

# WEC's New Rate Design Takes Effect

*First phase of new rate structure launches July 2020. General Manager Patty Richards explains.*

**Q. Hey Patty, what's this all about?**

A. We've been working for two and a half years on a new rate design. We got approval from the Public Utility Commission (PUC) in late 2019.

**Q. So why is it just now taking effect?**

A. Well, the approval came while we were applying for an across the board rate increase. We just got approval at the end of June for the 5.95 percent rate increase that's appeared on members' bills since January 1 as a temporary surcharge. The new rate design numbers now include that 5.95 percent increase—that's why we couldn't do both at the same time.

**Q. Does WEC get any more money with this rate redesign?**

A. No, absolutely not. The rate redesign is not a rate increase. We take in exactly the same amount, but it's now distributed differently throughout the membership.

**Q. That means my monthly member service charge goes up and my rates go down, right?**

A. Yes. The PUC ordered us to implement the rate design not in one fell swoop, but in three steps over two years. We're easing into it. Phase one takes effect mid-July 2020, phase two takes effect mid-July of 2021, and phase three,

mid-July of 2022.

**Q. So what am I going to see on my next bill?**

A. Your monthly service charge will go up to \$18.01, about three dollars higher than it is now. At the same time, for the first 100 kilowatt hours you use, we've lowered the cost to about eight and a half cents per kilowatt hour. That's really, really low, and that will stay constant for Phase Two and Phase Three.

Then, once you've used more than 100 kilowatt hours, you're in what we call the "tail block," and we've dropped those tail block rates from about 27 cents to about 23 cents.

**Q. What will happen over Phase Two and Phase Three?**

A. Well, your member charge will gradually increase, to \$22.25 and then to \$26.49, and the tail block rate will gradually decrease, to about 22 cents and then 21 cents per kilowatt hour.

**Q. Why is there a super low block and then the tail block?**

A. For years, WEC has had a low block to encourage energy efficiency. The idea is, if you use very little electricity per month, you have a very low electric bill. When we asked members their input when we redesigned our rates,

*continued on page 8*



Courtesy Vermont Foodbank

*Packaging nutritious veggies at Vermont Foodbank for a recent food distribution event in Berlin. According to the anti-hunger nonprofit, food insecurity in Vermont is up 46 percent due to the pandemic — and it's worse for children. WEC's Community Fund is distributing an additional \$3,000 each to Vermont Foodbank and Capstone Community Action to help our Central Vermont members and neighbors meet their basic needs.*

## WEC Triples Grants to Capstone and Vermont Foodbank

*Responding to COVID-19 driven economic crisis, Community Fund committee increases gifts to directly serve community members*

This summer, WEC's Community Fund committee made the unprecedented choice to roughly triple the annual gifts it typically makes to two local nonprofits in the Co-op's service area. The Vermont Foodbank and Capstone Community Action will each receive an additional donation of \$3,000 over grants the Co-op has already made.

Typically, the Community Fund normally distributes small gifts under \$1,000 to a variety of small nonprofits serving WEC members.

But this year, with so many members struggling with reduced incomes, and with the pandemic ongoing, the Board-led committee changed its approach.

"We felt these were extraordinary times, so we changed our focus to reflect our members' real needs," explained Board member Richard Rubin of Plainfield, who sits on the Community Fund committee. "The idea behind these grants is to provide direct benefits to people who need them."

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**Washington Electric Cooperative**  
East Montpelier, VT 05651


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**New PowerShift incentive for Electric Vehicle drivers:** help reduce WEC's peak, receive EV charger. More on p. 6.

**Members invited to IRP review:** Virtual meeting to review WEC's Integrated Resource Plan August 12. P. 6.



*WEC's operations crew tried out a new technology to keep rights of way clear. See more on p. 5.*

**President's and General Manager's Message**

# All in This Together, Supporting Each Other: The Cooperative Difference

*Moving our communities forward with reflection and compassion; moving WEC forward with visionary work upheld by our cooperative values*

**Addressing the times**

**Barry:** Recently, I asked a friend how she was, and she answered she was “in suspension.” I thought that was a great description for these strange times.

As someone who's been involved in this Co-op for a long time, and as the President of the Board, I think it's important to join hands, figuratively of course. We are all in the same boat together. We are all feeling the weight of these times in different ways. It's going to be a long haul.

As far as this pandemic goes, I'm grateful Vermont is in such a great position compared to most of the country. But I know that doesn't ease the pain for the families of the 58 people in our state who have died, and

for those of us who are worried about loved ones elsewhere. So as much as we can be here, we're here. Reach out to your neighbors. Reach out to us, if you need our help. We are all in this together and we'll get through it together. I've been thinking about this a lot and I want to put it out there.

**Patty:** I echo everything you said, Barry. I also want to acknowledge the Black Lives Matter movement. We're a co-op, so our mission is to make sure everyone in our community is supported. Equity matters. Listening matters.

I want to address the atmosphere in the world right now. With COVID-19 exposing every fault line, we need to be supportive of each other as human

beings. We need to work within our communities to break down racism. Address it, talk about it, let's try to reflect and move ahead as humans together. This is the time to have these challenging and important discussions. Let's have them in a compassionate way.

**Barry:** I think what you said is very true. These discussions are coming up in one form or another. And of course I believe we, as a Board and organization, are anti-racist and pro-equity, but what I know now is we need to say it and demonstrate it. I wholly stand behind our statement against racism in the last issue of *Co-op Currents*.

**Patty:** When it comes to equity, people are standing up and saying we need to be heard. It's true for race, gender—the #MeToo movement wasn't that long ago—and increasingly, the wealth imbalance in this country. It's important as a society that we reflect on this. We have to put these conversations on the kitchen table and have that talk at dinner. Communicate. That's the only way we're going to move forward.

**Rate design implemented**

**Barry:** The Board and our community of members spent a lot of time dialoguing and constructing a new way the Co-op charges for electricity. It's finally changing this month. We aren't taking in any more money—this is not a rate increase. Instead we are changing how costs are assigned to

our members.

Our goals are first to increase what's called beneficial electrification: using WEC's 100 percent renewable electricity more and fossil fuels less. To encourage that we're keeping our upper block rate as low as possible, and lowering it over time, so the choice to use WEC electricity over fossil fuels becomes not only an environmental choice, but an economic choice.

The second goal is to make sure we have a significant portion of our fixed costs guaranteed each month through the member fee, since the reality is that due to energy efficiency and net metering we are selling fewer kilowatt hours.

We also want to be fair to people who have committed to using electricity as efficiently as possible by keeping our first 100 kilowatt hour block at a very low rate. I believe we've accomplished all that and I encourage people to read the front page Q&A with Patty in this month's *Co-op Currents* which goes into more detail.

**Patty:** The Board of Directors spent a long time on this, well over two years. Our focus and our mission haven't changed. We still encourage energy efficiency, and we're looking at the big picture and taking action on climate change. This is about people looking at their total energy dollars, including gasoline and what they use to heat their house. We have a great story to tell being a 100 renewable energy source, and we're about to become a lot more economical. If people move their energy use from fossil fuel to our electricity, it's good for the environment,

## 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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## WEC Member Broadband Survey Happening Now

What would it take to bring high-speed internet to every WEC member? That's the question the Co-op is working to answer.

Now through mid-August, WEC members are being surveyed at random to gather data about your current internet service and your interest in future service.

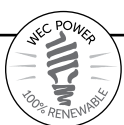
The survey is conducted by phone. If you're called, please respond.

If you are not called, and you would like to share your opinion, please do so. Contact [energycoach@wec.coop](mailto:energycoach@wec.coop) or call the WEC office to share your thoughts.

WEC is working in partnership with the Communication Union Districts (CUD) Central Vermont Fiber, EC Fiber, and Kingdom Fiber. A member survey is a critical component of WEC's feasibility study. Thank you for your participation.

**Got something to say?**

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



good for the consumer, and we think it's the direction to go. Go green, go electric, go WEC!

**Barry:** We also have incentives to give when you switch from fossil fuel to electric devices. I reduced my energy use switching out an old hot water tank and replacing it with a highly efficient Heat Pump Hot Water (HPHW) tank. And every time someone switches off a fossil fuel device, it's a step in the right direction toward mitigating climate instability. Thanks to the membership for your support and input throughout this process as we made these changes to our new rate design.

### Broadband

**Barry:** Over the summer and into the rest of the year, the WEC staff and Board are looking at results from our feasibility study and business plan to determine what roles WEC can play to help facilitate getting high speed internet to all of our members over the next several years. In doing that we are working with the Communication Union Districts, or CUDs, whose member towns are in our service area: CVFiber, ECFiber and NEK Community Broadband, and Cloud Alliance/Kingdom Fiber. We're going to see how we can work together to make this happen. I'm personally excited about it. There will be barriers and questions the board will have to review with management before we make any final decisions. But we know it's important to get high speed fiber to every one of our members' homes and businesses, whatever role we play.

**Patty:** Broadband service is not a luxury anymore. COVID-19 has shown us the importance of having high speed internet, whether for remote work, attending a medical appointment virtually, or to stay in touch with family. It's a critical service as valuable and necessary as electricity. We're taking it seriously. Our goal is to make it as economical as we can, to leverage federal dollars to the maximum extent we can, to see if we can pull this off.

There is a survey going out to a portion of the membership to support our feasibility study. The survey is to help us identify what the assumed participation rate will be of our membership. The question is not "Do you want broadband?" We already know you do! The questions are more technical, like, "Will you sign up at a certain price point?" It's really important to take that survey if you're called. It will help inform us with our analysis as we move ahead.

**Barry:** If you get the call with



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— Patty Richards

someone identifying themselves as calling from WEC for a broadband survey, it's for real. We appreciate your participation if you're selected.

Some of our members may have responded a while back to the online questionnaire from CVFiber. Whether or not you did, this is separate from that, and if you've been contacted for our survey, we do need you to respond.

### COVID-19 financial relief

**Barry:** We're being very conscious about helping our members manage their bills, especially those that are struggling during the pandemic. In the last issue we mentioned a payment plan that can help members spread bill payments out over several months. As a Co-op member you still have the obligation to pay your electric bills, but we want to take the strain off. The

state is helping, too.

**Patty:** State lawmakers passed legislation to allocate \$8 million in ratepayer relief to electric utilities, telephone landlines—and natural gas and some water, but those don't apply in our service area, so I'm just talking about electricity and telephone lines. The details and rules are still coming together and the Department of Public Service is designing a program to administer funds.

The point is, anyone impacted by COVID-19 who has past due bills may be able to get some help. Not your entire bill, but a portion could be waived.

You have to have a link to COVID: you were laid off, furloughed, got sick. This will likely be administered through community action agencies like Capstone Community Action and Northeast Kingdom Community Action, not WEC. We will point people who are late paying their bills to agencies

administering the program.

**Barry:** Patty, I understand it would be helpful for people to contact our Member Services Representatives now so they can get on a budget plan, and then when this happens, they'll be ready.

**Patty:** Exactly. One of the things required to receive relief is that members have a payment plan set up. If you're having a hard time paying, please call us. The target to roll out the program is early August, so get on a payment plan as soon as possible.

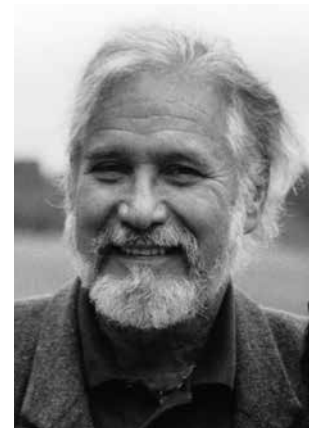
**Barry:** You talk to a Member Services Representative about your bill, you work out a payment that works for you spread over many months. Then we're aware you need us to pay attention to your needs, and then you are prepared to submit for electricity arrears relief in August.

Thanks to the Vermont legislature and governor for making these funds available. I've also heard there will be funds in another pot that will deal with rent arrears and mortgage arrears.

**Patty:** Yes. That's why the department wants to work with community action agencies, so if someone comes in and says, "I'm struggling with paying my utility bills and my rent," they can take care of everything at once. One stop is really important, especially when someone is in crisis.

**Barry:** Sarah Launderville, Executive Director of the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL), told me the other day they received a grant to help people with disabilities with some of their expenses. If you have a disability and need some support, you can contact VCIL.

**Patty:** This conversation reminds me that I want to mention the census. Vermont's response rate hasn't been great, so I want to encourage all members to do their part. It's so



*Our goals are to increase what's called beneficial electrification: using electricity more and fossil fuels less. To encourage that we're keeping our upper block rate as low as possible, and lowering it over time, so the choice to use electricity over fossil fuels becomes an economic choice.*

— Barry Bernstein

important to be counted. An accurate census count means more equitable funding for services in our communities, like our community action agencies. Do it today, and do it online—that way, nobody has to come to your house!

### Last thoughts

**Patty:** On behalf of the entire Board and staff of WEC, our hearts go out to the two Green Mountain Power lineworkers who were injured on July 22. Accidents are terrible events. We are thinking of them and their families, and we offer our support to everyone at our fellow utility.

**Barry:** I echo Patty. We wish them the best. Well, it's still summer in Vermont. It's been hot, but generally nice weather in the last few weeks. The big benefit is we haven't had any major outages.

**Patty:** Don't jinx us, Barry!

**Barry:** Patty's knocking on wood as I say this, but a break from outages gives our crew a little relief to accomplish their construction work projects to improve our lines.

I hope everyone takes the best you can out of this time and this weather, and enjoy being with your families and your close friends.

### For more information:

- Respond to the census: [census.gov](https://census.gov)
- Vermont Center for Independent Living: [vcil.org](https://vcil.org), 802-229-0501 or 800-639-1522
- Capstone Community Action: [capstonevt.org](https://capstonevt.org), 802-479-1053 or 800-639-1053
- Northeast Kingdom Community Action: [nekca.org](https://nekca.org), 802-334-7316
- Vermont Community Action Partnership: [vermontcap.org](https://vermontcap.org)
- To set up a payment plan with WEC: call 802-223-5245 or 800-932-5245
- For general support: dial 2-1-1



### COVID-19 WEC Office Guidelines

- WEC's office in East Montpelier is open from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- If you need to visit the office outside open hours, you must make an appointment.
- One member or member family in the building at a time.
- Maintain six-foot distance from other people, please.
- You must wear a mask to enter the office.

Thank you!



# Her Seat at the Table

*Board member Jean Hamilton's systems thinking strengthens food security, community, and a new generation of WEC leadership*

**W**EC Board member Jean Hamilton's leadership journey began as a student at Middlebury College in 2003, when she helped build a garden. Today, that garden project is now called The Knoll, and organic food grown there feeds both the college and wider community. "That was the first project that showed me you can have a vision and activate it," said Hamilton.

Students continue to learn and practice farming at The Knoll, and the space is designed around all the reasons people garden and cook: nutrition, education, community, and peaceful—even spiritual—connection to earth. In 2012, no less than the Dalai Lama visited the garden. That was, said Hamilton, a crowning moment.

But Hamilton's farming journey began even earlier. As a teenager growing up in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., she spent a formative semester at the Mountain School in very rural Vershire, which is "a leader in place-based environmental education and a leader in how to diversify that movement," she noted. That experience so ignited her interest in food systems that she took a semester off before college and apprenticed on an organic farm in Washington State. "I became all about farming and felt like my purpose had been discovered," she said.

But she wasn't ready to skip out on her plans to attend Middlebury, so she headed back east, where the Addison County farming community fascinated her. "A rich tapestry of life happened in this tiny town, and that was compelling to me. I love being able to know my neighbors and work on projects across age and interest groups, because so many different people held community health as their central guiding star," she said. "That was all really exciting for me, coming from the anonymity of the suburbs."

The development of The Knoll came partly through a class about local foods taught by environmental activist and author Bill McKibben. Hamilton and others wondered why, in an agricultural community, the grocery and college food systems didn't offer more local products. Their decision to garden and plug their own food into the system was aligned with a local foods movement gaining traction in Vermont and expanding throughout the nation. Hamilton never looked back.

## Intersections

After college, Hamilton worked a series of jobs that deepened her understanding of local food systems beyond the field, working in production and markets. For a while, she ran the retreat kitchen for the Center for Whole Communities in the Mad River Valley. "Their programming was focused



*Jean Hamilton introduces her daughter Cora to the sweet joys of a summer harvest. Hamilton, who was re-elected to WEC's Board of Directors this spring, consults within the local food industry and is currently working to leverage community structures — like gardens and restaurants — to help keep Vermonters from going hungry during the COVID-19 crisis.*

on a course of power, privilege, and equity for people who work in the conservation field—figuring out how to diversify the conservation movement

to make it more resilient and useful to the people who are most negatively impacted by environmental crises," she explained. What she learned there

helped shape her understanding of her own privilege and power, she said, and the intersections between food, land ownership and use, and power systems.

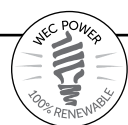
More and more, Hamilton was able to articulate the connections between her passion for local food and her values of justice and equity. At NOFA-VT, working on market development and food access, she helped develop cost sharing and subsidies for CSA shares, and worked to help open farmers markets to customers shopping for food with EBT cards.

Interested in honing these market-based skills, Hamilton went to business school in Italy, at a program focused on food and beverage industries in a country where those industries are dominated by small to medium-sized family businesses—not multinational corporations. Today, she works as a consultant, helping businesses and farms around the state with business planning, market planning, setting up financial systems, and grantwriting.

"Through this work I've continued to be interested in community development, and to see how strong, resilient communities are mutually reinforcing with local diversified strong agriculture, particularly here in Vermont," she said. "I've become familiar with both a lot of the individuals who are leaders in our local foods marketplace, but also the broader culture of these businesses and enterprises doing amazing things with limited staff and resources. It's what Vermont pulls off with passion



*Jean Hamilton and Richard Rubin represented WEC's Board of Directors at a public meeting on WEC's rate redesign in 2018.*



and commitment to sustainability and quality. Those are values I carry with me, and see reflected in our work at WEC: groundedness in our commitment to our neighbors and our environment, and a sense of integrity with the products we're delivering."

### Claiming her seat at WEC

With her skills and background embedded in the world of local food, how did Hamilton end up running for a seat on the board of her electric cooperative? The roots are in the same soil. Food and energy are both facets of community infrastructure, Hamilton explained; both are essential services, both are dependent on their immediate environment. "There are lots of similarities in the values of local economies, local infrastructure, and local control, and also a lot of interesting new territory I've had a chance to learn about," she said. Attuned to the effects of food production and consumption on climate change, she's applying what she's learned from local food systems to a local energy sector framework, she said. She can bring a perspective rooted in one industry to ask the right questions to uncover change points in another. And she's learning a lot. "I'm interested in learning what kind of advocacy and investments we can make in the energy sector to create a more secure future," she said.

There's something else. Throughout her life, something has driven Hamilton to examine systems, identify what's missing, and to see what she can do about filling it. With Hamilton on the Board, younger members see a Director they can relate to: someone hovering under 40, balancing work and parenthood along with service and the existential challenges of our time. "Many of my peers feel too busy, bored by, or shut out of community leadership positions," she pointed out. Society is starved for leadership from people who represent people of color, women, and youth, she said, whether in elected office, on municipal committees, or on nonprofit or corporate boards. "I have had access to certain privileges that gave me confidence and courage to step into decision making spaces, like the WEC board, and I hope that I can leverage my experience to make these kinds of opportunities more accessible to other young people, women, people of color, and those new to governance."

Finding the time and courage to walk into a boardroom of people with far more experience than you is hard. Hamilton, extending a hand to any interested peers, said she's always willing to talk about her own experiences and strategies to take the leap. "If we want to see change, we must empower ourselves to step into leadership. If you are a member of the community and you are willing to learn, you have what it takes to be a leader. WEC is a uniquely progressive, innovative community asset because of the passionate leadership of generations before us. With grace, we can honor our elders and say, now it's our turn."



*Jean Hamilton, who fell in love with farming as a teenager, began putting her farming and community-building skills to work when she and classmates founded Middlebury's organic farm, now known as the Knoll. Here she is hauling pumpkins on the farm in the mid-aughts.*

### Back to the garden

These days, as many people find their daily routines have grown quieter and centered closer to home, Hamilton has gone back to the garden. Not her own garden, necessarily, but building gardens as a form of food security.

Hamilton had recently begun consulting with the Skinny Pancake restaurant group when COVID-19 struck and leadership there had to lay off 240 workers. Beyond bottom line implications, their main concern was for their workers, some of whom may now be facing food insecurity. Skinny Pancake founder and CEO Benjy Adler called Hamilton and told her there was some momentum behind Shift Meals: a new initiative they were building to stave off food insecurity among food industry workers.

Traditionally, restaurant workers get a meal when they show up to work their shift: a shift meal. Adler, Hamilton, and others leveraged unused restaurant assets—large-scale equipment, coolers and freezers full of food—to make restaurants food distribution sites. Partnering with Vermont Foodbank and food shelves and community meals organizers, they distributed 40,000 meals this spring. "What we're seeing, and what hunger advocates are seeing, is that restaurants feed our communities in normal times. In times of crisis, restaurants can be part of a local, nourishing solution to hunger," Hamilton said.

Thinking big, she said, they next figured out that many food industry workers may be out of work long past when unemployment benefits end. They thought of creative ways

to improve food security, while taking some of the burden off of food banks and food shelves, which are seeing unprecedented, long-term demand. "One of the ways we could alleviate the constraints was diversifying the ways people are accessing food. We're inviting people to become closer to the production source, including producing their own food and casual distribution among neighbors and friends," she said.

So, they used Skinny Pancake's Payroll Protection Program (PPP) federal funds to set up gardens throughout the state. Each garden

is tailored to its own site: some are communal or community gardens, some are plugged into established farms with distribution systems. People with gardening experience ranging from zero to plenty commit to eight hours a week, and in return go home with fresh produce. The rest of the produce is distributed through existing community anti-hunger channels, or through informal handoffs. And, meal distribution continues, from sites in Burlington, Montpelier, Quechee, and Waitsfield.

Like all of Hamilton's projects, she tends to the interconnections in her work. "This incredible movement for Black liberation over the last few weeks has been reflected in our teams," she said. "We've had some amazing leadership from Black young women who have called to me personally, to the Skinny Pancake and the Vermont local food systems movement to better acknowledge and advocate for the centrality of Black liberation to sustainable food systems."

She continued, "There are so many tragedies that this pandemic has brought to us, but one of the stories I'm seeing emerge is the bare truths that are being revealed, the ways our status quo systems have been failing so many of us, and how there wasn't really space to question those systems until it's been revealed how vulnerable we are."

The Shift Meals gardens, she hopes, are part of a movement toward collective community food sovereignty. One more step toward recognizing and protecting the roots of the systems that nourish our communities and our planet. 🐛



Larry Gilbert

*Innovation isn't just for the tech sector: in late June, WEC tested a new machine (skid steer with forestry head) to keep vegetation down in its rights of way. The Co-op is interested in forestry technology that makes right of way clearing more efficient and effective while maintaining WEC's environmental pledge to keep its rights of way herbicide-free.*

### WEC in the News

*"Utilities, Internet Providers Team Up To Potentially Bid For Federal Broadband Aid." Vermont Public Radio, July 20.*

Read it on [vpr.org](http://vpr.org).

## WEC Triples Grants

continued from page 1

Both nonprofits are equipped to directly support community members who are food insecure.

The gift to Capstone will purchase 20 \$50 grocery store food-only gift cards to distribute, stock its Barre-based food distribution center with \$1,000 worth of food, and contribute \$1,000 toward its Chefs to Neighbors program, where chefs at local restaurants prepare free family meals for distribution.

The gift to Vermont

Foodbank will help distribute food through access points in WEC's service area.

"The level of need is unlike anything we've seen in our lifetimes, or the history of the Vermont Foodbank," said

*So many more people now are struggling with hunger who haven't been in that position before and don't know where to turn. We can connect you with the resources you need to feed yourself and your family—that's why we're here.*

— Nicole Whalen,  
Vermont Foodbank

Nicole Whalen, the Foodbank's director of communications and public affairs. Since the start of the pandemic, she said, statewide food insecurity—meaning, not being sure where the next meal is coming from—has increased 46 percent, and 60 percent among children. "We're doing everything we can to

make sure people have a place to turn to access food. That's only possible because of the incredible support of our community. If it weren't for the help of partners like WEC, there's no way we would stand a chance in being able to make sure everyone who needs help right now has a place to turn."

The monies in WEC's Community Fund come from members who generously choose to donate their annual Capital Credits refunds. Last

year, the Fund distributed \$54,425 in grants to nonprofits that share a service area with WEC.

Right now, said WEC General Manager Patty Richards, she's grateful the Co-op is in a position to ease fear and hunger among members—especially when there are so many other stressors for an individual or family navigating job loss or other upheaval. "Some people right now are

continued on page 8

## WEC's Integrated Resource Plan Public Meeting: Wednesday, August 12

On August 12, from 6-8 p.m., WEC and Vermont based consultants the Energy Futures Group are hosting a virtual meeting for any members interested in learning about WEC's Integrated Resource Plan.

Every three years, WEC updates its Integrated Resource Plan, or IRP. This is WEC's 20-year plan assessing:

- how much electricity the Co-op will need to serve its membership,
- where that electricity is generated,
- potential risks,
- and potential opportunities.

Updating the plan every three years allows WEC's leadership to maintain focus on long-term strategies and outcomes while incorporating shorter-term changes in technologies and other factors.

A subcommittee of the WEC Board of Directors will work with the Energy Futures Group and General Manager Patty Richards to analyze assumptions (such as how many people may purchase an EV in the next 20 years), create models, and build an Action Plan.

The member meeting is a chance to learn more about the Co-op's plans to meet members' energy needs, "including our power supply commitments, how we design the electric grid that serves homes and businesses, and what we are doing to combat climate change," said General Manager Patty Richards. "We will also talk about how we plan to meet regulatory requirements that will help move away from fossil fuel use to clean sources of electricity. This is an exciting opportunity and we hope you will join us." Members are invited to bring their questions and offer feedback.

All members are invited to attend, and registration is required. Internet access will be necessary to attend the meeting. Please visit [wec.coop](http://wec.coop) and look for the link under Events & Bulletins to register.

## Join Project PowerShift

Help Washington Electric Co-op keep energy costs lower for our community.

WEC gets 100 percent of its power from renewable sources, a source of pride for our Co-op members. Recent advancements in communication technology means the Co-op can reduce costs by shifting energy use to get the most benefits out of renewable energy, but we need your help!

### Why do we need to shift power?

When peak demand is high it causes increased operational costs and that can affect electricity rates. Most electricity is used when we get home and settle into our evening routines (dinner, laundry, TV, etc.).

The solution: shift the times that grid-enabled water heaters and electric vehicle chargers in WEC homes use energy. Technologies like water heaters and electric vehicles (EVs) can be enabled to flex their usage patterns to times when utility costs are lowest and powered by the cleanest sources. If we can shift energy use to a different time of the day, we can keep rates lower for everyone.



### What is Project PowerShift?

An opportunity to test a new, exciting technology that will help the Co-op reduce costs and maintain our 100 percent renewable status. Participating members can receive:

- free installation of a small device that enables your water heater to act just like a battery,
- or receive a Level 2 EV Charger that will charge your car at the most energy efficient times.

When a peak energy demand event is predicted, a signal is sent to your water heater or EV charger that will optimize what time of day it uses energy. These devices will help avoid using energy during the peak times.

- Water heaters will preheat earlier in the day and be ready for use when needed.
- Your EV charger will be able to charge your battery when operational costs are lower and the electric grid is powered by cleaner sources.

### What are EV Chargers?

EV Chargers are also known as EVSEs or Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations, electric recharging points or just charging points. These Level 2 chargers that are installed at participating members' homes will use energy when it's less expensive, shifting usage away from peak energy times.



### What to expect when you participate

- **Water heater participants:** During a PowerShift event, you will likely not experience any discernible changes at your home.
- **Level 2 EV Charger participants:** Your EV charger will default to charge at specific times, though you will be able to override this setting on a case-by-case basis if necessary.

Help us harness the power of grid-enabled water heaters and electric vehicle charges and build local energy storage that keeps energy costs lower for all WEC members.

From [efficiencyvermont.com/powershift](http://efficiencyvermont.com/powershift)

## ENERGY COACH SAYS:

### New PowerShift Incentive for Electric Vehicle Drivers

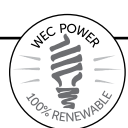


Electric vehicle (EV) drivers, this is an exciting, limited-time opportunity. Participants receive a Level 2 charger. Keep your EV charged, and your battery helps store power to offset WEC peaks (and peak costs). Visit [efficiencyvermont.com/powershift](http://efficiencyvermont.com/powershift) to learn more.

Website: [wec.coop/energy-coach-home](http://wec.coop/energy-coach-home)

Email: [energycoach@wec.coop](mailto:energycoach@wec.coop)

Call: 802-224-2329



# Community Fund 2019 Report

**W**EC's Community Fund is financed through the generosity of members who donate their Capital Credits refunds. Currently, nearly 1,400 members — 14 percent of WEC's full membership — donate their refunds to the Fund.

Donation requests come in throughout the year, and WEC's Community Fund committee determines donations on a monthly basis. Each organization that receives a Community Fund grant is a local nonprofit making a difference in the Co-op's service area.

Including \$5,079 in funds carried over from 2019, the Community Fund is poised to donate \$55,591 in 2020.

In 2019, WEC contributed \$54,425 to

96 organizations (out of 116 requests). The list of recipients is below.

## Community Fund Recipients 2019

Barre Heritage Festival  
 Blake Memorial Library  
 Bradford Public Library  
 Brookfield Community Partnership  
 Cabot Mentoring  
 Capstone Community Action  
 Center for an Agricultural Economy  
 Center For Arts & Learning  
 Central VT Adult Basic Education  
 Central VT Career Center  
 Central VT Council on Aging  
 Central VT Home Health & Hospice  
 Central VT Humane Society

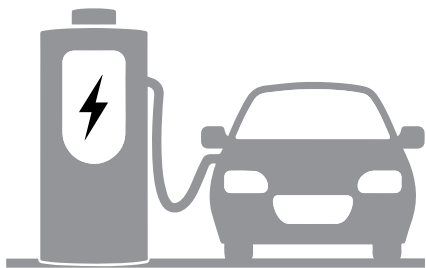
Champlain Valley Exposition VT  
 Agricultural Hall of Fame  
 Chelsea Arts Collective Invitation  
 Chelsea Public Library  
 Chelsea Senior Center  
 City Hotel Café  
 Clara Martin Center  
 Connecting Hope  
 Corinth Historical Society  
 Department of VT - VFW  
 Earthwalk Vermont  
 EcoForesters  
 Fairbanks Museum  
 Faith In Action  
 Family Center of Washington County  
 First Branch Ambulance  
 Friends of the Mad River  
 Friends of the PTHOH

Girls/Boyz Mentoring  
 Goddard College Community Radio  
 Good Samaritan Haven  
 Green Mountain Council - Boy Scouts  
 Green Mountain Film Festival  
 Green Mountain United Way  
 Green Up Vermont  
 Groton Community Club  
 Hardwick Area Food Pantry  
 HomeShare Now  
 Hyperbaric Vermont  
 Just Basics  
 Kellogg-Hubbard Library  
 Lotus Lake Camp  
 Mad River Valley Rotary  
 Montpelier Alive  
 Montpelier High School Project Grad  
 Montpelier Parks  
 Montpelier Rotary Club  
 Montpelier Senior Activity Center  
 Moretown Town Office - Morefest  
 Donation

MRPS Partners in Education  
 North Branch Nature Center  
 Orange County Parent Center  
 Peacham Library  
 People's Health & Wellness  
 Plainfield Historical Society  
 Prevent Child Abuse  
 Quarry Works  
 Rural Vermont  
 Salvation Farms  
 Stuff-A-Truck  
 T.W. Wood Gallery  
 The Governor's Institute  
 Toys for Tots  
 Twin Valley Senior Center  
 Twin Valley Seniors  
 Twinfield Together Mentoring  
 Umbrella Help Fund  
 Upper Valley Haven  
 Vermont Arts Council  
 Vermont Foodbank  
 Vermont History Center  
 Vershare  
 VT Center for Independent Living  
 VT Childcare Industry & Career Council  
 VT Community Garden Network  
 VT Community Loan Fund  
 VT Council On Rural Development  
 VT Granite Museum  
 VT Land Trust  
 VT Parks Forever  
 VT Stem Fair  
 Washington County Mental Health  
 Woodbury Volunteer Fire Dept  
 Worcester Historical Society  
 Youth Service Bureau

## 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](http://driveelectricvt.com/why-go-electric/purchase-incentives)

### Incentives for Weatherization



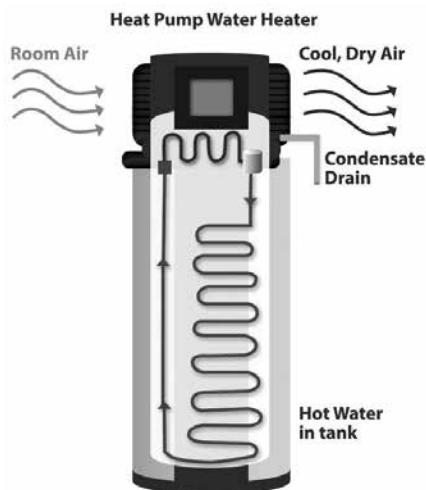
#### WEC

- 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

### 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.

To learn how you can contribute to WEC's Community Fund, contact Administrative Assistant Dawn Johnson at 802-224-2332 or [dawn.johnson@wec.coop](mailto:dawn.johnson@wec.coop).

To request a grant for your organization, email General Manager Patty Richards an explanation of how your organization serves the community and its current need: [patty.richards@wec.coop](mailto:patty.richards@wec.coop).

### Did You Know?

Did you know WEC has all-new incentives as part of our Button Up program? Check out the list on this page, or visit [wec.coop/energy-coach-home](http://wec.coop/energy-coach-home) and scroll to Incentives & Discounts.

802.224.2329 • [energycoach@wec.coop](mailto:energycoach@wec.coop)



## Rate Design

continued from page 1

they were very strong on keeping the low use block, so we did. A lot of our members are mindful about being as energy efficient as possible, and we encourage that. We reduced the number of kilowatt hours from 200 to 100, but we also cut the price per kilowatt hour by about three and a half cents.

### Q. So is my bill going to go up, down, or stay the same?

A. It depends on your energy use. If you use about 500 kilowatt hours each month, you won't see much change at all. People who use more than 500 kilowatt hours each month will see your bill drop. And if you're a lower user, around 200 kilowatt hours, you'll see a higher bill.

### Q. Tell me again why WEC is doing this?

A. The main reason is we're encouraging people to get off of fossil fuel use and use WEC's 100 percent renewable power for their energy needs. When our members consider switching out propane and gas devices for electric, we want our rates to be an incentive and not an obstacle.

We're also trying to stabilize how WEC collects revenue, so it's not all driven by kilowatt hour sales. Right now, our tail block rates are really high, at 27 cents per kilowatt hour, and that discourages people from using electricity. There's a cycle: the higher a rate we charge, the less people use, and then we have to increase rates again.

So with the input of our membership, we've decided a lower kilowatt


hour rate will help members use more electricity as they replace old fossil fuel devices with electric ones. It's the win-win we're looking for. A lot of people suggested we do an electric vehicle rate, and we're going to. But we want to push down our rates across the board, to incentivize battery powered weed whackers, e-bikes, heat pumps, and so on.

### Q. You don't really expect me to go out and replace all my fuel appliances with electric ones tomorrow, do you?

A. No, we don't! What we're saying is, when it comes time to replace your old boiler, or to trade in your car, make sure you consider electric options. If you think you can't afford new electric devices, or that they don't work as well, take another look. We offer incentives for many new electric devices which really knocks

the price down, and our new lower rates make everyday use affordable. What I'm hearing from members is that they love them: for lawn care equipment there is no need to have gas cans at the house, no maintenance, and these modern batteries are really strong and they last.

### Q. What's your favorite electric device?

A. My electric weed whacker. Pop a battery in, weed whack for 45 minutes, and it's super easy. I can easily keep the weeds and small tree growth down around my electric chicken wire fence. The fence stays energized and keeps critters out, and my chickens are safe and happy. The electric weed whacker is quiet and super easy to use every week. There is no fuss or frustration getting it started. My goodness, I love that thing. 

## Comparison of Electric Rates with New Rate Design

Class of Service	Rates as of January 1, 2020	Phase 1 Effective July 2020 Billing date (on or about July 15, 22, 29, 2020)			Phase 2 Effective July 2021 billing date		Phase 3 Effective July 2022 billing date	
Residential	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$15.03	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$18.01	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$22.25	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$26.49
	1st 200 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.12025	1st 100 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.08476	1st 100 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.08476	1st 100 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.08476
	Over 200 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.26849	Over 100 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.23292	Over 100 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.22220	Over 100 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.21149
Small Commercial	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$14.98	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$26.49	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$26.49	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$26.49
	Per kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.21981	Per kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.20136	Per kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.20136	Per kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.20136
Large Power	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$25.57	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$31.79	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$31.79	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$31.79
	Demand Charge per kW/month . . .	\$16.53	Demand Charge per kW/month . . .	\$16.53	Demand Charge per kW/month . . .	\$16.53	Demand Charge per kW/month . . .	\$16.53
	Per kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.11669	Per kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.11434	Per kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.11434	Per kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.11434
Time of Day	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$15.03	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$15.03	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$15.03	Monthly Customer Charge . . . . .	\$15.03
	<b>Peak Hours</b>		<b>Peak Hours</b>		<b>Peak Hours</b>		<b>Peak Hours</b>	
	First 60 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.12025	First 60 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.12025	First 60 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.12025	First 60 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.12025
	All kWh over 60 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.29720	All kWh over 60 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.29720	All kWh over 60 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.29720	All kWh over 60 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.29720
	<b>Off Peak Hours</b>		<b>Off Peak Hours</b>		<b>Off Peak Hours</b>		<b>Off Peak Hours</b>	
	First 140 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.12025	First 140 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.12025	First 140 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.12025	First 140 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.12025
All kWh over 140 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.25273	All kWh over 140 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.25273	All kWh over 140 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.25273	All kWh over 140 kWh/month . . . . .	\$0.25273	
Security Light	Per 100 Watt HPS/month . . . . .	\$23.39	Per 100 Watt HPS/month . . . . .	\$23.39	Per 100 Watt HPS/month . . . . .	\$23.39	Per 100 Watt HPS/month . . . . .	\$23.39
	Per 400 Watt HPS/month . . . . .	\$46.78	Per 400 Watt HPS/month . . . . .	\$46.78	Per 400 Watt HPS/month . . . . .	\$46.78	Per 400 Watt HPS/month . . . . .	\$46.78
	Per 30-40 Watt LED . . . . .	\$22.04	Per 30-40 Watt LED . . . . .	\$22.04	Per 30-40 Watt LED . . . . .	\$22.04	Per 30-40 Watt LED . . . . .	\$22.04
	Per 40-50 Watt LED . . . . .	\$22.44	Per 40-50 Watt LED . . . . .	\$22.44	Per 40-50 Watt LED . . . . .	\$22.44	Per 40-50 Watt LED . . . . .	\$22.44
	Per 50-60 Watt LED . . . . .	\$23.37	Per 50-60 Watt LED . . . . .	\$23.37	Per 50-60 Watt LED . . . . .	\$23.37	Per 50-60 Watt LED . . . . .	\$23.37
	Per 60-70 Watt LED . . . . .	\$22.30	Per 60-70 Watt LED . . . . .	\$22.30	Per 60-70 Watt LED . . . . .	\$22.30	Per 60-70 Watt LED . . . . .	\$22.30

## WEC Triples Grants

continued from page 6

finding it really difficult, they've lost a job or are struggling on so many levels trying to sort through a whole new paradigm, paperwork; and if you're a business owner, grants from the state or federal government. It takes time and energy to apply for all this stuff," she pointed out. "Food is a basic need. We're doing anything we can to help."

At Vermont Foodbank, Whalen echoed, "So many more people now are struggling with hunger who haven't been in that position before and don't know where to turn. Reach out for help. We can connect you with the resources you need to feed yourself and your family—that's why we're here."

For those who have not lost

income and are eager to support their neighbors, she said, the Foodbank offers several ways to get involved. People can make a donation, host a virtual food drive, or volunteer by gleaning unharvested food from farm fields.

*We felt these were extraordinary times, so we changed our focus to reflect our members' real needs. The idea behind these grants is to provide direct benefits to people who need them.*

— Richard Rubin, Board Member

While WEC's Community Fund donations are made on behalf of the membership, the list of recipients is a great resource for those interested in turning their personal philanthropy toward ultra-local causes. The Vermont Foodbank and Capstone Community Action are two highly effective nonprofits; for WEC's full list of 2019 Community Fund grant recipients, see p. 7.

"One of our values as a cooperative is to give back to our community. More than ever, it's important for each one of us to pay

attention to our values," said Richards. "If you need help, there's help. If you're in a spot where you can pay it forward, pay it forward."

To find food or get involved:

- vtfoodbank.org
- capstonevt.org/family-community-support-services/food-nutrition-

programs

You can also find information about local food distribution opportunities by dialing 2-1-1.

To direct your Capital Credit refunds to WEC's Community Fund, call Dawn Johnson at 802-224-2332.

## Where's WEC?

### ROW crews are finishing up odds and ends in these areas:

- Moretown Common Road in Moretown
- North Road in Vershire
- Poor Farm Road in Cabot/Walden
- Mosquitoville Road in Peacham/Ryegate

