

With Record-Setting Attendance at Annual Meeting, WEC Celebrates 80 Years of Cooperative Power

Farnham elected to board; Co-op considers broadband and files long-awaited rate redesign

Before the business portion of WEC's 80th Annual Meeting, former WEC board member and current VELCO board member Cort Richardson of East Montpelier stood by the ballot box considering the journey of our electric cooperative. Starting decades ago, "we were the utility everyone turned to to press for bold strategies," he said. WEC's policy focus on conservation, renewable energy, and divesting from nuclear power gained favor and momentum throughout the state, he said. "We set an example and it gave hope to people pressing for a clean energy future."

Over time, the Co-op built a reputation as both a progressive and practical leader in Vermont's energy landscape. Now, Richardson said, "our board has done an outstanding job steering us, balancing the need to address climate change and build a clean energy economy while being mindful of all our members."

As a record 261 members and guests finished a delicious dinner in WEC's Operations Center in East Montpelier, WEC Board President Barry Bernstein stood to welcome them. He kicked off the Annual Meeting with an appreciation of the vision and tenacity of the founding members of the Co-op. "Those

members that stood up and formed our Co-op did so under duress. It took the courage of those people, at both the employee and board level, to keep going. So I want to dedicate this annual meeting to those folks," Bernstein said.

He recalled back in 1939, when the first 150 members joined together to bring the promise of the Rural Electrification Act to the corners of Central Vermont that for-profit utilities wouldn't serve.

Now, Bernstein had an announcement to make: "On May 10, we'll be applying for a grant to study bringing fiber to the home," he began, and was interrupted by applause. Bernstein made it clear the grant begins an exploratory process. "We're not sure yet what our role will be. We're going to cooperate with others trying to do the same task," he explained. The grant will help WEC determine what it will take to bring high-speed internet to underserved parts of Central Vermont. WEC will also consider which partnerships or structures would work best, or whether it could even make sense for WEC to be a broadband provider. Bernstein estimated the cost could be upward of \$25 million, but either

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One of Sue Minter's yellow beach balls rested next to Carroll Beard of Orange as he listened to Minter's talk.

New Website Coming Soon

This summer, WEC will unveil an upgraded and improved version of its website, reached at washingtonelectric.coop and wec.coop. "We are excited to launch a new version of the website that will be easier to use and easier to read," said General Manager Patty Richards. "We're very happy with the new design and ease of navigation and we are excited to show it to our members."

The new site will feature a scrolling alert ticker across the top so users can easily access news about outage locations and durations, and an automatically updated outage map.

Members primarily use the website for outage updates and to check account information or

pay bills, Richards said. As a result, the site is being designed to improve those uses. Better outage communication was the top goal for the redesign, Richards said. "A big change for us is adding more detailed information during outages. Being able to easily and effectively communicate with our members during outages is essential," she said. The new site will link automatically to WEC's outage management software, providing far faster and more accurate outage information.

The new site will also have quick links to the pages members use most, frequently updated news, and easy to find information for members interested in Button Up incentives

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Washington Electric Cooperative

East Montpelier, VT 05651

Inside

Ingenuity before electricity: Member Ralph Bissell writes about powering the farm before WEC. P. 2.

WEC unveils new bill format: P. 6.

Is that an ash? With EAB spreading, WEC asks members to look for ash leaning toward power lines. P. 7.

Can you join Powershift? If you have wi-fi and an electric hot water heater, you can help reduce WEC's peak costs and keep rates down. More on p. 7.



Joe Kelly and Nancy Fuller staff the ballot box at the 80th Annual Meeting. 920 valid ballots were cast in the Board election this year.

Members Write

On The Farm Before Electricity

By Ralph Bissell

I was two years old when my parents, Ralph and Myra Bissell, moved to their farm in Walden in 1933. I look back on those years on the farm without electricity, remembering when Dad would go to the barn to milk the ten cows by hand, he would have the kerosene lantern hanging on a nail from a beam overhead. Coming back to the house after chores, Mother would have the house lit up with a couple of kerosene lamps.

My Dad had a milk cooler to keep the milk cool. He would put the milk in milk cans and set them into the cooler with ice blocks around them. He would cut the ice in the winter at Goslants Mill Pond and I think some at Lyford Pond. Most of the farmers did the same. Of course he had to cut

the ice by hand with a huge ice saw and draw these cakes of ice home on a sled with a team of horses. The ice was kept in an ice house covered with sawdust.

Dad was a very intelligent and ingenious man, so later added on to the stable (now milking about 20 cows) and put in lights from six volt automobile bulbs with reflectors and ran them off a car battery. To keep the battery charged he rigged up a car generator to a gas engine (single cylinder). Dad now put in a vacuum pump run by the same "one lung" engine to run the milking machine, making life easier.

We were lucky to have gravity running spring water from an elevation above which gave plenty of pressure for both house and barn. Some of the farms around had to let their cattle out to a nearby brook to drink or out of a watering tub outside. I remember

one farmer having a "ram" run down below the barn run by a large pipe full of water from a spring above it. This ram in turn pushed a smaller pipe of water uphill to the barn to a storage tank. By pumping twenty four hours a day this kept enough water ahead for a small farm operation. This ram of course took no other source of power other than water flowing power itself.

Mom used to heat flat irons on the wood stove, water tank sitting behind the stove with heating coils in the firebox and of course her old Maytag wringer washer with a Briggs and Stratton engine running most of the time. (All five of us children at home then.) Mom kept her foods that were apt to spoil in a cupboard in the top of the cellar stairway, always cool there. She put the milk in quart canning jars and sealed them and kept them in the ice filled milk cooler with the milk cans.

After the hurricane in 1938 Dad built a windmill patented by his uncle. This was very modern for its time, had a tail fin to keep the blades headed into the wind at all times. This was geared to a six volt car generator which charged the battery. (Not much trouble getting enough wind in Walden). The battery was then used to run an old Silvertone radio in the house and some lights in the barn. This windcharger was mounted on top of a 12 foot pole set deep in the ground. It first started out to be a double-blader hand carved by my great uncle. When the generator began to charge with a light to moderate wind the blades would slow down not having enough power. So Dad designed and whittled

After the hurricane in 1938 Dad built a windmill patented by his uncle. This was very modern for its time, had a tail fin to keep the blades headed into the wind at all times. This was geared to a six volt car generator which charged the battery.

out a very beautiful well balanced four-blader. This he had sanded and varnished very smooth from a piece of selected lumber. (I don't remember what kind of wood this was he used). Now this produced plenty of power to do the job. It didn't turn as fast, but would stand to its task of making electricity. After getting electricity from the Co-op, this windmill

was dismantled and put away. In the late 40s I took this windmill out and set up a new version, of which a high wind came up and destroyed it. I hope someday as I slow up my life, I can find time and the right piece of lumber to build another windmill as he had.

It was something back in the 30s with a few neighbors still having the old horse and buggy and sled teams in winter. I remember the old snow rollers drawn by two or three teams of horses packing the snow on town roads, making it easier for traveling, getting the milk out by team to main plowed roads for pickup by trucks.

We got real happy to see REA setting the poles up by the farm in the early 40s and getting electricity. God called my Dad home in 1955 and my Mom went there too, in the winter of '84.

You see why I wrote this as we sure do appreciate the Washington Electric Co-op. Thanks to all my friends there from past to present.

Thanks to member Ralph Bissell of Danville for sending in these memories on the occasion of WEC's 80th anniversary.

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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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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Got something to say?

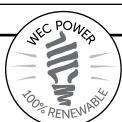
Letter to the editor, comment, or a story tip? Drop us a line at currents@wec.coop or Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 8, East Montpelier, VT 05651, Attn: *Co-op Currents*.



ENERGY COACH

Energy Coach Says: New Incentives on Heat Pumps

On May 1, Efficiency Vermont added another \$100 to its incentives for cold climate heat pumps and heat pump water heaters. With WEC contributing another \$250 in Button Up incentives, you could save up to \$750 on a cold climate heat pump or \$850 on a heat pump water heater. For more information: energycoach@wec.coop



To call the Co-op, dial 802-223-5245 Mon - Thur 7:30 am - 5 pm and Fri 7:30 am - 4 pm.; toll-free for reporting outages & emergencies, 1-800-WEC-5245.

President's and General Manager's Message

In with the New

Rate redesign filed, fresh faces at Annual Meeting and on Board, new bill structure and website, steps to increasing broadband access

Rate design filed May 1:

Patty: We filed our new rate design structure with the Public Utility Commission (PUC) on May 1. There's an official public notice posted on our website and in this issue.

The primary reason behind changing our rate structure is trying to get people to move off of fossil fuels and, to do that, making our renewable electricity more affordable. This is a revenue neutral filing, meaning WEC collects no more money than we did under the existing rates.

Members can chime in by filing a comment with the PUC [see how below].

Barry: Climate change is having an impact on how we operate our Co-op and live in our communities. We as a board decided we need to take this step.

We've been transparent about the need to change our rate structure and solicited member input in the redesign process over the past couple years. A number of us on the WEC board are low kWh users and will feel an increase in our bills as a result of this decision, so we understand how some members feel.

Patty: Yes, low users will see higher bills because of the rise in the monthly fee. We have had to think big picture. Barry, looking over the next few years, you may get an EV as your next vehicle. And then you won't have to pay for gas. We are asking everyone to think about their total energy bill, not just electricity. By converting to renewable electric use for things like getting around in a car, you will save carbon emissions and save the dollars you spend on gas.



One of the things we're launching is a new outage information portal. There will be a banner with a lot more outage information available. That's what our members have asked for, they want more communication during outages.

– Patty Richards

WEC celebrates its 80th Annual Meeting:

Patty: It was a great Annual Meeting! I had a great time. The food was great. We had record turn out, saw a bunch of new faces. And by having it at the warehouse, our Operations Center, we're highlighting the operations side of what WEC does. I love that and so do our members!

Barry: I liked the enthusiasm about the place, and that we had younger members there. It's great when the Annual Meeting is an opportunity for members to not only talk Co-op business, but to socialize with board and staff and each other.

Sue Minter was well received, from the reports I heard. I was

impressed with the way she ended her talk with the clip from Greta Thunberg, the Swedish teenage climate activist, addressing the UN plenary. Adults, move over!

Patty: Congratulations to Barry and Annie Reed for being reelected to our Board, and welcome to Steve Farnham, our new board member!

I want to acknowledge Glenn Goodrich, who ran for the Board as well. If you want to have an impact on your Co-op, run for a seat. I want to applaud him for that.

Barry: It was very exciting that we had four candidates for three seats and a very well qualified representation from our community.

Reflecting on Steve's election, it's always nice to have members new to the board. We have a nice mix between people who have long-term history serving the Co-op and new Board members who will have fresh ideas and new perspectives.

WEC rolls out new bill format, and...

Patty: We have a new exciting format! It's far more visual and easy to read. The reason we changed the bill format is A. it made sense and B. we had to! It was part of our billing system software vendor's upgrade to their systems, and the old software was no longer supported. Also, WEC didn't incur new costs.

So, we got to create a more understandable and readable bill structure. We're making the bill more simple and the website more simple and less wordy.

... a new website, too!

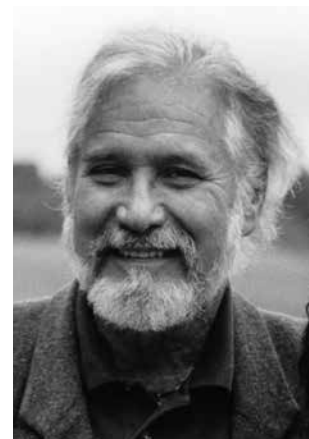
Patty: The website I'm really excited to roll out. It's clean-looking and easy to navigate.

One of the things we're launching is a new outage information portal. There will be a banner with a lot more outage information available. That's what our members have asked for, they want more communication during outages.

Barry: As we're doing a new bill design and website upgrade, we know these are the tools we use to share information with our members. It's all connected and it takes some time for it to evolve. We're in the process of unveiling these, the bill now and the website over the summer. Our staff are excited about the work they've done and we hope members will agree.

Fiber feasibility

Barry: The staff has been working with a couple of Board members to apply for a federal grant to allow us to hire someone to do a feasibility study, so that the Board and management can look at what the best role or roles are for the Co-op to play to ensure high-speed fiber gets to our members.



We see our role, in a broader sense, as a cooperator and a collaborator. That's what we're looking at: what would be most useful? We're finding our younger members consider high-speed a necessity, integral to their life and work.

– Barry Bernstein

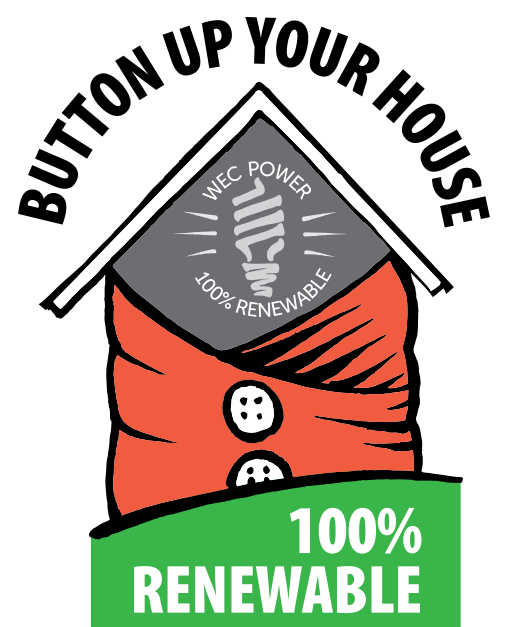
We hope to have that completed by the beginning of 2020, and we're excited about taking a more in-depth look.

Patty: This means we're doing a business plan or feasibility study. It's not a plan to roll out broadband. We want to find out how much does it cost, what will it take for WEC to do this? We're getting numbers on paper before taking next steps.

Barry: Right. We see our role, in a broader sense, as a cooperator and a collaborator. That's what we're looking at: what would be most useful? We're finding our younger members consider high-speed a necessity, integral to their life and work. They're

coming back to the communities in which they were raised, and we're going to help facilitate that with high-speed access. As Patty said, we're still trying to find out what that means.

We will be active one way or another, so stay tuned!



To file a comment about WEC's rate redesign with the PUC:

- **Online:** visit epuc.vermont.gov. Search case number 19-1270-TF. Click on "Add Public Comment."
- **By mail:** send to Public Utility Commission Clerk, 112 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05620-2701
- **By email:** send to puc.clerk@vermont.gov

New Website

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and other energy innovations.

Bill Powell, Director of Products & Services, said that many members use smartphones to access the internet, and many rely on mobile phones when the power is out. So, it's important that the website be easy to use on a phone. "We're working to make the outage

map work for the small screen," he said.

He also pointed out that a mobile website better supports members in using the Smarthub app on their phone. The Smarthub app is a convenient way to report outages, as well as to check usage and account information.

Look for the debut of the new website in late July or early August, 2019.

Levers of Change

In Annual Meeting speech, Capstone's Sue Minter finds collective strategies for tackling the big problems

As bright yellow beach balls bounced hand to hand through WEC's Operations Center, you could be forgiven for thinking WEC's Annual Meeting speaker was Jimmy Buffett. Instead, it was Sue Minter, the director of Capstone Community Action, loosening up the crowd before a talk that was not about partying, but about addressing pervasive poverty and climate change through collective action. Minter told WEC members not to expect her to be funny, because the issues Capstone tackles aren't funny. "But, I do know how to have fun!" she said, serving beach balls into the delighted audience.

Minter came to Capstone following leadership roles in nonprofits and state government, including a gubernatorial bid in 2016. She built up her credibility heading the state's Agency of Transportation and leading the state's recovery effort after Tropical Storm Irene devastated several Vermont communities. "I am really happy to be back in a garage!" she told WEC members.

She recognized the difficult job of utility workers – and the value of cooperative effort. After the deluge from Irene, 13 communities lacked road access, cutting off necessities like food, water, and medicine; and much of the state lacked power. She said a conversation with someone at a utility helped her frame the emergency response. That message was "You need to know it's all hands on deck. Do not think about your budget. Do what you have to do." It was a great and critical message," she said. Working together, crews restored access to 12 of the 13



Collective action: Capstone Community Action is addressing profound problems, like poverty and climate change, by seeking partnerships to find solutions with big impacts, said keynote speaker Sue Minter. WEC works with Capstone to weatherize low-income members' homes, a process that creates jobs, saves money, and reduces emissions.

stranded communities within 24 hours and restored power to 90 percent of communities within five days. "That was collective action," she pointed out.

In that emergency, people banded together to make sure no one was left behind. But that's what cooperatives do anyway, she pointed out – no one member is prioritized above another. That's what Capstone does too, she said. The nonprofit was founded during the so-called War on Poverty, initiated by President Lyndon Johnson. "Remember that?" she asked rhetor-

ically. "Well, here we are 50 years later, and the war rages on."

Minter believes pervasive poverty is the single biggest issue facing the state. "And it's invisible," she added. The number of households living in poverty in Vermont rose over the last 20 years. "So we are not going in the right direction, even though the economy is improving. The problem is wage stagnation," she said.

She threw out some painful statistics. In Capstone's Head Start program, which provides early childhood care and education to low-income parents, 30 percent of their caseload are homeless children under age six. Capstone clocked 3,000 visits to its food shelf this winter, and their housing team helped 500 people get out of precarious housing.

The good news is, these Vermonters are getting help. The bad news is, there are lots of obstacles on the path out of poverty. For example, Minter shared the story of a family she knows that is moving into a campground for the summer. They had been living in shelters and in a storage unit with three children under age eight. The family couldn't get housing because the parents were unemployed, and once the parents found employment again, they lost their food stamps and Reach Up benefits, she said. Crucially, she said, "they lost their jobs in the first place because they had to get their cars inspected." Under Vermont's new inspection rules, their cars didn't pass.

But, Minter said, there are levers of change. One young woman told Capstone staff that she was able to turn her life around because someone at Capstone believed in her and she

Looking For A Way To Help?

- Opt in to Operation Round Up on your electric bill
- Make a contribution to Project Warmth
- Donate your capital credits to the Community Fund

realized she could believe in herself. "Sometimes it's that simple," Minter said.

Capstone and WEC are partnering to weatherize low-income members' homes (see more in sidebar). Minter said this work not only helps lift members out of poverty, it also meets both organizations' commitments to addressing climate change. "We at Capstone are moving forward in this space of climate justice. Low income Vermonters are really the most vulnerable" to the effects of climate change because they tend to have more precarious housing and lack the resources to recover easily. She added that Capstone is pursuing more partnerships, including ones to get low income Vermonters out of gas guzzling cars and into cars with better fuel efficiency and mileage "with EVs as the ideal," she said.

But there is so much more to do, as the planet warms and the wealth divide grows. "How do we get to where we need to go? In my view, it's women and the next generation" who will serve as leaders, Minter reflected, like the 15-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg. Minter showed a clip of Thunberg's address to the UN plenary. "She gives me hope," Minter said, as members applauded. "I want to thank you all for expressing your democracy and keeping us clean and green and the power on!"



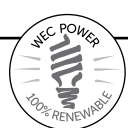
How Capstone Partners with WEC:

- Since January 2015, Capstone has invested \$477,000 weatherizing almost 50 WEC members' homes. In the next eight weeks, another 10 homes will be completed.
- WEC pioneered a partnership with Capstone to invest \$69,700 in low-income members' homes.
- Each family saves more than \$500 annually in heating costs.
- Last December, the Vermont Department of Health reported, the estimated 10-year economic benefit of weatherization per household is three times greater than the initial expense. In 10 years, the value of health benefits exceeds \$24,000.
- Weatherization reduces safety hazards like fire, and improves durability, which preserves affordable housing.
- Weatherization helps reduce demand during peak periods.
- Weatherization reduces fossil fuel heating use, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Data courtesy of Capstone



Sporting a new hat, keynote speaker Sue Minter hugs Dawn Johnson, Administrative Assistant and behind the scenes whiz of all things related to the Annual Meeting.



Annual Meeting

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way, “we’re going to take some steps forward.”

Douglas: Revisiting 2018’s rate increases

Following Bernstein, Board Treasurer Don Douglas confessed to having some bad news. Since the 79th meeting, he told the membership, WEC was forced to file for two rate increases, totaling 9.2 percent.

There are two main reasons for the rate increases, he said. “Transmission is constrained up in the Northeast Kingdom. That’s one reason. The other is the REC market collapsed. The market’s gone from \$40 to about \$10. That’s had an enormous effect.” The collapse of the REC market is not entirely a bad thing, he pointed out, since it means that renewables are rapidly coming online throughout New England.

Even though rates went up, WEC also returned a record amount of money to members in 2018 in capital credit refunds. “To date, over 21 years, we’ve returned \$6.8 million dollars. That goes a long way toward offsetting those rate increases,” Douglas said. The board decides annually how much marginal income, or remaining income after all expenses are paid, the Co-op can afford to return to its member-owners. Finally, he noted, WEC once again received a clean audit, and thanked the finance department for their hard work.

Richards: Storms, outages, and rate design

General Manager Patty Richards told the membership that WEC is seeing the effects of climate change. “We have had 100 year storms every year for the last 5 years,” she said. In response, the Co-op is working to improve reliability, including investing more in tree trimming around our lines. “We’re also working to identify redundancies so we can backfill our system,” she added, finding ways to



General Manager Patty Richards bids farewell to departing Board Director Roy Folsom of Cabot, retiring after 15 years of service to WEC.

connect members to power coming from a second substation or route – so if there is an outage on one line, the other line will continue to provide power. She asked members experiencing frequent outages to get in touch, as WEC is working to trim ROWs in high-outage areas this summer.

WEC’s safety record remains impressive. The Co-op has gone 3.5 years without a lost time accident, and its fleet of 18 on-road vehicles has gone 15 years with zero accidents, she said: “Safety is a fundamental tenet of what we do.”

Richards also had some big news to share with the membership. “We’ve been talking for two and a half years about rate design,” she said. “We filed yesterday for this rate design [May 1]. Part of the reason to look at a new way of charging for electricity is due to new state laws mandating Vermonters move away from fossil fuel energy sources to renewables. We are required to get people to move off of fossil fuels. We’re looking at this as a long term strategy

to mitigate the effects of climate change.” The new rate structure, she reminded members, increases the monthly service charge from \$14 to \$25. For each customer’s first 100 kilowatt hours (kWh) of use (previously 200 kWh), the rate drops from 11 to 8 cents per kWh. After that, the rate drops from 25 cents to 19 cents per kWh. Richards reminded members they may provide comments to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

Richards also asked members to consider donating capital credits to the Community Fund, which has more than doubled in the past few years and is poised to give about \$45,000 to small Central Vermont nonprofits this year.

Member questions and comments

Alex Thayer from Plainfield kicked off the Q&A portion of the evening with an appreciation of the friendliness and professionalism of WEC’s operations staff, led by Engineering & Operations Director Dan Weston. “It’s nice when you have an interaction with someone

Farnham Elected to Board of Directors, Folsom Retires

WEC welcomes Steven Farnham of Plainfield to the Board of Directors. Farnham was elected to his first three-year term at the Annual Meeting with 652 votes. A total of 920 valid ballots were cast.

Board President Barry Bernstein of Calais and Board Secretary Annie Reed of Marshfield both won re-election with 720 and 654 votes respectively.

Glenn Goodrich of Cabot, in his first bid for a seat, received 568 votes. WEC expresses appreciation to Goodrich for running.

Finally, WEC warmly thanks Roy Folsom of Cabot, who retired after 15 years of service on the Board.

from the Co-op that makes you go, ‘Nice!’” she said.

Amos Meacham of Plainfield wondered if capital credits have only been returned for the past 21 years, what happened to marginal funds retained from 1939 through 1998? Douglas replied that those funds had been returned over the years. Refunds don’t correspond directly to the immediate past year; the board carefully distributes capital credits

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Employees celebrate work anniversaries

Heartfelt appreciation and congratulations to Senior Member Services Representative Beth Ouellette for 20 years of service and Utility Field Technician Steve Hart for 30 years of service to WEC.



Steve Farnham of Plainfield, newly elected to WEC’s Board of Directors.



Shiloh Weiss of Calais enjoyed participating in the democratic process at his first WEC Annual Meeting.

WEC Rolls Out New Bill Design

When you open your mailbox and see your electric bill inside, does your heart leap with excitement? Well, maybe not always. Even so, your WEC bill just got considerably more pleasant to open.

WEC's electric bills received a makeover earlier this year. The new format debuted on members' March bills. Member Services Supervisor Susan Golden said the new bills have more information, presented more clearly, than the old bills. For example, the amount due is now in a big green circle at the top of the bill.

Other key changes include adding a due date, separating the monthly payment due from any balance forward, and including the service address so members may now present WEC bills to the DMV as proof of address.

WEC also didn't need to pay a penny for the changes, Golden added. The program WEC used for billing became obsolete, Golden said, and was no longer supported by the Co-op's software vendor, the National Information Solution Co-op, or NISC. "It didn't cost us anything. We had to do it anyway, so we decided to make it as user-friendly as possible," said Golden.

That gave WEC the leeway to make several improvements in response to member feedback. Easier to read, simpler to understand, and better customized to members' needs, Golden said the bills have been well received.

Have any questions about your new bill? Call Member Services at 802-223-5245 or toll-free at 800-932-5245.

New features on your WEC bill:

"There's no information missing from the old bill, and there's more information on the new bill," said Member Services Supervisor Susan Golden. Here are a few new or clarified features to look for:

- The amount due is easy to find in a big green circle at the top.
- Bills now show due date and the date last payment was received.
- For members with a balance forward, the current payment due is presented separately from the total amount due.
- Members with a balance credit can find that information more easily.
- Members with multiple accounts – house and barn, apartments, etc. – can now see them separately on one bill.
- If you pay automatically with a credit or debit card, the bill will alert you if your card is expired or about to expire.
- Service address is printed on bill to support proof of address.

Notice to Members of Washington Electric Cooperative of Proposed Rate Design Change

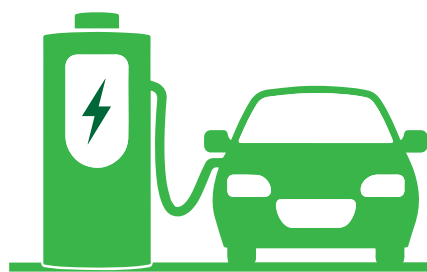
On May 1, 2019, Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc. filed a proposed rate design change with the Vermont Public Utility Commission (PUC). The Cooperative requested that this new rate design become effective on June 17, 2019. However, the Cooperative will suspend implementation of the proposed rate design if the PUC opens an investigation, and will not implement the rate design change until approved by the PUC.

The proposed rate design is revenue neutral, meaning the Cooperative collects the same revenue under existing rates as it would collect using the proposed rate design change. However, some members will see lower bills and others will see increased bills. This proposed rate design lowers the energy portion of rates to encourage members to use WEC's 100% renewable electricity to displace fossil fuel energy use. The fixed monthly customer charge will increase while the variable energy rate will decrease. The proposed rate design's purpose is to meet various legislative and regulatory mandates including Act 56 Renewable Energy Standard, the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, and to continue promoting efficient use of energy.

Any interested person may examine the proposed rate design filing via ePUC at: <https://epuc.vermont.gov/> and searching case number 19-1270-TF. The filing is also available at the Vermont Public Utility Commission and the Washington Electric Cooperative office during normal business hours. Comments regarding the proposed rate design may be submitted to the Public Utility Commission via mail at 112 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05620-2701, via email at puc.clerk@vermont.gov, or through e-PUC by searching case number 19-1270-TF and selecting "Add Public Comment."

Button Up 2019 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 & electric)
- An additional \$700 incentive is available for income qualifying members

Efficiency Vermont

- EV incentive not available

Incentives for Weatherization



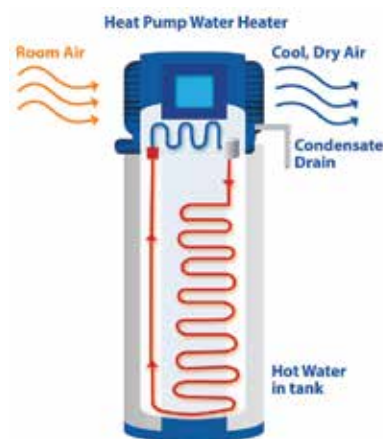
WEC

- 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

Incentives for Heat Pumps



WEC

- Qualifying heat pump in "high performance" house
- \$250. (incentives for eligible heat pumps based on verified building shell meeting 2019 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 \$600
- Cold Climate Heat Pumps:

Equipment Capacity (mini-split)	EVT Incentive 2019
≤2 tons	\$400
>2 tons	\$500

Incentives for Pellet Stoves, Furnaces, and Boilers



WEC

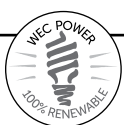
- \$250 for either a qualifying pellet stove or a wood stove. Stoves must be installed by qualified installer.
- Pellet furnace: \$500
- Pellet boiler: \$1000

Efficiency Vermont**

- Pellet stove: \$700 when installed by qualified contractor
- Pellet furnace: \$3,000
- Pellet boiler: \$3,000

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

802.224.2329 • energycoach@wec.coop



WEC Seeks Members' Help Spotting Ash Near Lines

As the devastating invasive Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) beetle spreads this summer, WEC is asking members to look out for ash trees that could threaten the Co-op's power lines. "We're hoping our members will turn in ash trees that may be on our lines, that are on their lawns, and we'll take a look at it and we'll prioritize it," said Dan Weston, Director of Engineering & Operations.

"We are only cutting ash trees that are leaning toward our conductors," Weston confirmed. "We are not out cutting all ash trees. There are two reasons: we don't know if the EAB is going to reach every ash tree. We also don't want to spend money on trees that aren't a threat to the line."

As EAB spreads, Weston is hopeful

Reporting Danger Ash to WEC:

- Is it an ash tree?
- Is it leaning toward power lines?

If the answer to BOTH of these questions is YES, email Elaine Gonier at egonier@wec.coop with the subject line: Ash tree

Include a picture, if possible, and include the tree's location and your email and phone number.

If you do not have email, call WEC at 802-223-5245 or toll free at 800-932-5245.

– like many – that a few resilient ash specimens will survive. And, he noted, from a utility perspective, there's not much point in cutting ash that will fall away from the lines.

Since EAB was discovered in Orange last February, WEC has been developing a protocol for protecting its power lines, staff, and members from dying ash trees. The plan, outlined in the March 2019 Co-op Currents, is to reassess the health of ash, and the direction trees are likely to fall, throughout WEC's rights of way (ROWs).

The ROWs of WEC's 1,256 miles of line are trimmed by hand using chain saws – no herbicides – over a roughly eight to ten year schedule. For ROWs scheduled for cutting in the near future, ash leaning toward the lines will simply be cut along with other trees that could fall and cause outages.

But for ROW areas that have been trimmed over the last few years, WEC is looking to identify and cut ash that could be dangerous – now. That's because ash infested with EAB die fast. As the beetle's larvae tunnel under the bark, they cut off the ash's channels of water and nutrients. That leaves a dry, splintery dead tree – one that is difficult and expensive to take down. A dead or dying ash tree leaning toward power lines or poles is a very dangerous tree.

That's why WEC needs help from its members, said Weston. If you see an ash tree leaning toward the lines,

alert WEC. A member of the operations team will confirm the genus and assess the threat posed by the tree. If it meets those two qualifications, WEC will remove the tree. Ashes that pose the greatest risk will be removed first.

For more about WEC's protocol for managing EAB, read "WEC Takes Action Against a Destructive Bug" (March 2019).

For more information about EAB in Vermont, visit vermontinvasives.org.

Identifying Ash Trees

- Ash buds and branches are opposite: they form directly across from each other. Many trees that resemble ash have an alternate branching pattern.
- Ash bark has deep grooves forming a diamond-shaped pattern.
- Ash seeds are oar-shaped and form in clusters.
- Most ash in WEC's service area are American ash, or white ash. Black, green, and white ash are all affected by EAB.



Credit: Keith Kanoti, Maine Forest Service, Bugwood.org



Credit: Michigan Dept. of Agriculture, Bugwood.org

WEC Pilots PowerShift Project

Seeks qualifying members to participate in collective load-sharing project to reduce peak energy costs; participants to receive \$5 monthly bill credit

Peak. It's what happens in early evening when everyone comes home from work, turns on the lights, and starts making dinner. Or on the hottest day of the summer, when hardware stores run out of air conditioners and the Red Sox are playing the Yankees on TV. A utility must buy enough power to make sure there's enough to meet everyone's needs. Like all commodities, power is most expensive when it's most in demand.

WEC is working to lower its peak costs – a goal that will benefit all members. The Co-op is launching a project with Efficiency Vermont called PowerShift. It's another innovation on the Co-op's part to keep rates low for members while encouraging conservation and cooperative values.

"We have over \$4 million in peak related costs. If we could shave off 10 percent of these bills that would be significant, and we in turn can pass along those savings to members,"

explained Patty Richards, WEC's General Manager. "That translates to lower rates."

The project works by using electric water heaters or heat pump water heaters (HPWH) as thermal storage, like a battery. For a conventional electric water heater, a small device is attached that communicates with the grid, explained Products & Services Director Bill Powell. A Rheem or GE-brand HPWH has this technology already built in.

In order for the project to work, the hot water tank must be able to communicate with the grid, so reliable wireless internet is key.

At times when the Co-op determines a peak event – greater than an ordinary daily peak – is forecast in the next day or two, the PowerShift communication device tells the water heater to operate during low-demand hours, and then turn off during the peak. The heat is stored in the tank as thermal energy. When the

Co-op experiences peak demand, the hot water heater will not actively heat water. The member has the pre-heated water to use and reduces demand on the grid; the member can override the setting if needed. It's a collective solution to a peak problem.

"We're going with a cooperative approach that uses equipment our members already have. In some cases we will install communication devices that allow us to manage when the appliance is drawing energy," said Richards. "We're going to learn how to share the management of peak electric load at critical periods by working with our members to leverage electric water heaters they already have."

WEC hopes to recruit up to 200 members in two groups to participate in the pilot. Members with a conventional electric hot water tank will have a device installed by a licensed contractor, at no cost to the member.

Participating members will receive

a \$5 credit on their monthly bills. To qualify for the pilot, members need to meet certain criteria (see box). Contact Bill Powell at energycoach@wec.coop or visit efficiencyvermont.com/powershift to sign up.

Can you join PowerShift?

To qualify, members must:

- Commit to a two-year time span
- Own their own homes
- Use a conventional or smart electric water heater
- Have 24/7 wireless internet

Members will receive a \$5 monthly bill credit for participating. Contact energycoach@wec.coop or visit efficiencyvermont.com/powershift for more information.

Annual Meeting

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earned from both the long past and the recent past so longtime members and recent members experience the benefit of capital credit refunds.

Bob Atcheson of Plainfield suggested that the Co-op can't call itself 100 percent renewable if it's selling its renewable energy credits (RECs). Bernstein explained that it's a balance. WEC keeps its rates as low as possible, and keeps its power mix renewable, by selling its top-level RECs and buying back lower cost renewable RECs at market, he said.

Kathleen Oswald "from the tail end of the grid in Northfield" heard that Green Mountain Power was offering smart grid Tesla batteries and wondered if WEC had plans to pursue the same. Richards and Bernstein noted that batteries are on WEC's horizon. They added they'll study GMP's efforts work to learn from their work.

Later, Phil Parrish of Catamount Solar, a vendor, pointed to a Sonnen battery on display and said members may not need to wait for Tesla. "There are companies that will help WEC members with battery backups that are available today. Sonnen's been in batteries for 30 years. Depending on people's needs, there's a lot you can do with a battery now," he said.

A question about whether WEC was interested in building a solar farm led to a quick explanation from Richards about WEC's power commitments. The Co-op already has secured its power from renewable energy generation for the next 30 years, she explained. That dovetailed with a question about the Coventry expansion: whether or not the expansion is permitted, she explained, the landfill is still projected to provide power for the next 30-40 years.

Steve Chase of southwest Calais asked for a clarification whether the new monthly charge is per property or per meter. The monthly charge per meter will rise from \$14 to \$25 if the rate redesign is approved by the PUC.

Tammy Leno of Calais thanked members who volunteered to feed staff during storms and expressed concern that the Co-op's pursuit of broadband might include 5G wireless. Bernstein assured her the Co-op is looking into direct fiber to the home.

Charles Johnson of East Montpelier wondered if blazes on ash trees indicated they were to be removed because of the invasive Emerald Ash Borer beetle. Yes, said Richards: "Two counties we serve are active with EAB. We are going through our lines and identifying ash trees in our rights of way and we are taking down the trees. We're taking a very proactive move," she said. Carolyn Peake of Williamstown offered that EAB tends to affect mature ash, not young ash trees. This was later confirmed by Larry Gilbert, WEC's ROW manager.

After a commanding talk from Sue Minter, Executive Director of Capstone Community Action, Richards and board member Steve Knowlton handed out



Vendor Dave Roberts with Drive Electric Vermont talks with Dina DuBois of Corinth. "I want to know about electric buses!" said DuBois. They're coming to Vermont, said Roberts: "Burlington is getting two this year." Behind them is Capstone's Energy Makeover trailer.

door prizes and thanked members for attending.

12-year-old Shiloh Weiss of Calais, waiting by the door, commented that he likes attending events like this, where democracy unfolds. He already knows his way around the statehouse, he said, and this was his first WEC Annual Meeting. The Co-op founders to whom Bernstein dedicated the meeting would have been glad to hear this: 80 years later and going strong. 🐌

For more information...

- About the crashing REC market and how WEC is addressing it: "WEC Announces Rate Increase..." and "Crash in REC Market..." (December 2018)
- About WEC's rate redesign process: "Listening for Consensus," (January 2018) and "With New Rate Design Structure..." (July 2018)
- About EAB: "WEC Seeks Members' Eyes on Ash," this issue; "WEC Takes Action Against a Destructive Bug" (March 2019)

Photo Contest Winners

Congratulations to Israel Helfand, who won WEC's photo contest! His images of a turtle and a rainbow over a barn tied for first place. Congratulations also to Alex Forbes, whose image of an EV charging in the snow won runner-up. Framed pictures were displayed at the Annual Meeting and are currently on display in WEC's conference room before being given to the winners.

