

Position Statements of the 2024 Candidates for the Co-op Board of Directors

Board Candidates' Policy Statements

In 2024, five Co-op members seek election to three seats on WEC's Board of Directors. The candidates are Pat Barnes of Vershire, Ian Buchanan of East Montpelier, Olivia Campbell Andersen of East Montpelier, Stephen Knowlton of East Montpelier, and Richard Rubin of Plainfield.

Buchanan is a first-time candidate. Barnes and Campbell Andersen were both candidates in 2022; at the end of 2023, Barnes was appointed to the seat vacated by Roger Fox. Knowlton and Rubin are long-serving incumbents; Knowlton is WEC's Board President.

Each Director serves a three-year term. WEC members may vote for or write in a maximum of three candidates. Ballots may be submitted at the Annual Meeting on May 2, or returned by mail. Any mailed ballots must be received by the Barre Post Office before the May 1 deadline at 1:00 p.m.

In the February-March issue of *Co-op Currents*, all known candidates may make a brief statement to the membership introducing themselves. In the

April-May issue, candidates may describe their skills, policy perspectives, and leadership styles in response to the following questions:

- *What is your name, in what town is your Co-op membership, and how should members contact you?*
- *What skills, expertise, and/or perspectives would you bring to the Board?*
- *What are the most important issues the cooperative will face in the next few years? How would you guide the Co-op in regard to these issues?*
- *Is there anything else you would like to tell the members?*

Candidate introductory and policy statements are also available on wec.coop/annual-meeting.

Pat Barnes

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I was selected by the WEC board to fill the vacancy left by Roger Fox's retirement.

Since my appointment in January, I have appreciated the

kindness and generosity of the other board members to teach and counsel me about the complexities of WEC operations. I look forward to being a voice on the board to represent southern Orange County.

I have been a resident of Vershire, Vermont for thirty years. My career has been dedicated to science education and my volunteer work has included being an EMT and firefighter, wilderness search and rescue, Justice of the Peace and member of the Board of Civil Authority, and a member of a school board.

I now operate a home weatherization firm dedicated to helping customers use energy more effectively to increase their comfort and reduce costs and carbon emissions, whatever energy source (petroleum, biomass, electricity) they use.

I wish to be a member of the WEC Board to be part of the team that helps carry our Co-op into the next era. I believe that Co-op members should be producing and consuming more electricity. We need policies that enhance resilience by diversifying our renewable generation (such as solar and wind) while encouraging the transition to efficient electrical power for heat and transportation.

The challenges that we face are numerous: increasing electrical use; maintaining our power lines in the face of increasingly destructive storms and forest threats like the emerald ash borer; increasing our grid's capacity to accommodate distributed sources of electrical power; all the while delivering great service at an affordable price.

We will need to combine the right

incentives and rate structures with the Co-op's clout in persuading the Vermont Public Utility Commission to craft policies that serve our members in this decade and the next.

Co-op members are free to contact me with needs or concerns about the Co-op at BPatBarnes@gmail.com.

Ian Buchanan

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Following college at CU Boulder and UVM, and before moving to East Montpelier in 2018, I lived in Waitsfield, Washington (state),

Colorado, and Burlington. I grew up in the Northeast Kingdom where my parents operated a small country store. I experienced a wide range of perspectives serving people in one of the state's most economically disadvantaged areas.

Since then, I founded, developed, and continue to run a small business in Vermont. I am aware of Vermont's equity challenges, regulatory climate, and what service organizations face today. We live in a complicated world that rarely is well served by binary "yes" or "no" answers; there is a lot of gray area in many decisions. I am pragmatic and understand that the perfect can be the enemy of the very good. Compromise is often needed to create true progress. I strive to peel back layers of topics to reveal the heart of the big picture and discover the most likely long-term results of different paths.

WEC faces significant issues today and tomorrow. At present, we have to work to systematically improve the reliability of our broad, rough, and tree-laden grid. We have to support broadband accessibility and the desire of many members to adopt more electricity-intensive technology (EV charging, heat pumps, etc...). When it comes to regulations, we need to

continue to advocate for ourselves while simultaneously meeting the expectations the legislature and the Public Utilities Commission have structured for utilities. We also need to maintain a workforce of high-quality and skilled people.

In the longer term, WEC needs to continue to secure adequate clean power to support increasing electrical demand; we need to explore ideas to help overcome our quantity of scale limitations and lower kWh rates; and we need to remain competitive in a marketplace that will continue to shift. We should learn from other utilities while managing risk so that we innovate and progress without overexposure. We should continue to pursue a future where affordable and clean are not mutually exclusive but are also both kept in perspective.

I am aware of the double-edged tendencies of technology and how promises and realities do not always align. I am committed to doing what I can to have technology help us more than it hurts us. My family has an electric vehicle and we converted our old farmhouse to primarily rely on hydronic heat pumps. These conversions, particularly the HVAC, took more planning, experimentation, money, and advocacy than should be required. We can't be blind to how nascent many of these technologies still are or how large the demands on our already compromised grid will be. I am committed to understanding and playing a role in guiding how WEC supports the accessibility of these technologies (lowering costs, improving ease of installation, providing an adequate grid...) to members in a manageable, affordable, and realistic manner.

As recent outages have demonstrated, living without grid power for any length of time is not an option for most of us. WEC is one of the most important resources in our communities.

I commit and work hard to the things I believe in. As a member of the WEC Board, I will explore how WEC is structured to flesh out where the best opportunities exist. I will listen and process what members and other Board members say while

putting in the planning, analysis, and effort necessary to make informed recommendations and decisions. We need to work cooperatively and creatively to build the brightest and most reliable future possible.

Don't hesitate to reach out. I'd like to earn your vote.

Olivia Campbell Andersen

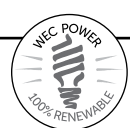
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As a local business and family farm founder, I deeply understand the need for reliable, affordable, and clean energy in our

rural community. I dwell in possibility, believing that nothing is impossible with hard work, creativity, and integrity. I have nearly two decades of experience creating collaborative partnerships and crafting innovative policies as a communications, renewable energy, and sustainability advisor to non-profit, business, and government leaders. My experience advocating for consumers and small businesses at the Public Utility Commission and state legislature, working with other electric utilities in Vermont and nationally, as well as securing federal funding for local projects can directly benefit WEC and its members.

I'm grateful to be considered for the opportunity to serve on our electric co-op's Board because I believe that we are stronger, smarter, and more effective when we work together and everyone in our community is served fairly and treated respectfully.

Affordability, reliability, and the impacts of climate change are the most significant issues facing the cooperative. Families and businesses cannot afford to stay, grow, and thrive in Vermont when faced with expensive and unreliable electricity bills and expenses. Over the last decade,



the annual cost of electric outages and storm recovery exacerbated by more frequent and intense weather events due to climate change cost each Vermont household hundreds of dollars every year and in recent years cumulatively caused WEC members to lose millions. WEC has a responsibility to build and maintain a distributed, resilient, and modern energy system we need today and tomorrow.

Change is needed to make our electricity and services from WEC more reliable and reasonably priced. Change is needed to ensure that everyone that wants to can access and benefit from cost-saving climate technologies. We also need better and more communications from WEC re: outages in times of emergencies and storm events as to when folks may expect power to be turned back on and other information so that everyone can be safe and healthy and best manage their own household's needs and expenses, especially during winter outages.

Rather than digging further into debt, WEC needs to proactively act and plan for greater reliability in a way that limits the cost to members. Ideas include strategic vegetation management along power lines, creating microgrids, and home or business energy storage as offered by most other Vermont utilities.

I believe that we all deserve to have and make our own choices related to our family's electricity, heating, and transportation needs. Too many Vermonters are unable to directly access the benefits of cost saving climate solutions—like cold climate heat pumps, advanced wood heating, geothermal, and electric vehicles, and I don't want our community to be left behind due to our rural location. WEC can serve as a facilitator and where appropriate a service provider to increase equitable access to broadband, climate, and energy resilience solutions.

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.

Richard Rubin

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802-454-8542

I have lived on East Hill Road in Plainfield for more than 50 years and have been a Co-op member since 1973. I can be reached by mail at 3496



East Hill Road, Plainfield, VT 05667 or by phone at 454-8542. My email is richardirubin@gmail.com.

I am 78 years old and have lived in Plainfield since I moved to Vermont in 1972. I have been a Co-op board member for several terms and have enjoyed my experience on the Board a great deal. I enjoy working with my fellow board members and management and would like to serve another term. I believe in cooperatives and cooperative principles, and I am committed to keeping our co-op strong. My experience as an attorney brings a critical perspective to the board and helps me ask the hard questions.

I am particularly proud that our Co-op obtains its energy from renewable sources such as the Coventry landfill methane generation plant, Hydro-Quebec, and the Sheffield wind farm.

Washington Electric Co-op has been able to rid itself from dependence on Vermont Yankee and the use of fossil fuel to generate our energy. Much of our power is also produced inside Vermont. Our Co-op's example is an important one to our policy makers and to other utilities as we move deeper into the twenty first century. It was exciting to see the Sheffield wind project come online. We received a \$1 million grant through Bernie Sanders' efforts and invested in this project several years ago. It took a long time, but as a result, we now have a 20-year contract for energy from that project at very favorable rates.

Our landfill gas-generation plant

in Coventry was also an excellent investment. We can produce renewable electricity from garbage at a very favorable cost.

I also continue to be proud of the efforts of our Community Fund, which now donates more than \$45,000 each year to non-profit groups in our service area, all from members turning back to the fund their annual patronage refunds. I urge all members to sign up and contribute. It's a good way to help our neighbors.

In addition to becoming 100% renewable, we have redone our office building using the best and greenest building techniques, providing an efficient and comfortable working environment for many years to come.

I am especially proud of our staff and the work they do for us in good weather and bad. The recent storms and outages have been hard, and they are likely to be a continuing problem with the changing climate. I am committed to reliability and to ensuring that our line crews are valued and fairly paid for the work they do. It's hard to see them out at night in the snow and mud restoring our power in freezing conditions.

I love Louis Porter and believe that participating in his selection was one of the best things I have done on the Board. He's great. He has deep roots in central Vermont, loves the Co-op and the outdoors, relates well to the staff and the members, and is really smart and committed. Steve Knowlton is our new Board President replacing Barry Bernstein who had been our leader forever. Steve is clear-eyed and a strong leader for our Board. We're lucky to have him.

We are a small business with high rates largely due to our rural nature and lack of large commercial and industrial customers. We run a tight ship but are continually faced with pressure on our rates outside our control. We are also faced with adapting to a new energy future in which more of our members are using solar energy and installing energy efficient heat pumps which will save fossil fuel but burn more electricity. We need to be nimble and creative to adapt what we do to meet our members' needs and to fulfill our mission.

I am confident the Co-op can continue to be a leader in both the energy arena and as a model for how locally owned and non-profit cooperative enterprises can provide our essential services while keeping our capital and "profits" in our local communities. Green Mountain Power is owned by a Canadian company and pays its management very high salaries. Its profit and return on its investments leave the state and the country as well. This is not a model for the delivery of energy that I support.

I am committed to a Co-op that is a leader in environmental stewardship based on nonprofit cooperative principles which operates reliably and keeps our electricity for all our members.