

VERMONT

ELECTRIC



## CEO Update: Cleaner Energy and a Broadband Boost

By Rebecca Towne

This year has already been a busy one, with VEC making significant and exciting commitments on clean energy and internet connectivity. Both commitments are designed to assure the long-term vitality of our rural communities and pave the way for our energy future.

In a bold show of climate and clean energy leadership, VEC's Board of Directors has committed to 100 percent carbon-free energy, up from our current 75 percent level, in less than two years. In recent surveys our members have told us clearly that they want us to move affordably and responsibly toward cleaner sources of power. By moving to 100 percent carbon-free in 2023 we are responding to that request in a way that is most meaningful for our climate – reducing carbon. I am proud of VEC's commitment to sustainability, and we are confident we can achieve this goal while maintaining a safe, reliable and affordable grid to serve your energy needs. (Read more about this recent commitment on page 2.)

In a second significant move this year, VEC committed up to \$3 million over the next three years to support and accelerate broadband deployment to

members in VEC territory who have no (or substandard) internet service. Under the program, VEC will be taking on much of the cost customarily borne by broadband companies to prepare our poles for the installation of their equipment. These "make ready" costs are often cited as a significant hurdle for broadband providers. If there ever was a time for VEC to support more broadband where it's most needed, it's now. By deploying this program over three years, we aim to be a catalyst – helping broadband providers deploy high-speed internet faster and further than they would otherwise be able to accomplish.

Fostering a clean grid, as well as supporting connectivity for members, is the key to assuring reliable, resilient and affordable energy services for our members for decades to come.

Many members are familiar with our energy transformation program, which includes incentives for the purchase of certain types of electricity-powered devices. In 2020 we had record numbers of members participate in this program and we hope 2021 has even broader impact. The program is designed to help members reduce their use of fossil fuels for heating, transportation, and other equipment such as lawn mowers. In shifting to a cleaner energy supply, VEC is creating an ever-lower-impact home for a

big range of emerging electric technologies like cars, trucks, heating systems, even things like forklifts. At the same time, as we move to a more internet-connected world, we can deploy programs that help us manage these new and varied energy loads to keep our grid reliable and affordable.

We continue to see members investing in solar, moving from oil heat to a heat pump, or considering replacing their home generator with a home battery. These are all great options but they introduce more complexity into the grid. This new dynamism – I've heard it called "democratization" – of the grid requires strong connectivity to assure a balanced system. An example? For members who might be charging an electric car, VEC and the member can team up to use the internet to be sure the car charges at the best times for both VEC and the member.

A final note on the COVID-19 pandemic. As painful as it's been, we are seeing some promising trend lines that we will soon be emerging from this pandemic and I feel a great deal of relief on that front. This gain, along with solid initiatives at VEC, make me optimistic that we are on track for a very solid year at the co-op. I hope to see many of you at our virtual annual meeting and look forward to the time when we can meet in person again.

## Financial Highlights

By Michael Bursell, Chief Financial Officer



2020 was a year unlike any other in so many ways. The pandemic created so much uncertainty for individuals and businesses. VEC was not immune to the impacts of the pandemic either. While we are considered an essential service, our business changed as we adapted to CDC guid-

ance for completing our work and keeping the electrical grid up and running. On the sales front, nearly 50 percent of our electrical sales are from commercial and related businesses with the other half coming from residential accounts. As you might guess, commercial sales were adversely impacted during 2020. Additionally, as our membership struggled, we saw a significant increase in our delinquencies with non-payments.

We made it through 2020 by adapting and adjusting our revenues and expenses to match up with these financial realities. Along the way we were helped by lower power supply costs, slightly higher residential sales, and a federal grant to help members pay down their past due balances. We also received federal help from the Paycheck Protection Program to insure our skilled employees would remain employed during the pandemic.

Despite these challenges, we made significant

progress in 2020. We did not sacrifice system reliability and continued to invest in our electric infrastructure. We increased our vegetation management spending and executed year two of our new prospective maintenance plan to review and audit our infrastructure and use those findings to replace equipment prior to a failure. Additionally, we completed several FEMA hazard mitigation infrastructure projects during 2020 that were made possible by grant funding. We implemented our first utility-scale battery storage system in Hinesburg that will allow us to better manage our electric peaks and lower our transmission costs. We also had our biggest year ever for our Energy Transformation Program, where we provide incentives for members to transition away from fossil fuels. Lastly, we acquired a small number of poles from Consolidated Communications, which we anticipate will further improve reliability and service.

After holding rates flat for six straight years, we had a modest rate increase of 3.29 percent in 2020. We have been facing upward pressure from power cost increases, shorter trimming cycles that increase vegetation management costs, net metering (which requires utilities to compensate producers at rates above market prices), and cost of living adjustments. Despite these cost pressures, our average annual rate increase has been less than one percent (0.62 percent) annually since 2012 (See financial statement on p. 6).

### Member capital, a co-op advantage

In the cooperative model, our customers are also our owners. One way this ownership is reflected is in member capital, which is a member's share of the money remaining after VEC pays its operating expenses. It is allocated to members based on how much they were billed for electric service that year. When the financial condition of the cooperative is strong enough, the board of directors may decide to refund a portion of member capital. In 2020, for the eighth straight year, VEC refunded member capital. Since 2013, VEC has returned nearly \$7.5 million in member capital, which is equivalent to a one-time rate decrease of nearly ten percent.

VEC bylaws, along with Internal Revenue Service regulations, govern how member capital must be distributed. The bylaws require that VEC's balance sheet must show a minimum equity level of 40 percent before member capital can be refunded. Because VEC exceeded this important milestone, the board of directors developed a plan to return a portion of this equity to members, while still maintaining the minimum 40 percent equity balance. It's important for members to understand that, to protect the co-op's financial stability, member capital cannot be returned all at

Continued on page 3

# Montgomery Member Says Reducing Her Impact Means Going Electric

Over the past couple of years, Chi Nguyen of Montgomery has 'gone electric,' at least in some parts of her life. And, she says, overall it's working well for her.

In 2019, Nguyen bought an all-electric Hyundai Kona along with a Level II charger which she had installed in her garage. Since then, then she's added a lawnmower, weed whacker, chainsaw and log splitter – all electric powered – to her collection of e-devices.

"Going electric is not the answer to everything, and you do have to make some adjustments, but I think we do have to find ways to reduce our environmental impact – and these are among the little things we can do along the way," she said. "I definitely don't miss breathing fumes from gasoline, either."

Nguyen's car gets her to and from work in Burlington every day (a 120-mile commute) and even handles the steep hill leading up to her house. "People ask me how I get along without all-wheel-drive – I tell them it's not been a problem," she said.

And maintenance for the car is close to nil. "The car is like a big computer – from time to time I get an alert that I need to take it to the dealer for a

software system update, and at least in my case that's at no cost to me." And that's it, she says, other than tire changes and rotations.

Nguyen acknowledges that her electricity bill is higher because of the car. "But you have to remember – you are saving somewhere else, on gasoline in this case."

For other VEC members considering adding more electric equipment to their lives, Nguyen offers a few tips:

- If you are considering yard equipment, spend some time to do research and choose a single brand for all the devices – that way you can easily swap around batteries among devices.

- Don't expect all electric equipment to perform exactly the same way its fossil-fuel powered counterpart performs. There will be benefits both ways. For instance, an electric chainsaw might not be sufficient for felling a large tree, but it's also much lighter so that smaller people can easily and safely use it.

- Particularly in the case of an electric vehicle, understand that any concerns over range limitations will continue to fade as technology improves.

Noting that she and her partner own a gasoline powered car as well as the EV, Nguyen says



**VEC member Chi Nguyen has moved to using a variety of electric-powered devices in order to reduce her environmental impact. Courtesy photo.**

they are considering going with a plug-in-hybrid car when it comes time to replace the gas car. "I know the charging infrastructure is coming," she said, and that she's likely to continue with electric technology. "I don't see going back," she said.

## VEC Commits to Carbon-Free Power Supply by 2023

The VEC Board of Directors recently committed to procuring a zero-carbon-emission power supply by 2023.

"I am proud that our Board of Directors, with strong support from our members, engaged deeply on this topic to boldly commit to 100 percent carbon-free in less than two years," said VEC Board President Rich Goggin. "We are moving quickly to reduce our impact on climate change, and doing it in a cost-effective manner. Vermont has consistently been a leader in the move toward clean energy, and VEC is stepping up even more."

Goggin also noted that in addition to moving to a carbon-free power supply, the VEC board also made a longer-term commitment to having a 100 percent renewable power supply by 2030.

Smuggler's Notch Resort, a VEC member, welcomed the announcement.

"Smugglers' is all about reliably cold and snowy winters, and climate change threatens that," said

Mark Delaney, Chief Mountain Officer at the resort. "Our congratulations and thanks go to VEC for making this important commitment towards a sustainable climate friendly power supply for their members."

VEC Chief Executive Officer Rebecca Towne noted that Vermont has a goal to meet 90 percent of all of its energy needs with renewable sources by 2050. To achieve this, more cars, trucks and building heating systems will be moving onto the electric grid, she said.

"By going carbon-free, VEC is setting the foundation for a clean energy future," Towne said. "As our members choose to transition their homes and businesses to electricity, they will be part of a more climate-friendly energy system overall."

Under VEC's Energy Transformation Program, the co-op offers members incentives to reduce their carbon footprint by helping them transition from fossil fuel equipment and appliances to electricity-powered devices.

Today, about 75 percent of VEC's power comes from non-carbon-emitting sources. The remaining 25 percent comes primarily from natural gas as well as other fossil fuel sources – sources which VEC will be moving away from. VEC is also expanding opportunities for "peak shaving" to reduce the need for carbon-emitting fuels especially during peak demand times.

"This is good news, and we applaud the Co-op for taking leadership on this issue," said Matt Maxwell, the owner of Maxwell Farm in Coventry, another commercial VEC member. "As a farm that generates clean electricity through the Cow Power program, we also believe strongly that we should move toward more modern and lower-impact energy systems."

"VEC deserves lots of credit for making this commitment," said Wendy Horne, the manager of the Keeler's Bay Variety store in South Hero. "Climate change is a critical issue for us, our kids and grandkids, and the health of our communities."



## Don't Wait, Get Your Rebates!

(802) 438-2303 | [www.heatsquad.org](http://www.heatsquad.org)

Receive 50% off your weatherization cost **up to \$5,000\***

HEAT Squad and VLITE seek to help Northeast Kingdom eligible homeowners save on their energy bills and make their homes cozy, safe and affordable.

Start with a \$50 home energy audit, and HEAT Squad will help every step of the way, so you may receive income-based incentives covering 50 percent of the weatherization cost up to as much as \$5,000. Eligible projects must include air sealing and insulation with a minimum air reduction of 10 percent, and may include vapor barriers, bath fans and ventilation, windows/doors, attic and basement hatches, and health and safety repairs.

In addition, HEAT Squad and the Vermont Clean Energy Development Fund are offering income-qualified homeowners in Essex, Orleans and Caledonia counties rebates of up to \$4,000 on the cost of purchasing a new clean-burning, efficient pellet or cord wood stove, plus a free home energy audit and up to \$4,200 in rebates for weatherization measures.

Financing is also available. These opportunities are limited. Act fast! For more information, please visit [heatsquad.org](http://heatsquad.org) or call 802-438-2303.



# Vermont Electric Cooperative

## 83rd Annual Meeting of the Members & 2021 Election

### An Adaptable, Resilient Grid *Teaming up for a Bright Future*



Join us virtually for a look ahead, a conversation with Vermont Lieutenant Governor Molly Gray, Q&A, and more.

**9 a.m. on Saturday, May 8, 2021**

Because of COVID-19, we will not be holding an in-person Annual Meeting.

Please join us on your computer or mobile device at:

<https://bit.ly/3vXv4ED> Passcode: 415688

Or call toll free:

**877-853-5247 or 888-788-0099**

**Webinar ID: 898 5412 6362 Passcode: 415688**

***Questions? Please email us at [annualmtg@vermontelectric.coop](mailto:annualmtg@vermontelectric.coop).***

#### *Financial Highlights: Continued from page 1*

once. Member capital cannot be applied to electric bills or cashed in until the board of directors determines that VEC's financial condition is strong enough and specifies which years will be returned. When this happens, VEC members in good standing who were members during the selected years will receive a portion of their member capital balance, as a bill credit for active members and by check for inactive members.

Every year, VEC updates members' bills with their new member capital balances. Very soon we will be reporting an update to member capital balances to reflect the financial results from 2020.

#### Using member money responsibly

Across the company, VEC employees work hard to provide good value to members. We are proud of the work we've done to improve reliability while keeping rates stable in the face of significant upward cost pressures, and we will continue to strive to maximize value for our members in an era of change in the electric industry.

If you are interested in additional financial information, VEC's financial reports can be found on our website at [www.vermontelectric.coop/financial-reports](http://www.vermontelectric.coop/financial-reports).

## Sign up for Paperless Co-op Life!

If you prefer to get Co-op Life digitally instead of in paper form, we can send you an email when each new edition is available. Sign up here:  
<https://vermontelectric.coop/co-op-life>

# Candidates for VEC's Board of Directors

## West Zone — TERM EXPIRES 2025

Alburgh, Bakersfield, Belvidere, Berkshire, Bolton, Cambridge, Eden, Enosburg, Essex, Fairfax, Fairfield, Fletcher, Franklin, Georgia, Grand Isle, Highgate, Hinesburg, Huntington, Hyde Park, Isle LaMotte, Jericho, Johnson, Milton, Montgomery, Morristown, North Hero, Richford, Richmond, Sheldon, Shelburne, South Hero, Starksboro, Stowe, St. Albans Town, St. George, Swanton, Underhill, Waterville, Westford, Williston

### John DeWitt – Essex

I grew up in Vermont and have been passionate about the important role the electric grid plays in our lives and its potential (haha) to shift global energy use ever since a prototype electric car was exhibited at my elementary school in the small town of Bradford over 30 years ago. Today, that shift in energy use is becoming a reality with the increased use of renewable sources of electricity and increased electric utilization through innovative technologies such as heat pumps. Although I do not have specific experience in the energy sector, as a member of the Vermont Electric Coop board I would bring a fresh perspective, an important asset in any successful organization. I would seek to promote policies that support a sustainable electric grid by continued and increased utilization of renewable sources of electricity including solar, with a particular emphasis on battery storage solutions. Innovative technologies such as this can help stabilize the electric grid by distributing electricity produced during the day, to when it is most needed at night and therefore can, most importantly, lower electricity rates for everyone. The support of innovation is not a choice between lower costs for members versus supporting sustainable energy. Innovation utilizing sustainable sources of electricity makes the grid more reliable and more affordable for everyone.



### Bonnie Pratt – Cambridge

The energy system is changing significantly and my entrepreneurial background and PhD in energy systems make me uniquely suited to help VEC address these challenges. I earned my MBA from Babson and went on to found multiple start-ups and coach entrepreneurs through the Center for Women and Enterprise, Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies, and a private consulting practice. I'm good at assessing risk and opportunity, collaborating with teams, and centering work around a shared vision for the future. This entrepreneurial, action-oriented mindset pairs well with the PhD I earned from UVM which investigated the complex behavior of the power system and key technologies that could accelerate the transition to renewables while keeping rates low and increasing reliability. I now work for a Packetized Energy, a Vermont-based start-up that built one of those key technologies. I work with electric utilities all over the country on a daily basis so I can bring fresh perspectives and ideas to VEC board meetings. I am passionate about promoting energy democracy and energy justice which involve empowering community members to more actively participate in decisions such as the siting of renewable generation facilities. As the energy system faces an increasing number of extreme weather events and sees new infusions of capital tied to the deployment of renewables it will be important to have VEC board leadership familiar with the changing landscape of the energy system. I am excited to bring a mix of professional and academic experience to the board and greatly appreciate your consideration.



### Peter Southwick – Grand Isle

The long term goals of VEC provides a view into the relationship with its members. The foremost of those goals is to provide reliable and affordable power. VEC's reliability is enhanced by the focus on vegetation control and its distribution infrastructure. These actions are visible to and appreciated by all members. Meeting the states renewable energy standards and brokering renewable energy credits reduce the cost of energy, in terms favorable to the earth as well as the pocketbook.

As a consumer it is exciting to be part of the energy transformations happening today. That VEC is incenting customers to go electric (e.g. cars, lawn mowers and heat pumps) is a testament to the company's vision in embracing these transformations.

As a board member I can add an expert's point of view in the area of Internet access. The COVID pandemic has shown a bright light on how necessary broadband service is to each and every household. The opportunities exist for VEC to assist in bringing Internet to its customers and as a network architect I can help.

At a personal level, I am a 30 year resident of Grand Isle, my wife and I are empty nesters, our two daughters having left the island for greener pastures. I have instructed skiing at Smuggs for over 40 years and have a sailing passion that is sated on Lake Champlain. I have an Electrical Engineering Degree from Clarkson and have worked in the communications industry since graduation.



### Rich Westman – Cambridge

Over the last six years as a VEC Board member, I have had the opportunity to participate in the Coop's improved financial situation and reliability. We are on sound financial track, the number of outages has dropped, the time to restore outages has improved, and we have expanded our supply of smart energy with VEC Co-op community solar projects in Alburgh, Hinesburg, and Grand Isle. I am proud to have contributed to this important work.

This experience has helped me understand the consequences of state and local decisions and my service in state government gives me a unique understanding of the regulatory process. I believe this experience adds value to the Coop as decisions are made.

In our annual member surveys, VEC members reported concerns about "the cost of power" and an interest in "reducing emissions". As a member of the Board I recently voted in support of a resolution for VEC's energy supply to be carbon free in 2023 with minimal cost to members. It's a win for all.

I do believe electric businesses have a role to play in the expansion of broadband. Going forward I hope to participate in seeing that happens in a smart way at the Coop.

It's an exciting time at VEC. With more electric vehicles on the horizon and more renewable energy it is a changing world. VEC is in a good position to succeed. It's an honor to serve you on the Coop Board and hope you will allow me to continue.



## East Zone – TERM EXPIRES 2025

Albany, Averill, Averys Gore, Barton, Bloomfield, Brighton, Brownnington, Brunswick, Canaan, Charleston, Conventry, Craftsbury, Derby, Ferdinand, Glover, Greensboro, Guildhall, Holland, Irasburg, Jay, Lemington, Lewis, Lowell, Lyndon, Maidstone, Morgan, Newark, Newport City, Newport Town, Norton, Sheffield, Sutton, Troy, Warners Grant, Warren Gore, Westfield, Westmore, Wheelock

### David Atkinson – Maidstone

I am a semi-retired chemical engineer that spent 20+ years in the pulp and paper industry (Wisconsin and NH). I was Vice-President of Operations (1999-2008) for the Wausau Paper Mill in Groveton NH. The Paper mill in Groveton was the largest customer of PSNH (now Ever-source). I was involved in special rate contract negotiations and ultimately design and installation of a 10 MW NG fired turbine integrated with a 7 MW high pressure steam turbine. This cogeneration plant operated for eight years and was ultimately shattered due to declining paper markets and offshore competition. I chose to leave the industry so that I could remain in New Hampshire and spent seven years teaching mathematics at the local JR/SR high schools.

I have served on numerous boards during the last 30 years. First Colebrook Bank Board, Weeks Hospital Board, BIA-NH, planning/zoning (chaired many). I am currently moderator for the town of Maidstone, VT and running for an open selectmen position in 2021.

I recently retired from teaching and I'm interested in keeping my mind challenged and being involved in the community.

I have been a VEC customer for 20+ years. I moved to Maidstone as a full-time resident in the summer of 2019.

I believe the relevant issues today as it relates to electric power are:

- Reliable transmission and distribution.
- Competitive rates (with a significant mix of clean energy).
- Incorporation of technology to aid in conservation awareness and reduced usage.

Contact information:

David Atkinson; 603 481-1670; david.atkinson.nh@gmail.com



**Voting is an important way to exercise your voice as a member of the co-op!**

The 2021 election will open on April 13 at noon and close on May 5 at noon. VEC members can vote for candidates online and by mail.

If you need help voting, please contact us at 1-800-832-2667 or support@vermontelectric.coop.

## Tom Bailey – Derby

At this time, I wish to ask for your vote to continue as a director of the Vermont Electric Cooperative. I believe that my past 16 years as a VEC director and my 30 year prior career experience in the electric utility industry qualifies me as a good candidate to continue as your VEC director.



The primary mission of VEC's management and directors is to provide safe, affordable and reliable electric service to your homes, farms and businesses. Over the past years I have worked closely with your other VEC directors to improve these functions at VEC. As we go forward, we are transitioning to a more renewable, low carbon power supply mix and exploring how we can help bring broadband to households who are underserved in our rural service territory.

A further snapshot of my relevant past experience would include a bachelor of science degree from Clarkson University in Engineering and Management and an MBA from Eastern New Mexico University. I am a veteran of the US Air Force and the Air National Guard. My further relevant experience includes 10 years on the North Country High School Board and 12 years on the Town of Derby Select Board.

In closing, I would like to recognize and thank all VEC employees and fellow directors for the effective transition to a COVID safe work mode that continues to provide excellent service for our members.

Thank you for your consideration, please contact me if you have further questions at 802-766-2647.

## Kristen Fountain - Albany

Hello members of the East Zone! I want to represent you on the VEC Board of Directors because I am inspired by the vision of the hard-working farmers who founded VEC 83 years ago. They understood that investor-owned companies were not going to bring electricity to them or their neighbors, and banded together to do it themselves. Today we are at the same crossroad in regards to high-speed broadband. For our rural communities to thrive in the 21st century, we must invest in bringing fiber to our businesses and homes. VEC has an important role to play, in keeping with its core mission of providing safe, affordable and reliable energy services to its members.



I live in Albany and work as a grant-writer, community development advocate and mom to a busy four-year-old. I was a journalist in Vermont for a decade, and enjoy researching and learning new things. A supporter of cooperative principles, I serve on the board of the Albany Community Trust, which will reopen the Albany General Store this spring, and am the Albany representative and Vice-Chair of Northeast Kingdom Community Broadband, our regional Communications Union District.

I work in and care for our community and would be proud to assist VEC in its continuing work to do its part. I would love to hear your questions and concerns and can be reached at (802) 586-9902 or kristen@nekbroadband.org.

## William Gilbert – Lemington

Hi, I am a NEK transplant that came from across the River. I grew up in the Colebrook area, and after a career as an Army logistician, my wife and I settled in 2016 to her hometown of Lemington. We love the area and doing the things that make the NEK a special place to live and raise a family. We enjoy fishing, snowmobiling, watching our girls in a variety of school sports and activities, and my favorite past-time, helping at my in-law's sugar orchard.



I work as a Procurement Manager for a power plant construction company which utilizes my background in engineering, logistics, and business management. I have had the opportunity to work on three large natural gas plants. My company also builds utility scale solar wind facilities. I have developed, negotiated, and managed contracts for engineered power equipment, materials, construction subcontracts, and services. Through my work, I learned about the industry, how to structure contracts to protect the customers, resolving contract issues, and what things should cost.

If fortunate to be entrusted with a position on the VEC board, I would strive to 1) ensure the same high level of service to members at the beginning and end of the line 2) ensure operational decisions are made considering all members, 3) bring durable, sustainable power, low-cost power to our members, and 4) take advantage of new technological opportunities (IF they benefit members).

Please email me at William.r.gilbert2@gmail.com for any questions.

Thank you for your consideration.

## District 2 – TERM EXPIRES 2025

Coventry, Derby, Newport

## Hazen Converse – Derby

As a resident of Derby, Vermont, I am interested in sitting on the Vermont Electric Co-op (VEC) Board of Directors for several reasons. I have a degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering and environmental conservation is one of my passions that goes beyond our climate change crisis. I enjoy many outdoor activities and want to see the environment stay healthy and clean for our future generations. As a technology educator, I understand the energy sector and where the challenges behind clean energy originate. Years ago I built a fossil free home, as I saw where this technology was going and decided to incorporate efficient electrical appliances for my heating and cooling, hot water, and drying needs. I can bring to the table thoughtful and reasonable ideas to help mitigate our energy crisis and incorporate new technologies.



I believe things are about to change drastically for people and their everyday lives as we fade out our dependency on fossil fuels. Making the shift to electric vehicles, heating, and renewable energy can be overwhelming and intimidating; I want to be part of the discussion when it comes to acting on that change. I feel my background in environmental science, technology, and education, can help people become educated about these challenges and how to adapt. The VEC is only a small portion of the bigger picture, yet to Northern Vermont, it will be our lifeline for more than our lights, it will be part of our transportation, heating, cooling, cooking, and more.

## Penny Thomas – Newport

My name is Penny Thomas and I ask for your vote as a new voice and fresh perspective for Vermont Electric Co-op. During my career as a corporate leadership trainer, I taught managers to tap their vision and communicate clearly -- skills I will bring to VEC. Currently, I serve on the board of Northeast Kingdom Organizing working to improve the quality of life in the NEK. Previously, I created the Newport flower beautification project that flourishes; headed my church leadership team; and chaired ReNewport Events! a downtown revitalization program. I live in a restored 1880's Newport home, and it serves as a happy space for me, Carl, two black Labrador retrievers and a cat who rules us all.



The priorities I see include:

- Electricity. Keeping the lights on in a safe, reliable and affordable way.
- Broadband. According to realtors, the first question asked when people consider moving to the NEK is "do you have reliable internet?" Keeping our young people in Vermont and improving the quality of life of our families, students, and businesses means using VEC's infrastructure to provide economical broadband for underserved areas.
- Renewables. State mandates require that we reduce emissions and fossil fuel dependence. This impacts traditional electric utility models, heating and transportation, and we must work thoughtfully to provide efficient renewable electricity.

Clean electricity is pivotal in helping us achieve these goals. I would love to hear your concerns and comments and would appreciate your vote.

Please contact me at:  
Penny211@gmail.com

## John O. Ward Jr. – Newport

I have been a director for Vermont Electric Cooperative (VEC) since 2004 when VEC acquired Citizens Utilities. I would like to continue to serve you representing the Town of Coventry, Town of Derby and the City of Newport. I believe I have the life experience, skills and knowledge that can help VEC to continue to provide quality, safe, reliable power at a cost its ratepayers are able to afford. I currently serve as VEC's treasurer and I am on the finance committee and power supply committee.



I retired from active employment during July 2015. For the prior 16 years I was employed as the City Manager for the City of Newport. As part of my duties I had management responsibility for the water and sewer utilities. Prior to my City employment, for 19 years I was an owner/partner in a local mechanical engineering firm, Phoenix Engineering. I am a life long resident of the City of Newport. My wife, Diane, and I have two married children and are the proud grandparents of four grandchildren who are lucky enough to live in Vermont.

I would appreciate your vote when you receive your ballot. Thank you for your support.



# Help Us Grow the Community Fund!

With your help, we can boost the giving power of the VEC Community Fund this year. Now it's as easy as ever to participate. With just a few mouse clicks, you can sign up to donate any amount one-time, round up your electric bill or donate your Member Capital.

(If you already participate, thank you!)

Supported solely by voluntary donations from members, the Community Fund helps non-profit initiatives right here in the VEC region - supporting food security, rural ambulance service, early childhood education, and a whole lot more.

Since the fund's first award in 2015, more than 50 local non-profits have benefited. We can keep that list growing, with your help! Please consider joining the nearly 1,000 generous VEC members already supporting the fund - so we can do even more!

Organizations interested in being considered for a grant should complete and submit an on-line application at <https://vermontelectric.coop/community-fund>

To be eligible, applicants must be nonprofit tax-exempt organizations and/or public schools. Individuals are not eligible, but funds may pass through eligible organizations to support individual needs. Focus areas of the fund are Economic security, energy education, emergency/disaster relief, and community development.

The Community Fund Allocation Committee accepts applications on a rolling basis. The committee reviews applications and makes allocations quarterly. Application windows for each quarter close on the following dates: December 31, March 31, June 30, and September 30.

Learn more at: <https://vermontelectric.coop/community-fund>



A young gardener at the Hinesburg Community Resource Center. The Center was a recent Community Fund grant recipient. Courtesy photo

## What has the Community Fund Supported Recently?

### Jenna's Promise

- to help upgrade the kitchen at Jenna's House
- a center point for the community in Johnson
- to better host community events, offer cooking classes to the community, and to aid people in their recovery journey.



### The Lunchbox

- to purchase more to-go containers for the curbside food drop-off efforts required because of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as develop new meal routes. The Lunchbox – which takes the form of a simple, white food truck – provides free summer meals for kids 18 and under.



### Floating Grace

- to support free cruises on Lake Memphremagog for families dealing with cancer.



### Alburgh Volunteer Fire Department

- to support cellular boosters for its ambulances to more efficiently send vital patient information to emergency rooms.



# VERMONT ELECTRIC CO-OP



# CO-OP LIFE

Spring 2021

Volume 78 Number 2



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Vermont Electric Cooperative Inc.  
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## Vermont Electric Cooperative Board of Directors

- District 1 Don Worth 802-723-6532  
P.O. Box 450, Island Pond, VT 05846  
district1@vermontelectric.coop
- District 2 John Ward 802-334-6022  
145 Mt. Vernon St, Newport, VT 05855  
district2@vermontelectric.coop
- District 3 Carol Maroni 802-586-7758  
2426 Collinsville Rd, Craftsbury, VT 05826  
district3@vermontelectric.coop
- District 4 Mark Woodward 802-635-7166  
110 Woodward Rd, Johnson, VT 05656  
district4@vermontelectric.coop
- District 5 Charlie Van Winkle 802-598-0128  
88 Corbett Rd, Underhill, VT 05489  
district5@vermontelectric.coop
- District 6 Paul Lambert 802-310-2740  
1758 Reynolds Rd, Georgia, VT 05478  
district6@vermontelectric.coop
- District 7 Rich Goggin 508-439-9166  
30 Whipple Rd, South Hero, VT 05486  
district7@vermontelectric.coop
- Eastern Zone Directors at large Tom Bailey 802-766-2647  
P.O. Box 114, Derby, VT 05829  
eastzone2@vermontelectric.coop  
  
George Lague 802-766-2456  
308 Boulder Drive, Derby, VT 05829  
eastzone1@vermontelectric.coop
- Western Zone Directors at large Jody Dunklee 802-356-6052  
6 Wilcox Rd, Fairfax, VT 05454  
westzone1@vermontelectric.coop  
  
Ken Hoepfner 802-644-5771  
1685 VT Route 108N, Jeffersonville, VT 05464  
westzone2@vermontelectric.coop  
  
Rich Westman 802-644-2297  
2439 Iron Gate Road, Cambridge, VT 05444  
westzone3@vermontelectric.coop

## Inside Spring 2021 Co-op Life

- CEO Update ..... pg. 1
- Financial Highlights ..... pg. 1
- Montgomery Member Goes Electric ..... pg. 2
- Annual Meeting and Election ..... pg. 3
- Candidates for VEC Board of Directors ..... pg. 4
- VEC 2020 Financial Statement ..... pg. 6
- Spring Safety Reminders ..... pg. 6
- Help Us Grow the Community Fund ..... pg. 7

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