

WEC Holds 81st Annual Meeting Virtually

Membership votes by mail, re-elects three Directors in uncontested election

In a normal year, WEC's Annual Meeting is a festive event, featuring a buffet dinner and a special speaker, vendors showing cutting-edge energy saving technologies, and opportunities for mingling with Board members and staff, elected officials, and dignitaries of Vermont's energy world. Always held just as central Vermont starts waking up to spring, it's a treasured time to greet neighbors and discuss Co-op business as a new season begins.

Not so in 2020. As the COVID-19 virus disrupted in-person gatherings throughout the state, WEC's Board of Directors held a brief business meeting in lieu of its normal Annual Meeting on May 7. The meeting was held over the virtual meeting platform Zoom and it was open to the membership. However, the only substantive business of the meeting was to certify WEC's election results. A recording of the meeting is available on wec.coop for any member who wishes to view it.

In an uncontested election, three incumbent Directors were re-elected: Treasurer Don Douglas, Jean Hamilton, and Mary Just Skinner. Before every Annual Meeting, WEC mails ballots to members, and the majority of voters submit their ballots by mail. However, 2020 marked the first year members voted exclusively by mail. WEC's Ballot Committee met to count votes with masks

and gloves. This year, 892 ballots were returned, and 838 were valid. Interestingly enough, there was no marked decrease in the number of members voting — in fact, despite no in-person meeting and no ballot box, the number of ballots was higher than in past uncontested years.

Board President Barry Bernstein announced the vote totals with Douglas receiving 796 votes, Hamilton receiving 775, and Skinner receiving 756. There were 27 write-in votes and 154 blanks. Bernstein offered his congratulations to the three re-elected Directors.

After Secretary Annie Reed certified the bylaw requirement, Bernstein ended the meeting. "The adjournment of the 81st Annual Meeting, the shortest in history," he said. "Let's hope we can have a meeting of the members this fall."

After the meeting, General Manager Patty Richards pointed out that process improvements can happen when people are forced to do something differently. Of course, she said, she prefers to have in-person meetings, to speak with members and discuss their questions face-to-face. But, she pointed out, not all members are able to attend in-person meetings even during a normal year—some live too far away to justify the trip;

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For the first time ever, WEC held a virtual annual meeting. It was the shortest, and perhaps smallest, meeting in Co-op history, held to validate the results of the 2020 Board election in accordance with WEC's bylaws. Present at the meeting, from left to right starting in the top row: General Manager Patty Richards, Treasurer Don Douglas, Secretary Annie Reed; Administrative Assistant Dawn Johnson, Co-op Currents editor Katie Titterton, Vice President Roger Fox; Board member Jean Hamilton, President Barry Bernstein, WEC Attorney Ron Shems; Board members Mary Just Skinner, Richard Rubin, and Steve Knowlton.

Co-op Business Proceeds in the New Normal

Steps the Co-op is taking to protect itself; and how things are the same, and different, under COVID-19

Daily routines at WEC are changing week to week. The office doors were closed to the public for several weeks. For a time, technical and field crews went out to work sites with one lineworker per vehicle, and they practiced social distancing on site. Office staff had worked mainly from home, rotating a minimum number of people in the office on a given day.

Since electricity is an essential service, WEC did not pause when

Governor Scott issued a state of emergency and limited business operations statewide. The work didn't stop—or even change. Now, it's just done differently. "We were going fast and furious before COVID," said Richards. "Now, we still have the same workload—even more—and it's under COVID."


For example, a member with a question about her bill can still call the same number, and still reach

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Washington Electric Cooperative
 East Montpelier, VT 05651

Inside

- WEC leadership on continuing process:** Barry and Patty discuss ongoing projects and WEC's work under COVID-19 - and how it affects members. P. 2.
- Election results:** Three incumbents re-elected by mail in an uncontested election. Full results p. 2.
- WEC's COVID response plan:** WEC adapts its safety protocols in response to Montpelier's updates. See the latest on p. 5.
- Members ask:** Members write in the questions they hoped to ask at Annual Meeting. P. 6.



WEC wishes a happy retirement to Mike Patterson after 28 years of service in the Co-op's engineering department, p.8. WEC also wishes happy work anniversaries to seven of its employees. P. 5.

President's and General Manager's Message

Maintaining Business as Usual During a Pandemic

With full staff working, Co-op adjusts to safety protocol; continues work on rate increase and redesign, broadband expansion, mediation in Coventry

Staff appreciation

Barry: I want to start this out by acknowledging our employees who are celebrating work anniversaries at WEC. Every year at the Annual Meeting we recognize our employees who've served a multiple of five years at the Co-op, and I want to make sure this year's group is seen and appreciated [see p. 5].

Also, we observed Lineworker Appreciation Day back in April. I want to acknowledge that again, because Patty and the Board and I know we are fortunate to have such a great line crew, and they do such good work.

Patty: The line crew is awesome. They do the tough work out in the weather. While we're on topic, I'd also

like to acknowledge the hard work of our indoor staff, too.

Barry: Our full team is just exceptional. Utility work is a team effort, and the full staff works hard on behalf of all our members.

Annual Meeting recap

Barry: I've attended almost 50 annual meetings. This year's was strange for all of us. As part of the Co-op difference it's so important to have our members get together, to share dinner socially and to share their thoughts with staff and the Board. Having the meeting by Zoom this year, with really no one in attendance, was hard, because that was missing.

We hope if things clear up in the

fall, we might be able to have a dinner and open meeting combined with our Community Meeting, but we'll have to see how it unfolds.

Patty: We held the meeting virtually in order to validate our Board of Directors election results. Thank you to all our members who participated in the democratic process.

Barry: Three incumbent directors ran unopposed this year, and they were each re-elected. We had a particularly good turnout with vote by mail. I also want to thank our members for taking time to vote during this pandemic.

COVID-19-related changes at WEC

Patty: Business continues here at WEC. Here's our safety update. At the office, the door is open to the public between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., and outside those hours you can speak to a staff member in person by appointment only. You will need a mask and you'll need to do a health self-assessment. You can still drop your bill in the drop box, but no one is allowed in the building other than staff, who are switching between in-office time and working remotely from home.

All our staff are working full time. You can reach people by phone and email. Line crews are full time out in the field.

When you see our crews working,

2020 Election Results

892 ballots cast
54 invalid ballots
838 total votes (quorum)

Board members re-elected:

Don Douglas: **796**
Jean Hamilton: **775**
Mary Just Skinner: **756**

Write-ins: **27**
Blank votes: **154**

please don't go right up to them and talk to them. If you must talk to someone, please keep that six foot distance. We can't risk having COVID hit the line crew, and we need to protect them. In the event we have an outage, they're out responding, whether it's in the middle of the afternoon or two in the morning. We need them healthy.

Barry: One thing Patty's laid out through this process is that if COVID-19 spreads through our team, we won't have the depth and strength we need for outage situations. If you want to honk and wave, they'll appreciate it, but they're trying to stay healthier than the rest of us—even from colds.

Patty: We've updated our phone

Co-op Currents

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WEC is part of the alliance working to advance and support the principles of cooperatives in Vermont.

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Editorial Committee

Patty Richards Donald Douglas Jean Hamilton Anne Reed Katie Titterton

The Board of Directors' regularly scheduled meetings are on the last Wednesday of each month, in the evening. Members are welcome to attend. Members who wish to discuss a matter with the Board should contact the president through WEC's office. Meeting dates and times are subject to change. For information about times and/or agenda, or to receive a copy of the minutes of past meetings, contact Administrative Assistant Dawn Johnson, at 224-2332.

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A Statement Against Racism from WEC's Board and General Manager

WEC's leadership wishes to send a message to our members: We are committed to seeing, supporting, welcoming, and protecting our Black members, members of color, women, and members who belong to historically marginalized groups.

We lead a 100 percent renewable, democratically run electric cooperative. Our core values include safety, equity, fairness, and meaningful climate action.

Systemic racism harms people, communities, democracy, and our planet. Social justice is inseparable from climate justice. Climate events are well documented as having an outsized effect on communities of color. And at this moment, we are all aware that disasters of all kinds, including violence, natural disasters, and viral outbreaks, disproportionately harm people of color.

As a community-owned not for profit, we must support the safety and dignity of all of our members. To that end, we are working on ways to celebrate and increase the diversity of our staff and board, and we want our community, and in particular our members of color, to know that WEC is a place where you are welcome, respected, and safe.

— WEC's Board of Directors and General Manager Patty Richards

Got something to say?

Letter to the editor, comment, or a story tip? Drop us a line at currents@wec.coop or Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 8, East Montpelier, VT 05651, Attn: Co-op Currents.



systems to support our staff working from home. We've really upped the technology in recent months. And a shout out to our backup call service, CRC, another cooperative that supports electric cooperatives like WEC all across the country. Early on, as we built up our staffing rotation schedule, CRC was our backstop for picking up members' phone calls. A lot of co-ops across the country closed down their member services departments completely and relied on CRC to answer the phone. Luckily, we didn't need to do that. With our new phone system, all our Member Services Representatives are available to take calls while working from home.

We also have a new weekly all staff meeting by phone. We're using the phone so line crews out in the field can participate. It's a nice way to stay connected. We're saying, here's what's going on at WEC, here are staff updates. We're keeping everyone up to date and giving our employees a chance to ask questions.

Barry: COVID has meant all our members have been pretty isolated. Our governor's press conferences three times a week have been really respectfully done. Kudos to Gov. Scott and our congressional delegation for working to get federal funding to Vermont to help folks.

January 2020 rate increase approved; launch of new rate design

Patty: The rate increase was a fully litigated rate increase, with the Department of Public Service (DPS) checking all our numbers. At one point they recommended a lower rate increase of 5.25 percent. We said, we recognize the department's concerns, and showed them the data based on new information from the renewable energy credit (REC) market. We actually made the case for a higher rate increase than the one we asked for, though we're not requesting more. The DPS came around and agreed to the 5.95 percent increase. The Public



All our staff are working full time. You can reach people by phone and email. Line crews are full time out in the field. When you see our crews working, please don't go right up them and talk to them... We need them healthy.

– Patty Richards

Utility Commission (PUC) just approved it on June 19.

Barry: That 5.95 percent increase is already on your bill as a temporary charge below the line. Now it'll become official.

Patty, I know we've held off instituting our new rate design until this increase was finalized. Is that happening next?

Patty: Yes. Since the across-the-board rate increase is final, we can make the changes to our rate design. The PUC ordered us to change our rate design in three steps. People won't see the full increase in the customer charge immediately, but it will be phased in over time over a two year period.

Barry: The first step to the monthly member charge will raise it from about \$15 to \$18. That includes the most recent

rate increase. But as the monthly charge increases, the rate at which we charge for energy will drop. Each time the member charge goes up over two years, it will lower the kilowatt hour charge on the end block.

Are we dropping the rates for the first 100 kilowatt hours in this first stage?

Patty: Yes. The change to a 100 kilowatt hour low block at eight cents is immediate.

Barry: We're dropping the number of hours in the low-use block from 200 to 100 kilowatt hours, but we're also lowering the rate for that block quite a bit, from 12 cents to eight cents per kilowatt hour.

Patty: Yes.

Barry: There are still a lot of things up in the air, because COVID-19 comes with additional costs. We'll look to see how that flows when we look at our budget in the fall, and look to see what adjustments we need to make.



WEC receives Payroll Protection Program funds

Barry: Patty, would you share with the membership our success in getting some funds from the Payroll Protection Program (PPP)?

Patty: It's a program of the federal Small Business Administration. We received roughly \$843,000. The rules are that these funds are to pay employees, so that is how we're using them.

Over the weeks after the PPP funds were issued, there was confusion over whether we met the criteria of the program. The dollars were put out quickly and there weren't many guidelines. We've been actively working through the guidelines and the numbers and consulted with our congressional delegates. At this point, we feel we're on good footing to hold onto these funds.

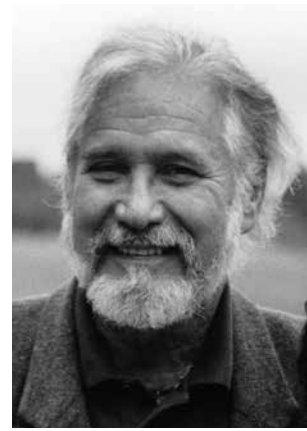
Green Mountain Power, Vermont Gas, and VELCO received funds but returned the money. I think it's appropriate they returned the money, given their financial situations and that they have shareholders. These are big businesses that operate in a very different place from a nonprofit cooperative. We can make a good showing that we need the funds and that they benefit the membership, not a corporate bottom line.

Barry: The Board is concerned that any additional expenses incurred from COVID-19 fallout will negatively impact rates. So access to these PPP funds to pay our staff will help reduce that impact. We all know these times will have economic repercussions on our Co-op and on our members. We're always trying to tighten our costs as much as possible on behalf of our members.

Broadband process advances

Barry: We're excited about WEC's role in bringing broadband to our membership. WEC is still working on this, in spite of COVID.

Patty: We received a \$60,000 grant from the DPS to enable us to do a feasibility study and business plan to figure out the cost of how we



We all know these times will have economic repercussions on our Co-op and our members. We're always trying to tighten our costs as much as possible on behalf of our members.

– Barry Bernstein

could potentially deliver broadband in our service territory. We issued a request for proposals, and we've just picked a consultant organization to work with: the technology cooperative NRTC. The feasibility study should be done in three months, and then the business plan in another three months. NRTC will work with WEC and our sister co-op VEC, and other co-ops across the country at the opportunity to bid on federal funds.

So, by the end of the year, we hope to have determined what it would take to deliver high speed internet in our 41 towns. We recognize our towns are drastically underserved by high speed service, and many members don't have internet at all. We're excited about the possibilities here.

Barry: The state did an overview study of all electric utilities. 72 percent of our nearly 11,000 members are either underserved or unserved by high speed internet. This is not a simple process. Even if we were given a grant for all the money it would take to bring fiber to our member homes and businesses, it would still be a six-year-plus buildout to get that fiber, with some combo of wireless, to everyone.

But at the same time we're starting with our consultant on the feasibility study, we're also actively exploring partnerships with the three CUDs (Communication Utility Districts) in our service territory: EC Fiber, CV Fiber, and NEK Fiber. We're exploring other partnerships and federal and state grant funding opportunities. It's going to take a lot of money, and hopefully we can get some grants.

Patty: This pandemic has spotlighted the fact that broadband is not just a nicety. It's not just for entertainment. Broadband is an essential service, just like electricity. People need to be able to work and communicate. Without high speed internet service, you can't work remotely, and it is more difficult to stay connected with family and friends. Whether WEC does this work or we partner with someone else to deliver it, we need broadband in every member's house.

Barry: Patty, that's really important. I just had my first teleconference with my doctor instead of an in-person appointment, for example. Two years ago, I was saying, "I don't have kids at home playing video games," and was not a big proponent of broadband. Then I started listening to friends who worked from home, and people who were using it for education and

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Thank you, Ballot Committee!

WEC offers heartfelt thanks to the Ballot Committee, who came in masks and gloves to count ballots for the Co-op's 2020 election:

Co-Chair Joe Kelly
Co-Chair Cort Richardson
Barbara Bendix
Richard and Annie Dolan
Peter Keene

Did You Know?

72 percent of WEC households are underserved or unserved by high speed internet service. WEC's new study will determine what it will take to bring broadband to every member.

Business Proceeds

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someone familiar in Member Services. Out in WEC's rights of way, crews are still working on equipment and maintaining the lines, cutting back vegetation, and working to make sure power stays reliable.

WEC is a utility, and utilities are stress-tested all the time through weather events, cyber threats, climate change, and other major disruptions. At the helm, Richards is calm about unknowns and confident in her employees' ability to navigate. "It's just like a mega storm. The underlying skill sets are the same," she explained. Her mission is the same as always, plus taking steps to keep her team healthy, available to do their essential jobs, and well-resourced.

But WEC is also a small, member-owned cooperative, rooted and intertwined in its community. From that perspective, the social changes in response to COVID-19 have a cultural impact on the Co-op. How do different departments respond? "We make sure everyone has what they need, and we're adapting as we go," said Richards.

Protecting finances

Early in the pandemic, WEC leadership quietly agreed to pause power cutoffs for members who did not pay their electric bills. Soon after, Governor Scott's administration banned all state utilities from cutting off services during the crisis.

While a necessary protection for those who have lost income, utilities throughout the state are bracing for significant revenue losses as a result. Already, WEC has seen its late accounts triple. And other costs associated with COVID-19 may well ripple out, affecting the Co-op's income streams.

So WEC applied for and received \$843,000 in Payroll Protection Program (PPP) funding. WEC is fully staffed, and the funding must be used for WEC's payroll. Richards explained, "What this grant does is free up revenue to pay other operational expenses. We're being very fiscally responsible and doing our best to seek out funds from various sources that are being issued by the federal government stimulus packages."

The federal PPP funds rolled out quickly, and eligibility guidelines weren't immediately clear. After going over the paperwork carefully and consulting with Vermont's congressional delegation, Richards is confident WEC is entitled to the money. Other major state utilities, like Green Mountain Power and Vermont Gas—both owned by the same multibillion-dollar international conglomerate—received and then returned funding. Richards thinks

that's appropriate, given the vastly different economies at play. "We're a neighborhood co-op. We have no corporate shareholders. Our members and our staff are all in the same community," she said. "These funds are designed for companies like ours. It protects our staff, and helps to protect our members from higher rates."

Member Services here to help

When WEC leadership decided on social distancing protocols

including remote work, they realized staff would need to remain available to members while they worked from home. That meant WEC needed to hook up a phone system so staff could use their work numbers from home, and Member Services Representatives (MSRs) needed access to their files and billing system.

While the technology was set up, Member Services relied on the

Cooperative Response Center, or CRC, the co-op WEC contracts with as a backup call system. "It took a few weeks at the beginning, but everyone has a laptop and access to the phone system and we have taken the calls back from CRC," said Susan Golden, Member Services Supervisor. Now, all MSRs are back on the job full-time, and CRC is back to taking overflow calls.

At first, every day one member of the MSR team went into the office. "That individual processed the mail, answered the phone, and did what needs to be one physically in the office. It was done on a rotating basis," Golden explained. The office routine is slowly returning to normal, with two team members now onsite each day. "Everyone has been absolutely awesome in making this work, and I couldn't be more proud of them," Golden said.

Golden and her team are acutely aware that the economic effects of COVID-19 impact many WEC members. "If you're not sure how you're going to pay your WEC bill, the best thing you can do is to call us," she said. "We are helping members develop monthly budgets to get through this." Even though the Governor ordered a moratorium on utility cutoffs, she cautioned, all utility customers are still responsible for paying their bills. "The worst thing you can do is ignore your bill, and then get stuck in arrears," she worried. "Call us. We really do want to help." To reach Member Services, call 802-223-5245, or 800-932-5245.

Energy coach

Products & Services Director Bill Powell, commonly known to members as WEC's Energy Coach, is able to talk with members about their electric needs just as easily as always—except he can't go on site visits, and

WEC is a utility, and utilities are stress-tested all the time through weather events, cyber threats, climate change, and other major disruptions. At the helm, Richards is calm about unknowns and confident in her employees' ability to navigate.



At WEC HQ, before COVID-19: from left to right, Energy Coach / Director of Products & Services Bill Powell, Member Services Supervisor Susan Golden, and Member Services Representatives Elaine Gonier, Beth Ouelette, and Gordon Matheson (now Plant Accountant).

members can't drop by the office. "My preference is to have members walk in to the office and have face time. Well, that hasn't happened in a while, and it won't happen for a while. I miss that," he said.

Some programs have been quieter, he noted, like Button Up, which incentivizes members to swap out inefficient fossil-fuel appliances for energy-efficient electric ones, and PowerShift, WEC's partnership with Efficiency Vermont that harnesses members' electric water heaters as battery storage to help offset peak power costs. "But that's changing, slowly," he said, and he projects that members now stuck at home are starting to notice items they'd like to replace, and efficiencies they'd like to improve. "A deferral of consumption, and then a rebound, but I don't know when," he mused.

New offerings this summer will help keep members' focus on improving efficiency and reducing carbon, he hopes.

New PowerShift technologies will also help. Powell is particularly excited about the prospect of working with members with electric vehicles. New incentives will encourage members to switch to electric vehicles and reduce

their carbon footprints. Because climate change will still be a threat even after the virus is gone.

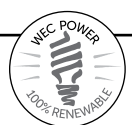
Improving reliability

"First and foremost, we're a service company. If all our crews are home and an outage occurs, it doubles or triples our response time. It's important to keep our crews working," said Operations & Engineering Director Dan Weston.

As a result, WEC's work crews quickly adapted to the state's social distancing orders. Typically, all lineworkers meet at the Operations Center first thing in the morning for a meeting, then split into crews to head out into the field. Under the orders, the team split to rotate half on, half off. Each crewmember took a company truck home and drove right to their assigned worksite, where they maintained distance from each other. Crews missed the conversations that support fluid teamwork, said Weston—"safety discussions, environmental impact, brainstorming," but quickly fell into new patterns.

In addition, members by and large respected WEC's requests to give line crews plenty of space, and crews

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In Coventry, Utilities and Town Settle; Mediation Continues with WEC Power Plant Valuation

In 2019, the town of Coventry appraised utility equipment located within the town at far higher values than previous appraisals had. Coventry is home to WEC's landfill gas-to-electricity plant; poles and other equipment operated by WEC, sister utility Vermont Electric Co-op (VEC), and transmission utility VELCO are also located in the town. In April of this year, WEC, VEC, and VELCO settled with the town on their transmission and distribution line equipment property appraisals. However, the valuation of WEC's landfill gas to energy power plant remains in mediation.

The town and WEC settled on

a total listed property value of \$2.04 million for the next three years. Originally, WEC valued its transmission lines at \$1.96 million; Coventry's appraisal was several hundreds of thousands dollars higher, at \$2.32 million. The town and WEC ultimately settled on a value of \$2.04 million.


"It's important to us to have a positive, respectful relationship with the town of Coventry, and I believe this settlement helps maintain that," said WEC General Manager Patty Richards. "We are perfectly willing to pay our fair share of taxes. As a regulated utility and a member-owned cooperative, we're also responsible for

making sure the taxes we pay are fair and reasonable."

VEC and VELCO saw similar settlements in their property valuations.

The town and WEC are still working to find common ground on valuation of WEC's power plant. All landfills emit methane, a harmful greenhouse gas, as the garbage within them decomposes. WEC harvests the gas to renewably power more than 6,000 homes, or two-thirds of its membership. WEC's members voted to build the power plant in 2004, when landfill gas power plants were still a relatively new idea. Last year Coventry appraised the plant at \$14 million,

compared to WEC's estimate of \$7.8 million.

COVID-19, however, has changed the court process. In order to take the process out of the courts and to get to the root issue, mediators "called a time out," said Richards. Following the mediators' recommendation, the next step is for both the town and WEC to provide the data that led to their respective valuations. Richards called this a good faith effort. "If we can show our hands, we might be able to educate one another and avoid a lengthy and expensive court challenge," she said. 



WEC's landfill-gas-to-energy power plant at the landfill in Coventry.

WEC Employee Anniversaries

At every Annual Meeting, General Manager Patty Richards and Board President Barry Bernstein honor WEC staff who reach milestone anniversaries with the Co-op. This year, we applaud them in ink instead of in person.

"I absolutely love our employees," said Richards. "Our staff is so rich in institutional knowledge, they are so skilled, so committed, and they're wonderful to work with. Please join me in congratulating these amazing members of our team on their anniversaries with WEC."

25th Anniversary
Teia Greenslit
Senior Accountant

Kevin Stevens
Manager of Information Systems

20th Anniversary
Larry Gilbert
Right of Way Manager

Bradley Nutbrown
Fleet Mechanic

15th Anniversary
Kevin Lanphear
Lineman

Jason Smith
Construction Foreman

5th Anniversary
Patrick Morrissey
2nd Class Lineman

WEC's current COVID-19 staffing and response plans

WEC's COVID-19 safety plans are responsive to changes in state and federal recommendations and aim to keep staff and members safe while ensuring continuity of work. These are WEC's most current COVID-19 plans:

- Operations and field staff back to full time work, with staggered start times
- Member Services Representatives (MSRs) cycle two per day in the office with others working remotely; all full time with fully equipped WEC phone lines
- All office staff work full time, rotating in-office and remote work
- All employees wear masks in office when away from workstation
- Functional area movement limitations remain in effect at the office, limiting in-person communication
- Sneeze guards to be installed
- Employees coming to office must self-report changes in health
- Weekly all-staff conference call continues
- Doors open to the general public from 10-2, Monday-Friday
- Staff designated as safety officers at both warehouse and office

Members Ask

Last issue, we invited members to write in questions they would have liked to ask at the Annual Meeting. Here are their questions, and answers from Patty Richards, General Manager; and Annie Reed, Board Secretary.

In the Treasurer's report it is stated that "we have 100 percent renewable, locally generated electricity." How can you claim that our electricity is locally generated when we get power from NY (and Quebec)?

How does it work that you can call WEC power 100 percent renewable if you've sold "renewable energy credits?" Isn't this sort of a questionable "double accounting?" Also, aren't we periodically buying power on the spot market? Is this all "renewable" power?

— Nat Shambaugh
Berlin

All of WEC's underlying power commitments—those we own and those with whom we contract—are all renewable-based generating stations. First, where our power sources originate:

We do not currently receive power from Quebec. While we have a contract for Hydro Quebec power, it is set up so that we only receive HQ-based power if we are short in our power mix. That is not currently the case.

We do receive some of our power from New York Power Authority (NYPA), which operates hydro plants

What does locally generated power mean?

We all have different definitions of local. Does local mean in-county, in-state, in an adjacent state or province, or in the same geographic region?

The vast majority of WEC's power is generated in northern Vermont. A small amount comes from New York; the amount may vary by a percentage point or two from year to year.

In 2019:

- 94 percent of WEC's power was generated in Vermont.
- 6 percent came from New York.
- 0 percent came from Quebec.
- 100 percent was from renewable sources.

in Lewiston (near Niagara Falls) and Massena, NY. Currently, a small amount of power comes from the Niagara plant.

The vast majority of our power is local in that it is generated within Vermont. In 2019, 94 percent of our power was generated in Vermont, and six percent came from New York.

We also generate more power than we need to serve our retail load needs. We have excess in the amount of 5 to 10 percent in any given year. So, technically, not all the power we have under contract or own is in the state of

Vermont. However, the Vermont-based generation we do own and have under contract covers roughly 90 to 95 percent of our retail load needs in most years.

The statement that 100 percent of our load is served from renewable resources is correct. We do sell renewable energy credits (RECs) from some of our resources: the majority are from the Coventry landfill gas plant and Sheffield Wind facility. We then buy back less expensive RECs and green back up our mix enough to cover our retail loads needs. The income from our top-quality RECs allows us to keep our rates lower than if we did not sell them, and buying back less expensive RECs maintains our renewable power mix.

— Patty Richards

The new film "Planet of the Humans," directed by Jeff Gibbs and produced by Michael Moore, raises some serious questions about "renewable" solutions to generating power. How much of WEC's power comes from biomass power plants?

The WEC newsletter mentions that biomass energy is part of the Co-op's power mix (April 2020, page 3, "President's Report.") What is the Co-op's position on using such a resource for power generation, considering it will inevitably contribute to deforestation, reduce our ability to sequester CO₂, and is only renewable in the very long term, not the short term? Can we divest

from such sources or get them to change how they operate?

— Carl Quesnel
West Brookfield

We receive roughly three percent of our power from the Ryegate wood facility. This is a state mandated contract and we, along with all other Vermont electric utilities, are required by law to purchase power from it. We don't manage or own the facility and have no operational authority over the plant.

That said, we do believe wood fired power plants can have a place in a renewable power portfolio. Vermont's wood plants harvest based on sustainable forestry practices. Preserving Vermont's forests also means land use practices that promote good forestry practices. This helps our loggers stay in business, while keeping land used for forestry activities while we make electricity.

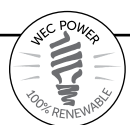
This is a triple use endeavor and bottom line good use of a natural resource: maintaining forestry jobs, creation of local energy, and preserving land which is to be used for woods rather than developments.

— Patty Richards and Annie Reed

Thanks to Nat and Carl for writing in. *Co-op Currents* publishes letters from members. Please write currents@wec.coop if you have a question, comment, or story to share. 🖊️



WEC's hydro power plant at Wrightsville Reservoir, located within WEC's service area. Three percent of WEC's power comes from Wrightsville.



ENERGY COACH SAYS:

Shopping For a New Car? Considering an Electric Vehicle?



New EV incentives are coming in the summer of 2020, thanks to our partners at VLITE and Efficiency Vermont. Cut out gasoline and oil and power your ride through WEC's 100 percent renewable electricity. Details coming soon. Contact the Energy Coach for more EV info and incentives:

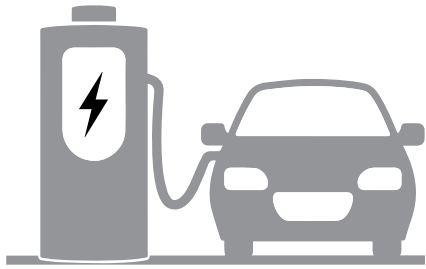
Website: wec.coop/energy-coach-home
 Email: energycoach@wec.coop
 Call: 802-224-2329



This spring, road traffic was quieter in WEC territory as nonessential workers were asked to stay home. This actually made conditions safer for WEC crews working along roadsides. Crews also worked clearing rights of way and identifying and replacing broken poles, like in this file photo. The work accomplished this spring should result in improved reliability as storm season returns.

Button Up 2020 Incentives

Incentives for Transportation



WEC

- Up to \$1,900 in member incentives towards a new plug-in Electric Vehicle (EV)
- \$1,200 for an all-electric vehicle (AEV)
- \$950 for a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV – gas and electric)
- An additional \$700 incentive is available for income qualifying members

Efficiency Vermont

- EV incentive not available
- Agency of Transportation**
- In 2020 AOT provides up to \$5,000 in additional incentives for EVs: driveelectricvt.com/why-go-electric/purchase-incentives

Have your finances taken a hit from COVID-19?

Don't let your bill go past due. Call Member Services today.

We know these are difficult times, and we're here to help. Even with the Governor's halt to cutoffs, all utility customers throughout the state are still responsible for paying their bills. A Member Services Representative will help you put together a budget that works for you.

Don't let your bill go past due, or grow beyond what you can manage. Call us today, and we'll help you put together a plan.

Incentives for Weatherization



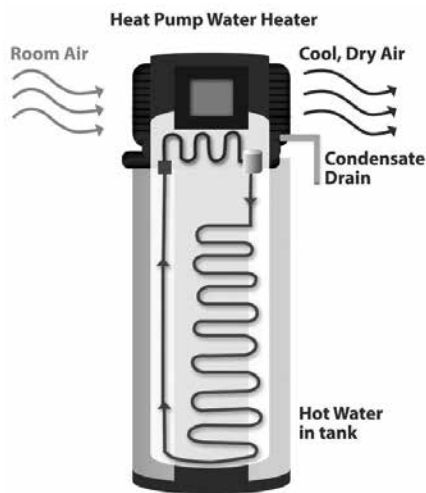
WEC

- Weatherization improvements to building shell: \$600 for Home Performance with Energy Star contractor

Efficiency Vermont

- Weatherization improvements to building shell: up to \$2,000 for Home Performance with Energy Star contractor; up to \$4,000/50% of project costs with an Efficiency Excellence Network contractor

Incentives for Heat Pumps



WEC

- Qualifying heat pump in "high performance" house
- \$250. (incentives for eligible heat pumps based on verified building shell meeting 2020 thermal performance standards; contact WEC Button Up for specifications)
- Heat pump hot water (HPWH) system
- \$250. (HPWH incentive available where a fossil-fueled (oil/kerosene/propane) hot water system is replaced)

Efficiency Vermont

- HPWH incentive up to \$800
- Cold Climate Heat Pumps (HP):

Equipment Capacity (mini-split)	EVT incentive 2020
≤2 tons	\$400
>2 tons	Up to \$650

- Centrally ducted HP: up to \$4,500
- Air to water HP: up to \$500

**Go Green.
Go Electric.
Go WEC!**

Incentives for Pellet Stoves, Furnaces, and Boilers



WEC

- \$250 for either a qualifying pellet stove or a wood stove. Stoves must be installed by qualified installer.
- Pellet furnace: \$500
- Pellet boiler: \$1000

Efficiency Vermont*

- Pellet stove: \$750 when installed by qualified contractor
- Pellet furnace: up to \$6,000
- Pellet boiler: up to \$6,000

* Offers subject to change. See EfficiencyVermont.com for current details.

Have you been to wec.coop recently?

The new website is your resource for up-to-date outage information, easy bill pay, and so much more. Bookmark it today!

802.224.2329 • energycoach@wec.coop



President & GM Message

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entrepreneurial purposes, and realized how essential it is.

Most people in rural areas in the US are right where we are. We want to make sure we can get the service delivered to our members at the lowest possible cost and that it's done well. That's why we're being careful about what our role is, and we're very open to working with others.

Once everyone has high speed, we'll be able to work closely on load management and helping you lower your electric bill through smart use of electricity. It will be a several year adventure.

Coventry property value assessment in mediation

Patty: We're trying to reach agreement with the town about the assessed value of our power plant at the landfill. We're trying to be a good business partner and do the right thing, and also to protect our members and not pay too much in taxes. In June, we will meet with the town again with the assistance of a mediator. We are hopeful this will bring parties together and we can narrow down the differences.

Barry: Our responsibility is to our membership. We must make sure that what we pay for taxes is based on a realistic assessment of the cost of our system. Mediation means we're trying

to come to a place where both parties feel comfortable, and we mitigate the effect of any property tax increase on our rates.

Having trouble paying your bill? Call the Co-op

Barry: The Board recognizes the impact the pandemic has had on our individual members' finances.

Patty: If you're unable to pay your bill, the best thing to do is reach out and let us know. We can help you set up a budget plan. We can extend it over a year or two years. We're giving a lot of flexibility right now to people who are past due on their accounts.

The best thing to do is reach out and we'll work out a plan. We really don't want you to have to dig out from large balances.

Barry: Patty, that's great. That's something we've always done, supporting our members with budget plans, and it's part of the Co-op Difference. We need to get our bills paid, but we also work with every member to make it easy as possible for them to meet their obligations.

We hope all our membership is getting through this time safely and in good health. We know it's put added strains on everybody. All our employees and Board send our best wishes out to every one of our members. Even though our offices are open for limited hours, it doesn't mean you can't get a hold of us. We're here for you. 🐾

PUC Approves WEC's 2020 Rate Increase, Clearing Way for Rate Redesign

On June 19, 2020, the Public Utility Commission (PUC) approved WEC's rate increase of 5.95 percent.

The increase has been included as a temporary line item on WEC members' bills since January 1, 2020. The approval comes nearly six months after WEC filed for the rate increase. For the drivers behind WEC's filing for the rate increase, see the December 2019 issue of *Co-op Currents*.

The PUC's approval paves the way for WEC to implement its new rate design in stages, incrementally increasing the monthly member

charge and simultaneously decreasing the charge per kilowatt hour.

"That's right. We had to raise rates, and now that the increase was approved, that clears us to start lowering them," said General Manager Patty Richards. The purpose of the new rate design is to stabilize WEC's income streams while helping its members transition off carbon. The restructure will make WEC's 100 percent renewable electricity a more affordable option for all its members' power needs, from appliances to vehicles. 🐾

Business Proceeds

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have stayed away from members and their homes. Overall, "the level of cooperation was phenomenal," Weston said appreciatively.

As Weston and his team considered their working options under COVID, they developed a mindset. "We went into this as, let's leverage the situation," he said. Soon, they noticed efficiencies appear. While two thirds of crews were setting poles and making improvements to the system, like transferring conductors and clearing rights of way, the remaining third patrolled lines and marked trees that pose a danger to lines: plenty of ash, susceptible to the emerald ash borer, and also diseased or leaning trees. "A lot of the work we'd normally be doing over the full course of the year got done now," Weston observed, saying this allowed right of way crews to get to work clearing those trees during the warmer months.

During the peak of the pandemic, reduced traffic meant a far easier time accomplishing electrical work on roadways. As dangerous as it may be working with thousands of volts of electricity, distracted and dangerous drivers pose a much greater threat to lineworkers at WEC and elsewhere. "One of the most dangerous things we can do is set up on a highway," Weston pointed out.

As the state's restrictions have eased, more traffic has returned to the state highways that cut through WEC territory. Weston is pivoting line and right of way crews back to an original schedule. "The work we've done in these past couple of months will show up in reliability improvement," he predicted.

Returning your money

Working from home, Administrative Assistant Dawn Johnson has been working to return money to members. With no Annual Meeting to plan, she said, she's been focused almost

entirely on projects related to WEC's capital credits programs. "I'm able to work on finding people who've been missing from our system, do due diligence for abandoned and unclaimed property, merge accounts, and talk to members about the allocation and refund process," she explained.

Like all cooperatives, WEC is member-owned. As a result, every year the Co-op takes in more revenue than it needs to function, those funds are allocated to members. The amount credited to each member depends on how much electricity they bought that year.

Because WEC needs to maintain a certain amount of cash reserves to keep operating and to demonstrate fiscal strength to lenders, it can't just refund the total margins from the previous year. Instead, every November, current members receive a credit on their bills for some portion of their allocated credits. The Board typically returns some funds from several years ago and some funds from the previous year or two, so both brand new members and those who've been on the lines for decades stand to benefit. Former members receive a check. And many members choose to donate their refunds to WEC's Community Fund, which gives grants to nonprofits working within the Co-op's service area.

With so many families, small businesses, and helper organizations struggling right now, those donations are especially important. To learn how you can donate your capital credits to support your central Vermont neighbors, contact Dawn Johnson at 802-224-2332. 🐾

Congratulations, Thanks, and a Fond Farewell to Mike Patterson

After 28 years serving in the Co-op's Operations department, Utility Technician Mike Patterson, fondly known as WEC's "lone wolf," retired this spring. Staff, Board, and the whole WEC community are grateful for his years of good work. We will miss him and wish him the very best. Here's Mike showing off his catch after a WEC fishing contest.

