

## Community Letter - Magic Valley Electric Coop 2024 Annual Meeting

April 15, 2024

To: MVEC Board of Directors

CC: MVEC Management

On behalf of our community, thank you for your service to the cooperative and for prioritizing affordability. It is a pleasure to be with a community of cooperative owners tonight at our annual meeting and for the chance to learn how to make our coop even stronger.

Coop owners like me and my community care very much about affordability, reliable electricity, and staying safe during extreme temperatures that have become more common. We would like more opportunities to share our ideas, concerns, and give feedback to the board of directors and management. For example, the annual meeting would be a great opportunity to open up the microphone to co-op owners to talk about affordability.

**Affordability means something different today** than what we are used to, due to record hot and record cold temperatures. Our total cost for light, heat, and air conditioning is higher than ever. We use our heaters and air conditioners more, which means higher bills.

The Dallas Morning News recently reported that, according to a US Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, more Texans are having to stop spending on the basics, such as food and medicine in order to pay our energy bills. According to the report, low-income Texans are spending up to 28% of their income on energy. This is known as “energy burden.”

We want Magic Valley to acknowledge this growing crisis of energy burden in the Rio Grande Valley. We would like to have more discussions with staff and our fellow owners throughout the Valley to find ways the coop can do more to address this crisis.

**Another example is reconnection fees.** Paying our bills is an important responsibility. But keeping up with utility bills during times of extreme weather and higher costs of living has become more difficult. Reconnection fees are penalties for the poorest residents in our communities who are already struggling to keep up with bills. We would like to see these fees reduced or eliminated.

**Transparency** is very important for a strong coop. It can be very difficult to find out information about the annual meetings, the elections, and how to vote in the coop elections. More transparency and community engagement will help ensure leadership and staff are hearing from our neighbors and addressing these important issues. Requiring members to attend in person to vote is a disadvantage and burden on members who have evening jobs, lack childcare, or are unable to travel.

**Solutions** are available to help address these problems. We'd like staff to make more information available on the website, to study other coops in Texas and identify easier options for voting.

On affordability, MVEC should invest more in programs to help owners make their homes and apartments use less energy, and should explore setting a goal to reduce residential energy use through energy efficiency programs. We want Magic Valley staff and leadership to work with partners in county, city, and state government to use funds available through the Inflation Reduction Act that can help increase energy efficiency.

Thank you again for your service and leadership. Together we can make a stronger coop.