

# WASHINGTON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

## 86<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

May 1, 2025

The 86th Annual Membership Meeting was held at the Barre Auditorium in Barre, VT on Thursday, May 1, 2025, with 172 members, guests, and employees in attendance. The business meeting was called to order at 6:45 p.m. by President Stephen Knowlton.

### **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

President Knowlton opened the meeting introducing fellow board members, Susan Alexandar from Cabot; Betsy Allen, Secretary, from Plainfield; Don Douglas, Treasurer, from Orange; Steve Farnham from Plainfield, Mary Just Skinner, Vice President, from Middlesex; as well as Pat Barnes from Vershire, Olivia Campbell Andersen, from East Montpelier, and Jean Hamilton from Plainfield who was absent. Knowlton then acknowledged and thanked the Committee on Candidates and the Ballot Committee. These committee members are volunteer members of the coop that work diligently to guarantee the integrity of the election. He also recognized WEC staff for making the annual meeting successful.

President Knowlton continued by introducing invited guests Ron Shems, Sarah Buxton, and David Mears of Tarrant, Gillies, & Shems, the Cooperative's legal counsel, Betsy Bloomer of VELCO, Charles VanWinkle, Treasurer of Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC); Rebecca Towne, General Manager of VEC; Carol Maroni, VEC Board Director; and Paul Lambert, VEC Board Director and Efficiency Vermont.

### **CERTIFICATION OF QUORUM**

President Knowlton presented the Certification of Quorum signed by Ballot Committee Co-chair Cort Richardson. President Knowlton stated 829 ballots were received by mail from the CPA firm, 26 ballots were invalid (spoiled) and 20 voted in person at the annual meeting for a total of 823 members voting in the election which he certified constituted a quorum for the purpose of transacting business at the 86th Annual Membership Meeting in accordance with the Cooperative's Bylaws.

### **NOTICE OF MEETING**

President Knowlton called on Secretary Betsy Allen who certified that Volume 86<sup>th</sup>, No. 2 of the Cooperative's newsletter, *Co-op Currents*, constituted the official notice of the 86<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Members and that this notice was mailed to all members of record on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of April 2025, in accordance with the requirements of the Bylaws.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES—2024 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

President Knowlton called for a motion to waive the reading of the minutes and there was no objection to waiving the reading of the minutes.

President Knowlton called for a motion to accept and approve the May 2, 2024, 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Membership Meeting minutes.

*A motion was made by Mary Just Skinner of Middlesex to accept the minutes of the 2024 Annual Membership Meeting. The motion was duly seconded.*

## **EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION**

General Manager Porter recognized the four employees who reached this year's five-year employment milestones:

- Richard Pateta, 5 years of service
- Kevin Lanphear, 20 years of service
- Jason Smith, 20 years of service
- Teia Greenslit, 30 years of service

Porter then asked all staff to stand and be recognized for the hard work they do each day.

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

President Knowlton opened by acknowledging how much he enjoyed the annual meetings; "they are like a birthday party," he said. He went on to explain the improvements and adaptations WEC makes to protect its grid that provides service to members. Knowlton shared the following list that is happening behind the scenes: streamlining management and outage operations, increasing infrastructure resilience, better cybersecurity, improving right-of-way management, increasing state and federal grants, hiring experienced staff, and improving members' experience by providing more participation and control in their own electric use.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Treasurer Don Douglas explained to members that despite some surprises, WEC was within half a percent of its original budget for 2024. He noted that WEC returned less money in the form of capital credit retirements to members than in previous years, in part because it had to draw down \$2 million in short-term borrowing to cover process delays. WEC was able to quickly pay back the short-term borrowing and satisfy all its lender requirements. Property taxes rose steeply in 2024, and Douglas noted that WEC also went over its budget for outages. However, a half-million increase in sales helped offset costs.

## **ELECTION RESULTS**

President Knowlton reported the election results of the five candidates. The three candidates elected to three-year terms were: Susan Alexander, 587 votes, Bill Powell, 479 votes and Betsy Allen, 478 votes. President Knowlton announced that Steve Farnham received 385 votes and Ian Buchanan, 380 votes.

President Knowlton congratulated each candidate for running and thanked them for the willingness to serve their community.

## **Q & A SESSION**

President Knowlton opened the meeting to questions and/or comments from members.

**Member William Tarkulich** of Tunbridge asked whether power from Hydro-Québec would be subject to new federal tariffs, if that would impact rates, and if any of WEC's federal grants were at risk.

**GM Porter** responded that nobody knows yet, but Hydro-Québec risk is shared among multiple utilities, and that while no claw-backs had been announced impacting any of WEC's grants, it's still an anxious time. Another member asked about new meters (which are expected to be largely paid for by state and federal grants). Porter briefly described the change from meters that communicate through the copper wires that distribute electricity to radio frequency mesh meters, which will give better outage data and inform time-of-use rates and other system information (read more about advanced meters in the October-November 2023 issue of Co-op Currents)

**Member Paul Cate** of East Montpelier asked why the Co-op planned to sell Wrightsville, WEC's hydro generation plant, when it was an owned and local generation source.

**President Knowlton** responded that the Board's decision to sell was difficult to come to. Because regulations prevent the dam from discharging water at will, its maximum power is "during spring runoff, when power prices are not particularly high," he said. GM Porter added that Wrightsville is WEC's "most expensive source of power we choose to accept, that we are not obligated to accept."

**Member Barry Bernstein**, former Board President from Calais noted that net metering is a source of high-cost power that the Co-op is obligated to accept. Bernstein requested that Knowlton and Porter clarify the Co-op's position on net metering.

**President Knowlton** confirmed that net metering is established by the legislature, and that WEC is required to follow the law. But, he added, "incentives come at a cost," and as a result members who do not net meter pay to incentivize net metering, and do not realize the benefits of the program. "Pairing solar to local battery storage is a way to make it work," he suggested.

**Member Eric Andersen** of East Montpelier picked up the topic, urging WEC to take action on battery storage incentives. "What I would like to see is easy for WEC to make battery storage more affordable for members," he said, suggesting WEC could do this in partnership with other cooperatives. Andersen also recommended fellow members listen to Board meetings (Andersen's spouse, Olivia Campbell Andersen, is a Board Director).

**President Knowlton** thanked Andersen and reframed the question as how to make battery storage accessible to members, without creating a cost impact to other members. GM Porter added, "We are doing exactly as you suggest as a pilot and will expand as possible." (WEC is part of the Energy Storage Access Program now being developed and already has the ACRE pilot uses community solar to benefit income-qualified members of WEC and Vermont Electric Co-op; learn more in the August-September 2024 issue of Co-op Currents.)

**Member Michael Duane**, a former Director from East Montpelier addressed newish online outage tracking and restoration timing estimates provided by the Co-op: "It's terrific." The tech had improved a lot since the 1990s, when he served on the Board, he reflected: "If I looked across the valley to Plainfield and the lights were on, it wasn't too bad of an outage. If the lights were off in Plainfield village, it was a bad outage." Member Angela Manning of Orange also noted that outages had improved in 2024. GM Porter credited Dave Kresock, Engineering and Operations Director, for the improvements, and added that outage severity was still increasing year over year. "It's a full sprint to stay where we are," he said.

**Member and former Director Steven Farnham** of Plainfield commented that about 10% of members net meter and he believes that many would like to achieve energy independence and see net metering as a way to be able to afford it. "Why is the Co-op's apparent position to rather be rid of net metering than to put more pressure on changing the incentive?" he asked.

**President Knowlton** responded that net metering tariffs are set by the legislature and approved by the Public Utility Commission, and WEC can't engage in overt political activity but can raise issues. Changing the incentives is a good idea, he said "but ~~at the same point~~, we have to deal with the law as it stands."

**GM Porter** added that one of his responsibilities is to be WEC's lobbyist. "I say excess generation should benefit the rest of the membership," he explained, taking the position that net metering should not be eliminated but paid for at avoided cost—or the cost WEC avoids by not having to source electricity elsewhere. He invited members to get in touch if they thought he should take a different position on their behalf.

**Member Dan Wing**, a former Director from Corinth, asked if new meters could look at the time power was produced to ascertain avoided cost. Porter thought an annual average made sense but noted that would be up to the Public Utility Commission.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

President Knowlton concluded the meeting with distribution of door prizes donated from local businesses and vendors, and gift cards purchased with points accrued on the Co-op's credit cards

With no further business to conduct,

*President Knowlton adjourned the 86th Annual Membership Meeting.*

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Date of Membership Approval: \_\_\_\_\_, 2025

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
SECRETARY