....	New Town
H&R Well Services Inc	Fort Morgan, Colo.	Pickett, Amy.....	Harvey	W.P. Inc. DBA Charbees	New Town
Hanson, De Jay.....	Minot	Pierce, Raymond.....	Williston	Zenith Produced Water	
Haverlock, James	Twisp, Wash.	Prairie Disposal Inc.	Tioga	LE Johnson LLC.....	Centennial, Colo.
Heller, Quentin	Williston	Prochaska, Paul.....	Ramsey, Mont.		

Don't let the chill affect your bill

When cold weather approaches, you can keep your home comfortable and still keep your energy bills from escalating with these winter tips from Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative:

BUNDLE UP YOUR HOME

- Weather stripping and caulking are probably the least expensive, most effective ways to save energy in the winter. Improperly sealed homes can waste 10 to 15 percent of the homeowner's heating dollars. Take these steps:
- Check around doors and windows for leaks and drafts. Add weather stripping and caulk any holes you see that allow heat to escape. Make sure doors seal properly.
- If your windows leak badly, consider replacing them with newer, more efficient ones. Keep in mind, however, that replacing windows can be expensive – it could take you quite awhile to recover your costs from the energy savings alone.
- Every duct, wire or pipe that penetrates the wall, ceiling or floor has the potential to waste energy. Seal them all with caulking or weather stripping.
- Electric wall plugs and switches can allow cold air to enter. Purchase simple-to-install, foam gaskets that fit behind the switch plate and effectively prevent leaks.
- Don't forget to close the damper on your fireplace when the fireplace is not in use. If the damper is open when you're not using the fireplace, your chimney functions as a large open window that draws warm air out of the room and creates a draft.

CHANGE A LIGHT BULB TO LED

- Lighting our homes can represent 20 percent of home electricity bills and is one of the easiest places to start saving energy.

CHECK YOUR HEATING SYSTEM

- Get a routine maintenance and inspection of your heating system each autumn to make sure it is in good working order.
- Check furnace filters. Be sure to clean or replace your system's air filter. At a minimum, change the filter every three months; a dirty filter clogs the system, making the system work harder to keep you warm.
- Reverse the switch on your ceiling fans so they blow upward, toward the ceiling.
- Make sure all heating vents are opened and unblocked by furniture or other items. This will ensure that the air is evenly distributed through the home.
- Duct air leakage is one of the largest energy-wasters in your heating system. Heating contractors can check your ducts for air leakage, and seal the biggest leaks. Believe it or not, duct tape is not a good choice for sealing ducts because its adhesive usually fails after a short time. Duct mastic, available in cans or buckets, is an effective and permanent material for sealing duct air leaks.

CHECK YOUR INSULATION

- Insulate your attic. In an older home, that can be the most cost-efficient way to cut home heating costs. Before energy efficiency standards, homes were often built with little or no insulation. As a result, large amounts of heat can be lost through walls, floors and ceilings.
- Insulate your attic hatch or door to prevent warm air from escaping out the top of your house.

Oct. 31, 2018

Directors present: Lahtinen, Lynne, Johnson, Hartsoch, Grant, Sorenson, Jorgenson, Ludwig and Lalim.

Directors absent: none.

Others present: Manager Haugen, in-house counsel Johnson Ellis, attorney Foust and staff members.

The meeting was held at the Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative (MWEC) office building and called to order at 9:30 a.m. An executive session was added to the agenda and approved as amended. Minutes of the regular board Sept. 26, 2018, were accepted as presented.

SAFETY MOMENT: Manager Haugen went through safety notes for the meeting, including where exits are located and identifying designated persons who were responsible for making emergency phone calls or obtaining emergency medical devices if needed.

OPEN HOUSE RESPONSE: The board discussed the general feedback from the public received following the Oct. 4 open house. A letter from Congressman Cramer was also made available.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Director Sorenson discussed the Cooperative Leadership Institute he attended. He also discussed the tour of the cooperative's Williston office with Congressman Cramer, Donald Trump Jr. and Kimberly Guilfoyle.

ATTORNEY'S REPORT: Attorney Foust reviewed Director Qualifications, N.D.C.C. §10-15-25 and the cooperative's current bylaw on Director Qualifications with the board. The board talked about the current qualifications and the pros and cons of adding additional qualifications to the bylaws. The board asked attorney Foust and in-house counsel Johnson Ellis to prepare proposed bylaw language to address length of membership, prior employment with the cooperative, legal capacity to sign legal documents, background checks, meeting attendance and ability of board to remove or disqualify a director. The board also asked to see examples of education/continued education requirements of other board of directors.

In-house counsel Johnson Ellis presented a proposed Policy 530 – Infants in the Workplace. The board reviewed and discussed the policy and the policy was adopted as presented. A proposed visitor policy for the Williston Service Center was also presented, reviewed and discussed by the board, and adopted as presented.

OPERATING AND FINANCIAL REPORT: Jodi Collings presented the operating report for the year to date and for the month of September. The total margins and capital credits for the year to date was \$21,184,217. OTIER is 2.53; MDSC is 2.32; cooperative equity is 25.49 percent; and SPP equity is 36.01 percent.

BAD DEBTS: The board approved the transfer of \$849.93 from accounts receivable

to bad debts. Efforts will continue to collect these sums including the retention of capital credits.

CAPITAL CREDIT RETIREMENTS: The board approved the retirement of the following capital credit accounts for the month of August:

Milton Theige estate
Vance Nessel estate
Joe Farhart estate
Gordon Rugland estate
Marleen Stammen estate

RS PLAN CORRECTIVE

AMENDMENT 2017: The board reviewed and discussed the Retirement Security Plan Addendum No. 2 to Adoption Agreement - Additional Benefits for Certain Non-Highly Compensated Employees. The amendment was proposed to correct three non-highly compensated employees' retirement plans to bring their plans in compliance with IRS regulations. The Board approved the amendment as presented.

COOPERATIVE FINANCE CORPORATION (CFC) BOARD

RESOLUTION: A resolution was presented to the board allowing Jay Lux or Jodi Collings to authorize CFC to make payments on behalf of the cooperative. The board approved the resolution as presented.

HR REPORT: Brandy Hansen presented a human resources report. The board participated in discussion about the cooperative's two current health insurance options and the 2019 premiums for each plan. A motion to contribute the premium difference into the employee's Health Savings Account (HSA) for the HSA plan was approved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: The board broke for executive session to discuss safety matters.

MANAGER'S REPORT:

RELIABILITY AND OUTAGE REPORT – The reliability and outage report was made available for review.

SAFETY – James Neether presented the safety report and discussed the cooperative's recent Safety Committee meeting. The in-house safety meeting minutes from Oct. 11, 2018, were made available for the board to review. The board also watched a safety video.

SOUTHWEST POWER POOL (SPP) – SPP has finished its review of the cooperative's QRP application and has determined the cooperative is approved as a 2019 QRP participant effective Jan. 1, 2019. Manager Haugen also discussed the MOPC meeting he attended in Little Rock, Ark.

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE – All necessary agreements for the Slette Subdivision project are in place. Manager Haugen also gave an update on the progress of the Howie Substation project.

SOUTH DAKOTA RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION (SDREA) – Manager Haugen talked about his experience at the SDREA meeting he spoke at in October.

EXXONMOBIL MEETING – The cooperative has participated in a meeting with ExxonMobile discussing options for excess natural gas.

OFFICE BUILDING AND GENERATOR UPDATES – Construction status, office building closeout updates and an update on the generator was made available to the board.

CORRESPONDENCE – A thank you letter from Mountrail County Commissioner Wayne M. Olson was presented to the board.

MEETING REPORTS:

NORTH DAKOTA ASSOCIATION OF RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES (NDAREC) – Director Grant discussed the proposed bylaw changes that will be brought to the NDAREC annual meeting. He also discussed the position NDAREC board took on North Dakota Measure 1.

UPPER MISSOURI POWER COOPERATIVE – Director Jorgenson talked about load management generally.

BASIN ELECTRIC POWER COOPERATIVE – The notice of annual meeting and the proposed bylaw changes were made available.

MISCELLANEOUS: Director Lahtinen brought up a possible need to move power poles near New Town for a currently unpaved road to be widened and paved. The existing easement(s) will need to be reviewed and new easement(s) may be necessary if the poles need to be moved outside the current easement area.

CALENDAR: The December board meeting was rescheduled for Dec. 20, 2018, at 9:30 a.m. CST to accommodate the Christmas holiday.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. ■

MOUNTRAIL-WILLIAMS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

P.O. Box 1346

Williston, N.D. 58802-1346

P.O. Box 129

Stanley, N.D. 58784-0129

DIRECTORS

Roger SorensonChairperson
Robert GrantVice-Chairperson
Cheryl HartsochTreasurer
Blaine JorgensonSecretary
Larry JohnsonDirector
Aaron LynneDirector
Garrett LalimDirector
Luke LahtinenDirector
Dick LudwigDirector
Neff, Eiken
& Neff, PCProject Attorney
Dale HaugenGeneral Manager

OFFICE PHONE NUMBERS:

Williston (701) 577-3765
Stanley (701) 628-2242
New Town (701) 627-3550
WATS (800) 279-2667

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