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Greetings, fellow Co-op members.

As a prospective Co-op Board member, I believe it would be presumptuous of me to offer policy statements on crucial topics on which I am not yet fully informed. I have a lot to learn. I look forward to critically analyzing the issues, reading the background materials, listening to staff and experts, and talking with other members before voting on matters that come before the board.

What I can offer is my perspective on energy issues. Prior to retiring in 2024, I spent 20 years helping Vermonters with limited incomes reduce their energy consumption through participation in the Weatherization Program at Capstone Community Action. I am an expert in the many ways folks can reduce energy consumption and transition from fossil fuels to clean, renewable electricity. My bias is that I am all too familiar with the limitations many of our neighbors have when it comes to investing in changes that might ultimately save them money in the long run. Working to air-seal, insulate, and improve efficiency in more than 8,000 households—most of them low-income—has made me aware of how many people simply do not have the options others take for granted.

Some of the issues I expect the board will address include:

- approving capital and operational budgets that minimize rate increases while maintaining long-term financial stability,
- preparing for the operational and financial impact of severe storms,
- maintaining a focus on conservation while expanding access to, and the affordability of, transitions from fossil fuels to clean electric power, whether for heating and cooling, transportation, cooking, or laundry, and
- seeking equity between who pays and who saves when members invest in high-efficiency appliances, solar, and batteries that ultimately produce benefits shared by all members.

To that last point—my personal preference is to be an early adopter when it comes to energy. I feel great urgency for all Vermonters to reduce fossil fuel purchases. Full disclosure: as a WEC member I have been net-metering solar for over a decade. I have installed a mini-split heat pump and changed from electric resistance water heating to a heat pump water heater. I mostly drive an EV and have a car charger at home.

I approached all of these changes with an understanding of the incentives built into the WEC rate structure and the programs of Efficiency Vermont. I am also keenly aware of the cost-shift that can occur when we incentivize members to invest in upgrades. While on a macro level, investments made by members at their homes (“behind the meter” infrastructure like grid-tied solar and batteries) can benefit all members, the majority of the benefits flow to the owner and the rest of the ratepayers are exposed to the risks. If elected, I will work to make sure the balance between who saves and who pays is as fair as possible.

My name is Paul Zabriskie. I have lived in the South Bear Swamp valley in Middlesex for the past 37 years. I studied sustainable agriculture at UVM and managed engineering

and construction in the environmental, energy, and transportation sectors. I served on the Washington County Mental Health Services Board for 15 years.

As a co-op board member, I will prioritize keeping members informed and, if they choose, making it easy to be engaged. An important way to participate is to take out the ballot that came with this issue of the Currents, mark your vote and then get your ballot into the mail today. I would be grateful for your support, and I am eager to serve the membership.