

## Stephen Knowlton

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Generally, a board member acts as a financial steward on behalf of all the members of this cooperative that we own together, and to ensure that it carries out its primary mission of providing safe, reliable electric service with low negative environmental impact. To this end, I have worked diligently during my time on the Board to understand WEC's not-for-profit cooperative business model and how it meshes with the political, regulatory, and technical environment of Vermont's utility world. Thanks to forward-looking decisions taken by previous boards, WEC is a leader in providing affordable clean electric power to all its members, and I am confident we can continue to be a 100% renewable utility into the future as long as WEC's options are not overly restricted by statute. WEC, and most other Vermont utilities, have been successful in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the state's electric sector to minimal levels. But achieving perfection is an expensive burden on the ratepayer when resources are needed for our growing challenges: it is a fact that WEC and other Vermont utilities are experiencing more damaging storms than ever before, probably resulting from the changing global climate. There is an evident need for WEC and its members to adapt to new circumstances. Most members emphasize they want their power to be reliable, particularly those who are coming to depend more on their residential electricity for their heat, work-from-home capability, and electric vehicles. WEC will likely need to invest in a range of storm management options. Maintaining good reliability in this new environment will require a combination of engineering, investment, and close engagement with members on their expectations and what they can do to prepare. Secondly, ratepayers are justifiably concerned about the cost of electricity even when investment is desirable. In a co-op, what this means is that we seek to apportion WEC's operating costs equitably to all members so that everyone pays their fair share, and not more. These are the key challenges I see in 2024.

I was first elected to WEC's Board of Directors in 2015. I served on the Power & Operations and Members & Marketing committees, and became chair of the latter. In mid-2021, I was selected by the Board to be president, replacing Barry Bernstein who stepped down after serving over twenty years in that role. From 2018-2022, Bernstein and I actively researched the feasibility of WEC providing fiber broadband service to all its members in partnership with non-profit Communication Union Districts. While the effort ultimately did not pan out for WEC for several good reasons, some beyond WEC's control, it showed me the opportunity a Board member can have in pursuing the Co-op goal of improving members' quality of life if one is willing to spend time educating oneself in the issues and engaging with others.

I live in the White Pine community near Dillon Rd. in East Montpelier, and have been a member of Washington Electric Cooperative since 2001. Members may contact me at 160 White Rock Dr. #2, Montpelier, VT 05602, at knowlsf@auburn.edu, or at 802-223-2230. I've lived in various places around the US and abroad as a result of my father being in the army. I graduated from Middlebury College in 1975, and received a Ph.D in physics from MIT in 1984. After finishing my

degree I worked at an international plasma physics and fusion energy laboratory in England for several years. Afterwards I spent most of my career at Auburn University where I taught physics and led an experimental fusion energy research laboratory at that university, supporting staff, students, and post-docs. Now retired, I continue to participate in scientific program reviews and federal advisory panels at the request of the U.S Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation. Locally, I served as a mentor in U-32's Branching Out program, and as an advisor to the Vermont Energy Education Project. I am a member of the Vermont Academy of Science and Engineering, and a volunteer judge of the annual Vermont STEM Fair.