



TROUPE 1096
DHS theater troupe to stage new production 1B

MOVING ON
DHS girls tennis wins in team state playoffs 1C

THE Durango HERALD

Weekend Edition

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Animas Museum takes guests to early days of electric generation



The Tacoma Generation Station along the banks of the Animas River started generating hydro power in 1906 north of Durango.

JERRY MCBRIDE/Durango Herald photos

DURANGO CITY COUNCIL

Mayor pro tem custom upended

Woodruff elected to lead, Loyer takes second in command

BY CHRISTIAN BURNEY
HERALD STAFF WRITER

The election of Durango City councilors Dave Woodruff and Kip Koso to mayor and mayor pro tem on Tuesday was all but a foregone conclusion – or so it might have seemed to someone familiar with Durango’s rotational mayor system.

Mayor Gilda Yazzie subverted expectations when she nominated Councilor Jessika Loyer for mayor pro tem instead of Koso, receiving pushback from Koso and Councilor Shirley Gonzales and leaving some residents in attendance confused.

During an intermission between the swearing in of Woodruff and Loyer, a resident in attendance approached Woodruff and said he’s disappointed in him.

Koso, who was traveling out of state, attended the meeting virtually.

During a short but heated discussion on the dais, councilors called Koso’s leadership and trustworthiness into question.

Loyer said the mayor and mayor pro tem positions are not just ceremonial roles – they require leadership, the ability to build consensus and to support city staff within the city’s council-manager form of government while upholding the city charter.

She said City Council best functions when there is trust among city staff, councilors and the community, and leadership on City Council requires “the ability to collaborate and find common ground, to respect the boundaries of the council-manager structure.”

Koso said he was “sidelined” and “blindsided,” calling the development “ridiculous.”

See COUNCIL, 7A

TIME TRAVEL BY TRAIN

BY JESSICA BOWMAN
HERALD STAFF WRITER

ROCKWOOD – Tacoma Generating Station normally sits empty – a far cry from its early days, when 18 to 20 workers and their families lived in a small community near the station.

Today, the historic hydropower plant continues to operate, but with little direct human supervision. Most days, no employees are required on site, said plant operator Jon Ickes.

Still, remnants of the once-thriving company settlement remain. Old nails and dilapidated wood are reminders of the six homes that once stood near the bridge on the opposite side of the river, where plant workers and their families lived.

On Tuesday afternoon,

See TRAIN, 8A



Jon Ickes, with Excel Energy, explains the operations of the control panel to Lewis Aligarbes, left, and Gary Rollstin, who are part of the Tacoma History Train tour at the Tacoma Generation Station on Tuesday.

LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

Meet the candidates running for board of directors

Affordability, transparency and reliable power top concerns ahead of election

BY SCOUT EDMONDSON
HERALD STAFF WRITER

Seven candidates have cast their hats into the ring with the hopes of being elected to represent La Plata Electric Association’s four districts on the electric cooperative’s board of directors.

This year’s election carries a lot of weight: On April 1, the co-op officially separated from its longtime power supplier Tri-State Generation and Transmission, which CEO Chris Hansen described as

the “biggest day in our history since (LPEA) was founded.”

At the top of each candidate’s mind in this new chapter for the cooperative are affordability, transparency between the board and co-op members, and a mix of energy sources that will provide reliable electricity. Just how each candidate plans to achieve those goals varies, however.

The Durango Herald spoke with each of the candidates hoping to be elected to the board of directors. Here is what they said.

LPEA District 1, Archuleta County

Nicole Pitcher

Incumbent Nicole Pitcher was first elected to LPEA’s board of directors in 2023, and served as the board’s president through the transition from Tri-State. Now, she is up for reelection to the board to represent her home of Archuleta County, where her family has lived for six generations.

Pitcher’s career spans roles in national security think tanks in Washington, D.C., work in the U.S. Senate and extensive experience

in Southwest Colorado’s tourism industry, including work at Wolf Creek Ski Area, rafting outposts, the service industry and real estate.

She pointed to how, while serving on the board, she in part helped the co-op keep member rates the same even when Tri-State increased prices. Additionally, she said, she has helped move LPEA closer to its goal of reducing its emissions.

“There’s a lot to be said for the three years I’ve already committed to serving LPEA,” Pitcher said.

If reelected, Pitcher said she wants to continue creating a diversified energy mix, such as solar, natural gas, biomass, geothermal and hydropower. Continuing to diversify LPEA’s ener-

gy mix will make the cooperative more reliable, increase local investment and make it more environmentally responsible.

Pitcher said wildfire mitigation and grid hardening, along with transparent communication with cooperative members, are central to her platform.

“We have a potential to become a community that powers itself,” Pitcher said. “That’s the future that I’m working toward.”

James Lane

James Lane is challenging Pitcher for her seat representing Archuleta County on LPEA’s board of directors. He said his platform focuses on

See CANDIDATES, 8A



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