

September 2020

Horizons

A Special Annual Meeting Edition

Renner Retires

After 48 Years of Service

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 **Golden West**
We're everywhere people connect.





Renner Retires *After 48 Years of Service*

From party lines to blazing broadband, Golden West grew membership, services, and service area during Renner's tenure on the board of directors.

When Rod Renner started on the board nearly a half century ago, Golden West provided dial tone to about 2,400 customers in 11 counties with less than 20 employees. Today, the company serves over 30,000 customers across nearly a third of the state's geography with broadband internet, phone and cable TV and employs over 300.

"It has been an exciting experience to be a part of a growing company that has brought telecommunications to thousands of people in rural South Dakota," stated Renner, the longest-serving board member at Golden West.

After 48 years, more than a dozen elections and over 800 meetings, Renner will put his nameplate away for the last time when he retires after the annual meeting on Sept. 26. While he didn't do it alone, Renner was a major force in the growth and evolution of Golden West.

Yet only people who worked closely with Renner know the impact he has had on the cooperative and rural telephony in general. He is not the type of person who talks about his achievements nor does he look for, or expect, recognition for his work. Nevertheless, when examining how far Golden West has come during his tenure, his prints can be seen everywhere.

Ensuring Access to Rural Areas

From the start, Renner's mission was to ensure people living in rural areas received the telecommunications services they deserved. He championed advancements in technology every step of the way. From pushing for better telephone quality and burying lines for weather protection to business systems and fiber-optic technology, he embraced progress and voted to support it at every turn.

When Renner was first elected in 1972, private, one-party lines were the recent advancement in telecommunications. Telephone lines were getting moved from utility poles to being buried underground, and Golden West served many of the cold war missile silos in western South Dakota. Today, Golden West offers a wide array of services to customers across rural South Dakota. One of his most prescient moments on the board came when he voted to invest in a new service called the internet.

It is great to see people in small towns, tribal areas and everywhere else have the advanced communications systems which are needed in today's world.

Rod Renner

"It's been a big joy of my life," Renner said. "I am grateful for the experience and the opportunity to tend this and watch it grow."

Growth Helped Ensure Viability

Renner knew that growing the cooperative was important to ensure its future viability. During his time on the board, the cooperative expanded many times in multiple ways. Golden West purchased or built about 45 exchanges across South Dakota, adding tens of thousands of customers to its service area. The cooperative also built a cable television company, an interconnect business and became an internet service provider.

"It is great to see people in small towns, tribal areas and everywhere else have the advanced communications systems which are needed in today's world," he said.

Recognized For His Efforts

Renner was recognized for his devotion to cooperative values and rural telephony when he was inducted into the South Dakota Cooperative Hall of Fame in 2015. Then in February 2020, the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association awarded him the James L. Bass Life Achievement



There are a lot of extremely talented people in this business, and it was exciting to work with them and be a part of it. You can't replace those experiences. I will miss that a lot.

Rod Renner

Award for his work as a director and leader in rural telephony.

Renner spoke fondly of the many people he met both in South Dakota and around the nation while representing Golden West. Through the years he served with over 40 other directors on the board, served as chairman for each of the last four general managers, and worked with hundreds of employees. He will miss the people the most, he said.

"There are a lot of extremely talented people in this business, and it was exciting to work with them and be a part of it," said Renner. "You can't replace those experiences. I will miss that a lot."

His Involvement Will Be Missed

Golden West is grateful for his time and efforts working for the cooperative. "His retirement will leave a tremendous hole at Golden West. All of Rod's knowledge, all his history advocating on behalf of rural communities, all the friendships - it's going to be tough not to see him sitting in the board meetings," said Denny Law, general manager and CEO of Golden West.

Golden West congratulates Rod Renner and will forever be indebted to him for his great work and dedication. While he will be sorely missed, Golden West wishes him the very best in his retirement.





Annual Meeting Will See Changes This Year

Things will be a little different at the 68th Golden West Annual Meeting, including a new meeting time and location to simplify the schedule and allow more space for social distancing.

The meeting will start at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 26, in the gymnasium at Wall High School at 401 South Blvd. in Wall. Registration will run from 9:30 to 10:45 a.m. Attendees should park and enter on the west side of the building.

Precautions to Prevent COVID-19

Several other precautions are also planned to help reduce the spread of COVID-19, including changes to minimize movement and up-close interaction. For example, tickets for free lunch from one of five restaurants will be distributed to those who attend the meeting and can be redeemed afterwards. Attendees will also automatically be registered for cash and gift card door prizes, including one \$500 grand prize. Members must be present when name/number is drawn to win.

“Golden West encourages members and employees to practice social distancing every day, and we will take many special precautions to make it possible at the annual meeting, as well,” said Golden West General Manager and CEO Denny Law. “While we have business to conduct as an organization, keeping our members and employees safe is always of the utmost importance.”

Another schedule adjustment involves drawing for door prizes as ballots are counted in lieu of entertainment to expedite the meeting. Golden West will distribute hand sanitizer and a pen to everyone who registers, along with a registration gift. Masks will also be available.

“*While we have business to conduct as an organization, keeping our members and employees safe is always of the utmost importance.*”

Denny Law
General Manager / CEO

Vote for Four Directors

During the meeting, members can influence the future of the cooperative with their vote. Four of Golden West’s 15 board seats are up for election this year with three incumbents running unopposed and four candidates vying for one open seat. All director terms are four years. Co-op members may vote in all board elections regardless of their district of residence for the following:

District II – Gerry Sloat, Judy Goldhammer, Ryan Kjerstad, and Tanner Handcock vie for an open seat as incumbent Rod Renner did not seek re-election.

District III – Incumbent Lee Briggs runs unopposed.

District V – Incumbent Stu Marty runs unopposed.

District IX – Incumbent Jeff Nielsen runs unopposed.

Proposed Changes to Articles & Bylaws

Members will also vote on proposed changes to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. Proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation cover items like referring to the organization as a “Cooperative” rather than an “Association” and providing a range in the number of directors rather than a set number. Proposed amendments to the Bylaws adjust parameters for membership, member meetings and eligibility for directorship, among other things.

Members were sent a Notice of Proposed Amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative with this year’s annual report. The notice provides a general overview explanation and details of the proposed changes.

2019 Annual Meeting MINUTES

The Annual Meeting of the members of Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc., was called to order at 1 p.m. on Saturday, September 28, 2019 at the Wall Community Center, Wall, South Dakota by President Jeff Nielsen. Said meeting was held pursuant to notice thereof as required by law. Dakota Beat opened by leading the National Anthem. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Nielsen.

President Nielsen called upon Darla Pollman Rogers, Attorney for the Cooperative, who gave the Credential Report. A motion was made and seconded to approve a quorum. Motion carried.

Next, President Nielsen called upon Kenneth Tonsager, Jr., Secretary, to read the Notice of Meeting and the Proof of Mailing, after which a certified copy of each was duly filed as part of the Minutes of this meeting.

President Nielsen introduced the special guests in attendance at the meeting.

President Nielsen welcomed the Cooperative members and asked that the minutes of the 2018 Annual Meeting be approved, if there were no additions or corrections, as written. On a motion duly made, seconded and unanimously carried, the President declared the minutes approved.

A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the financial report.

President Nielsen then delivered his presidential report, starting with an introduction of the Golden West Board of Directors. He talked about his hometown of Canistota and how Golden West helps him and all members connect with the rest of the world. Mr. Nielsen gave several examples of how connections are made throughout Golden West’s service territory.

Next, President Nielsen called on Denny Law, general manager/CEO, to present his annual report. Mr. Law spoke about the challenges Golden West faces to connect members with the world. He also listed the community projects Golden West undertook this year and how internet access benefits the members of the cooperative. He emphasized the importance of advocating at the federal level to ensure all rural South Dakotans have access to broadband internet. Mr. Law spoke of how employees are the cooperative’s greatest asset

and gave them a heartfelt “thanks” for all they do. He concluded his report with references to the additional investments Golden West makes in the communities it serves.

President Nielsen called on Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, to report on the nominating petitions for the Board of Directors. Vacancies on the Board of Directors were as follows:

District III – Arnie Hill (four-year term) one vacancy with one candidate

District IV – (four-year term) one vacancy with two candidates – David Assman and Kenneth Bolzer

District VI – Ansel Wooden Knife (four-year term) one vacancy with one candidate

A motion was made, seconded and passed to seat the uncontested incumbents:

District III – Arnie Hill

District VI – Ansel Wooden Knife

Darla Pollman Rogers, attorney, introduced the director candidates for District IV:

David Assman and Kenneth Bolzer. Each candidate was allotted three minutes to address the membership.

Next, Darla Pollman Rogers advised the membership of the balloting process and requested that the ballots for the election of director be handed out. After the membership had the opportunity to vote, the ballots were collected. A three-member balloting committee was appointed by Darla Pollman Rogers to oversee the ballot counting and report to the membership. The members of the balloting committee were: Leonard Benson, Lola Roseth and Frances Deering.

Ms. Rogers next discussed the proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc. For ease in voting and explanation, the proposed changes were divided into three categories:

- Category 1 – Communication References (update references to “telephone” and “telecommunications” services to “communication” services)
- Category 2 – Gender Neutral (modify references to “he,” “him” and “his”)
- Category 3 – Clean-Up Amendments

Two questions were asked about the proposed amendments to the articles and bylaws.

1. Will changing telephone to communication services do away with telephone service in the future? Denny Law responded.
2. Why can’t he/she be replaced by the word “member?” Darla Pollman Rogers responded.

Darla Pollman Rogers again advised the membership of the balloting process and requested that the ballots for the proposed amendments to the articles and bylaws be handed out. After the membership had the opportunity to vote, the ballots were collected. The same three-member balloting committee was used to oversee the ballot counting and report to the membership.

President Nielsen called for any old business. There was none.

President Nielsen called for any new business. One member asked if with a fiber connection, phone service would not be available without electricity. The speaker also requested the opportunity to keep copper lines. Denny Law responded.

Prizes were awarded to members in attendance.

Next, President Nielsen called on Member Services Manager Jody Bielmaier to introduce the entertainment for the afternoon, Dakota Beat.

Following the entertainment, Darla Pollman Rogers announced the election results: Kenneth Bolzer was elected director for District IV (four-year term). The proposed amendments to both the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws were approved.

During the course of the meeting several drawings were held to award prizes. The grand prize of \$500.00 went to Vernon and Carol Omdahl.

President Nielsen adjourned the meeting at 3:15 p.m.

Kenneth Tonsager, Jr. - Secretary

DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

Golden West Cooperative members will elect four members to the Board of Directors. To vote, members must register and attend the annual meeting on Sept. 26 where they may vote for a candidate in each district that has a director opening.

Four-Year Terms



GERRY SLOAT

District II – Challenger Candidate

Gerry Sloat has lived in Philip almost nine years, thanks to his wife, Bobby, who is a Philip native. Together they have four children and nine grandchildren.

Gerry currently works for Philip Health Services, Inc. He is a board member for the Bad River Senior Citizens Center, a Haakon County Library Volunteer and a Senechal Park maintenance volunteer. He and Bobby also own a small business in Philip.

Gerry is a Brookings County native. Before moving to Philip, he worked in the business end of daily newspapers in Minnesota, Iowa and Pennsylvania. While in Pennsylvania, he owned a small business, was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, served as mayor of his borough, and was rotating chairperson of a regional police commission.



JUDY GOLDHAMMER

District II – Challenger Candidate

Judy Goldhammer is a retired manager of the First Western Agency in Wall. She worked in the insurance industry for over 30 years in Kadoka, Philip and Wall. During that time Judy served on the Kadoka School Board and the Philip City Council.

Judy was also elected to the board of the South Dakota State Association of Insurance Agents. She served as its president and helped the crop insurance industry become a viable partner. While she was on the board, Judy helped create the Young Agents Group and received the State Agent of the Year Award. Judy has also been active in the Wall Chamber of Commerce and on the Badlands Natural History Association Board.

Judy lives in Wall with her husband, Paul Goldhammer. She is a member of the First Lutheran Church and has three children and five stepchildren.



RYAN KJERSTAD

District II – Challenger Candidate

Ryan Kjerstad is a fifth-generation ag producer in Wall. He graduated from Wall High School in 2006 and attended Northern State University for one year while playing college football.

He transferred to South Dakota State University where he participated in collegiate rodeo. After receiving his bachelor's degree in Ag Business with minors in accounting and marketing, Ryan returned to the family's agricultural operations.

Ryan has been active in the community. He has coached or played a role in youth football and basketball and high school religion courses. He has served on the Diocese of Rapid City Pastoral Council and is currently serving in his seventh year on the Wall School Board.

Ryan appreciates being considered to continue in the footsteps of his grandfather, Dick Kjerstad, who served on the Golden West Board of Directors from 1991 to 2004. Ryan and his wife, Amanda, have four children.



TANNER HANDCOCK

District II – Challenger Candidate

Tanner Handcock grew up on a farm and ranch in southern Jackson County. He graduated from Kadoka High School in 1999 and received his bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Black Hills State University.

Tanner and his wife, Kim, moved back to Wall in 2009 when he started as a crop insurance agent with the Crew Agency, Ltd. in Cactus Flat. Tanner has served on the Wall Community Golf Board for nine years and as president for five years. He has also served as a volunteer coach for tee-ball, baseball and basketball and has served on the Greater Wall Foundation Board, the South Dakota Wheat, Inc. Board, and on the legislative committee for the Crop Insurance Professionals of America.

Tanner and Kim have four children, Dawson, Hallie and twins, Reese and Davis. When he's not busy with kid's activities, Tanner enjoys camping, hunting, fishing and golfing.



LEE BRIGGS

District III – Unopposed Incumbent

Lee Briggs was first elected to the Golden West Board of Directors in September 1996. Lee graduated from Eagle Butte High School and served four years in the Marine Corps, including two tours of duty in Vietnam. After

graduating from South Dakota State University in 1972 with a bachelor's degree in Animal Science he worked for a short time in Mobridge for Farm Credit of Omaha.

Lee and his wife, Mary, have been ranching since 1976 and have owned their northern Haakon County ranch since 2004. The Briggs' have two grown daughters, Rea and Keva, five grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.



STEWART (STU) MARTY

District V – Unopposed Incumbent

Stu Marty retired as a business owner in 2008 and lives in Hot Springs. He was the president of Wright Printing Co., Inc. in Normal, IL, for 25 years and before that served as executive vice president for Bruce-Green Advertising, Ltd.

Stu has served on several national and regional boards, including the Heartland Chapter of the American Red Cross, PrintImage International, and the National Association of Quick Printers, to which he was awarded an honorary lifetime membership. He currently serves on the Save the VA committee and is a lifetime member of the

Fall River Historical Society and the Society of the Black Hills Pioneers. He is also a member of the Jedediah Smith Corral of Westerners International.

Stu and his wife, Karen, raised three daughters and have seven grandchildren. They enjoy gardening and visits with family. Stu enjoys rock hunting, cutting and polishing, jogging, fishing, and researching and writing about western Dakota history.



JEFF NIELSEN

District IX – Unopposed Incumbent

Jeff Nielsen is a business owner from Canistota and has served on the Golden West Board since 2010. He grew up in Viborg and graduated from the University of South Dakota with a degree in Business Administration.

After college, Jeff served five years in the United States Army as an Infantry Officer stationed in Germany. After leaving the service, he moved to Dallas, TX, where he worked for Sam's Wholesale Clubs. He returned to South Dakota to raise his family (Chloe 24, Jerad 22) and start his own business.

Along with his wife Janine, Jeff owns and operates Total Stop Food Stores with locations in nine communities in Eastern South Dakota. Jeff has served on the Canistota School Board, Church Council, Economic Development Committee, Good Samaritan Society, and the South Dakota Retailers Association. Jeff is also a 25-year member of the American Legion and Canistota Lions Club.

Attention Businesses, Churches, School Districts, Towns, Etc.

AUTHORIZATION TO VOTE

Non-individual members of Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc., such as school districts, towns, churches, corporations, and LLCs, wishing to vote at the annual meeting must complete this form and present it at the registration desk on September 26, 2020. This includes all businesses, regardless of organizational structure. Each member organization should designate a representative who is an officer, stockholder or member of their organization.

This form must be signed by an officer or member of the governing body of the non-individual member being represented.

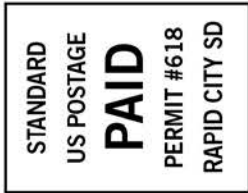
This is to certify that _____ is hereby
(Name of Person)

designated the delegate to the Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc., Annual Meeting on September 26, 2020,
from _____ whose phone number or account number is _____
(Name of Non-Individual member)

Named delegate is authorized to vote on all issues that may come before the meeting including election of directors.

By: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____



Please Join Us for the

68th Annual Meeting

Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc.

Saturday, September 26

Wall School Gym,

401 South Blvd., Wall, SD

Park & Enter on West Side of Building

Registration: 9:30 – 10:45 a.m.

Meeting Called to Order: 11 a.m.

Meal tickets will be distributed to those who attend the meeting.

Attendees will be registered for the \$500 grand prize plus additional prizes.

Must be present to win.

The time and location are different this year to allow more space for social distancing with a simplified schedule to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.



HORIZONS – Volume 20, Number 5

Horizons is an award-winning customer newsletter published bimonthly by Golden West Telecommunications.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

Golden West, PO Box 411, Wall, SD 57790

Dee Sleep, Editor • goldenwest.com • 1-855-888-7777