

With New Rate Design Structure, WEC Looks to the Future

Higher service charge, lower kilowatt hour charge encourages clean energy use among membership—more affordably and more fairly

By Patty Richards and the WEC Board of Directors

WEC's Board of Directors and management are proposing a new way to charge for electric service. A new rate design gives WEC an opportunity to leverage its 100% renewable power sources to encourage beneficial electrification: using clean and green electricity instead of fossil fuels for our daily power needs.

A new rate structure is an exciting opportunity for WEC consumer-members as we look toward the future. Combined with WEC's Button Up incentives for purchasing energy-efficient appliances and vehicles, this plan will help WEC members reduce their carbon footprints while contributing to Vermont's ambitious renewable energy goals. WEC has long been a green energy leader among state utilities: this change supports WEC's commitment to fight global warming. Changing the way

WEC charges for power also creates a more equitable payment system for every member on our lines. The new rate structure will help our Co-op plan for a sustainable, viable future within

a dynamic energy landscape.

How it works

The current rate structure includes a fixed charge of \$13 per month, a low block of 200 kWh charged a rate of about 11 cents per kWh, and a charge of about 24 cents per kWh for energy use over 200 kWh per month. This two-tiered energy rate structure has been in effect since 2011 and, with the low block at a low rate, was intended to encourage conservation and discourage high energy use. The structure has been successful, since on average WEC members use 489 kWh monthly—well below the state average of 560 kWh.

The new proposed rate structure includes a higher fixed charge of \$25 per month. The low block is maintained, but drops to 100 kWh, and the low block rate drops to about eight cents per kWh. Energy use over the first 100 kWh drops from 24 cents to roughly 18 cents per kWh.

In this new method, WEC continues to emphasize energy efficiency by retaining a low block at a lower rate to encourage and reward low energy use. Energy efficiency and

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"He held my hand and assured me everything was going to be okay."
At WEC, kindness matters. Read more: Members Write, p. 7



Will Lindner

Brandie Litchfield and Bob Purvis, the Facilities Manager and Executive Director of Turning Point Center of Central Vermont, which supports people in recovery. A donation from WEC's Community Fund helped Turning Point improve its website to better reach the folks who need their help.

Community Fund Recipient Turning Point Center of Central Vermont: A Port in the Storm

By Will Lindner

Each year, Washington Electric Cooperative's General Manager, Patty Richards, receives dozens of inquiries from nonprofits, bootstrap municipal organizations, and groups and individuals engaged in activities that benefit Co-op members and other residents of central Vermont. These hopeful callers and correspondents are seeking contributions from WEC's Community Fund to support their efforts. And many of them receive it. In 2017, the Community Fund provided \$38,000 in grants to 74 recipients, including social-services groups,

libraries, food shelves, advocates for the disabled, health care and ambulance operations, educational groups, arts programs, and environmental organizations. The Community Fund was instituted in 2002, and all dollars come from Co-op members who generously donate their capital credit distributions.

But an unusual thing happened on one spring day in 2017. Rather than fielding an inquiry from an organization, Richards placed the initial call herself. She called Robert Purvis, Executive Director of the Turning Point Center of Central Vermont located on North Main

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Washington Electric Cooperative
East Montpelier, VT 05651


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PUC approves 3.72% rate increase. P. 4.

The Co-op gives back: Organizations that received donations from WEC's Community Fund are listed on p. 7.

Coventry open house: Learn how garbage becomes clean electricity at the Coventry Landfill. P. 8.



WEC's Button Up program now offers incentives for electric vehicles, like this Chevy Bolt parked in front of the warehouse. Learn more about what WEC can chip in toward members' energy-efficient purchases on p. 5.

This Weatherman Knows Which Way the Wind Blows

When Worcester-based meteorologist and WEC member Roger Hill was a child, he drove with his family from Los Angeles up North America's Western spine to visit his mother's family in Edmonton, Alberta. In big sky country—somewhere outside Butte, Montana—a massive thunderstorm hit. "The hail was so strong it broke the windshield, with me in the backseat scared to death," he remembered. He's been fascinated by weather ever since—and awed by nature's power.

Since the mid-2000s, Hill's skillful storm forecasting has benefited WEC and all of Vermont's utilities. And as a daily observer of weather patterns, he

We're not putting a value on [good weather]... A sunny winter day in Vermont is such a high value.

— Roger Hill

feels an obligation to speak up about what those patterns indicate: "Climate change is much stronger than people realize, and it's happening faster, and it's causing our weather to behave more and more oddly," he confirmed.

It's more accurate to call it anthropogenic global warming, Hill added. "We'd be slipping into an ice age if not for human interference,"

he said. Asked about the Co-op's recent statement about global warming—see p. 4—Hill said he was grateful to WEC for addressing the issue and hoped others would follow suit.

As a forecaster, Hill's daily attention to the weather means he's highly sensitive to changes in patterns. While many of us may note that winters look



Meteorologist Roger Hill surrounded by screens and weather models in his home office in Worcester.

Co-op Currents

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WEC is part of the alliance working to advance and support the principles of cooperatives in Vermont.

Board of Directors

President	BARRY BERNSTEIN (May 2019)	1237 Bliss Road, Marshfield, VT 05658 Bbearvt@myfairpoint.net	456-8843
Vice President	ROGER FOX (May 2021)	2067 Bayley-Hazen Rd., East Hardwick, VT 05836-9873 rfox@pivot.net	563-2321
Treasurer	DONALD DOUGLAS (May 2020)	21 Douglas Rd., East Orange, VT 05086 dondougla@gmail.com	439-5364
Secretary	ANNE REED (May 2019)	3941 Hollister Hill Rd., Marshfield, VT 05658 annereed48@gmail.com	454-1324
	ROY FOLSOM (May 2019)	2603 US Rt. 2, Cabot, VT 05647 RoyGrmsy@aol.com	426-3579
	JEAN HAMILTON (May 2020)	3499 East Hill Road, Plainfield 05667 Jean.myung.hamilton@gmail.com	777-6546
	STEPHEN KNOWLTON (May 2021)	160 White Rock Drive, #2, Montpelier, VT 05602 knowlsf@auburn.edu	223-2230
	RICHARD RUBIN (May 2021)	3496 East Hill Rd., Plainfield, VT 05667 rrubin@sover.net	454-8542
	MARY JUST SKINNER (May 2020)	P.O. Box 412, Montpelier, VT 05601 maryjustskinner@gmail.com	223-7123

PATTY RICHARDS General Manager patty.richards@wec.coop	KATIE TITTERTON Editor katie@clearspotvt.com	WILL LINDNER Contributing Writer	TIM NEWCOMB Layout
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Editorial Committee

Patty Richards Donald Douglas Jean Hamilton Anne Reed Katie Titterton

The Board of Directors' regularly scheduled meetings are on the last Wednesday of each month, in the evening. Members are welcome to attend. Members who wish to discuss a matter with the Board should contact the president through WEC's office. Meeting dates and times are subject to change. For information about times and/or agenda, or to receive a copy of the minutes of past meetings, contact Administrative Assistant Dawn Johnson, at 224-2332.

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different from 20 years ago, Hill's close observations over those decades eliminate any doubt this is just a sense, or a trick of memory.

Weather report suite

Hill enlisted in the Army near the end of the Vietnam War. He served as a ballistic meteorological crewman, sending up weather balloons to supply artillery data that helped hit targets accurately. After the war, he joined the National Weather Service as a meteorological technician, and spent three years in Hawaii.

He moved around the country working for the National Weather Service: to Missouri and back to the big western states of Montana, Nevada, and California; to Cape Hatteras, NC "where I learned East Coast weather," he said, and was introduced to hurricanes. From there he moved to Albany, where he met his wife Michele, who grew up in Montpelier. The couple moved to Vermont and raised two kids, and Hill left the National Weather Service.

For the most part, he's worked independently since, from an office in the Hill home on the side of a mountain in Worcester. "I prefer living out in the boondocks because I like wildlife and less dense population," he said, noting that growing up in Los Angeles, he always wanted to experience seasons. But, he pointed out, rural living forces issues of sustainability: you can't drive up the road to get to his house without using a combustion engine.

Hill is a blues-rock drummer and a music fan, and during 1990s, his reputation for site-specific forecasting snagged him the opportunity to work for the Grateful Dead and Bob Dylan concerts in Highgate. Forecasting for

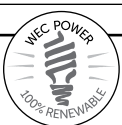
massive outdoor concerts requires juggling a special set of variables, he said: "Lightning's critical, dust, what a crowd will do." Both times he was there, he said, the wind blew down fences intended to contain 100,000 people. "Weather is highly critical in so many niches," he explained. "From maple syrup runs to sunny day forecasts for outdoor concerts."

Hill has been forecasting for VELCO (Vermont Electric Power Company, the upstream utility that provides transmission services to all Vermont utilities) since 2007, and as a result, utilities statewide benefit from his expertise. But he began utility forecasting with WEC a couple of years before that, hired by his neighbor, former General Manager Avram Patt. He also consults for the U-32 school district, Radio Vermont WDEV, individual towns, and others.

Forecasting requires long days. "I get up at about 4:45 in the morning, and unless there's ongoing weather, which there often is, I'll do a last broadcast for WDEV at 4:30" in the afternoon, he said. He takes breaks when he can, and has been known to duck out of lunches in Montpelier to file a report over his cell phone.

Before major storms, Hill holds conference calls with all utilities. His home office is well equipped: he has a backup generator and backup internet, and he subscribes to multiple weather sources and models. His workstation is a nest of screens set up directly across from his drum kit. "I run a lot of computer models. I'm keeping track of different conditions for analysis purposes," he explained. "Without good analysis and good situation awareness, you're not going to get a good forecast."

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President's and General Manager's Message

Big Changes Take Effect This Summer

Rate Increase Approved, WEC's New Rate Design, Board's Climate Change Statement, State's Net Metering Rules, Button Up Incentives, NEAEC Recap

Rate increase approved by PUC

Patty: While no one likes to raise rates sometimes it something we have to do. To remain a viable business we must face the hard facts about rising costs. We kept this rate increase to a bare minimum. The 3.72 percent rate increase went into effect July 1. The Public Utility Commission (PUC) approved it at the recommendation of the Public Service Department (PSD)—that's the state entity that reviews all the numbers to make sure what we are filing for is just and reasonable.

We've tried to give as much notice as possible: through the WEC website, *Co-op Currents*, at the Annual Meeting in May, through the *Times Argus*, and on bill messages.

Barry: The rate increase was set to go into effect on July 1 as a temporary surcharge. However, the PUC approved it before July 1, so we consumer-owners will see the new rates on our bills that will arrive late July and in August.

Patty: The PSD said we're all set and recommended no proceeding by the PUC. It's not that we file and there's no scrutiny—the PSD looked at all our numbers, checked everything, made sure we did all the analysis correctly. They're a second set of eyes to make sure we're filing only for exactly what's needed.

Barry: The PSD does due diligence and works closely with WEC management and staff to make sure they understand all the details that go into the Co-op's filing.

WEC presents new rate design to members

Barry: After 18 months of discussion, at our May meeting the Board of Directors came to consensus on a new rate design we'll file with the PUC in late fall of this year. The article is in this issue (p. 1). As part of our decision we will have a public meeting with our members, scheduled for Wednesday, September 19, at the Old Brick Church, next door to the Co-op office. We're interested in hearing any questions our members have about how we got here and why we're doing it.



Part of the reason to make a public statement [about climate change] is to continue to demonstrate our leadership on environmental issues. As an electric cooperative, this will help guide our future actions and discussions as we talk to lawmakers, our members, anyone in the climate and renewables sector, other utilities, and beyond.

—Patty Richards

Patty: That's right. We held listening groups last November to get member input, and that factored heavily in our design. At the last board meeting our board approved a plan, recognizing our rate design needs to evolve.

Barry: The board recognizes this is a significant change, especially since we haven't had a rate redesign in roughly 15 years. Times have changed, and we have to change with them. Global warming is no maybe. It's here now. WEC can address it by working with you, our members, in making our total energy use greener—remember, the Co-op's power portfolio is 100 percent renewable. To do that, we needed to make sure our rates are affordable for people switching their fossil fuel-powered cars and heating systems over to electric power.

Patty: If anyone wants to give feedback, come to the meeting, write letters, or call us. See the article

on the rate design on page 1 and you will find details about the September 19 meeting and how to write in.

WEC issues climate change statement

Barry: The Board felt it was extremely important to adopt a climate change policy statement, both to acknowledge what we've already been committed to for the last couple of decades, and also to clearly guide how we address global warming going forward.

Patty: The importance to me, as your General Manager, in putting this down on paper was really significant. We've been operating all along under the premise that climate change is real, but now that it's in writing, that helps me as the manager and our staff in taking positions on climate change.

It's important for us to be open and outspoken about this. It's one thing to say "Yeah, we believe in climate change," but codifying what we stand for is a really important step. Quite frankly, words matter.

Barry: We are and will continue to make a difference. Since 1990, we've been committed to working with our

members on energy efficiency, conservation, and developing a 100 percent renewable power supply, ensuring every kWh you use is green. Now 20 percent of our peak is supplied by our members' net metering installations. We've fully supported the state's goal of reaching 90 percent renewables in all sectors by 2050. We're in our second year of our Tier III Button Up program to work closely with our members to get off fossil fuels. We feel this pulls it all together in a transparent statement so our manager and staff can have a unified voice on this issue.

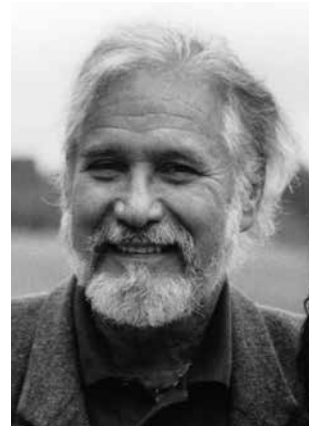
Patty: So all of us can go out and talk about climate change. We want to make noise on this issue! We've done all these steps. We have some of the lowest use in Vermont on average.

Part of the reason to make a public statement is to continue to demonstrate our leadership on environmental issues. As an electric cooperative, this will help guide our future actions and discussions as we talk to lawmakers, our members, anyone in the climate and renewables sector, other utilities, and beyond.

State's new net metering rates in effect

Patty: On July 1, the new net metering rates went into effect per the PUC's order. We fully support net metering and we want to see it continue.

Barry: In 2013, net metering supplied 10 percent of our peak. Now in 2018, 20 percent of our peak is



We are and will continue to make a difference. Since 1990, we've been committed to working with our members on energy efficiency, conservation, and developing a 100 percent renewable energy power supply, ensuring every kWh you use is green.

— Barry Bernstein

supplied by our members' net metering installations.

New Button Up incentives for 2018

Patty: We're on year two of our Button Up program, which is an effort to move members off of fossil fuels and onto clean and green electricity WEC provides in order to meet the state's renewable energy requirements. We've got incentive dollars for people to move over to new heating systems and new vehicles—electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles. I'm looking forward to seeing more people taking advantage of those incentives.

Barry: It may be driven by a state mandate, but our Button Up program goes along with everything we've been committed to over the last 30 years, and that's working closely

with our members to use energy as efficiently as possible. The mandate requires we work with you to move away from fossil fuels and use electricity for transportation, heat, and hot water. And we're excited about it. It supports how we address climate change and goes hand in hand with the new rate design structure we've proposed.

Northeast Electric Co-ops annual meeting report

Barry: In May, a number of our board members and our manager attended the Northeast Association of Electric Cooperatives (NEAEC) annual meeting, which brings together representatives from New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine to talk about common issues we have as electric co-ops, and common issues facing our members. It's really a wonderful opportunity to hear about the progress each co-op is making individually and to share solutions to issues we all have in common. These co-ops range in size with the largest representing 80 thousand members, and the smallest a couple thousand.

For me, at these meetings, I really realize how much I have grown to appreciate the cooperative difference. We're all working on the same issues, we're working on behalf of our members, all board members are members of their respective co-ops,

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Rate Design

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conservation are still the best ways to reduce environmental impact. However, lower kWh charges for the second block helps to incentivize using clean electricity in new ways, which hopefully has the effect of reducing members' fossil fuel use.

These changes will affect all members' bills. Some members will see lower monthly electric bills; others will see an increase. Those who use near 500 kWh a month will see very little difference.

Goals

1. Align with Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard (Act 56) and state goal to move 90% of total energy use to renewable sources

Because 100% of WEC's electricity comes from carbon-free, renewable sources, shifting household energy use from fossil fuels to electricity is a way for WEC members to significantly contribute to a more sustainable future.

We also look forward to electricity's expanding role in reducing air emissions and combating the effects of climate change. Most of us use fossil fuels to drive cars and heat our homes, and these are the greatest producers of harmful air emissions in Vermont.

WEC members are in a position to transition now to appliances and vehicles that use electricity, as appliances powered by fossil fuels eventually become less common, harder to service, and more expensive to run.

2. Potentially reduce spending on total household energy use

While realigning our rates to meet state goals intended to reduce air emissions, we also look to reduce household spending for all uses of energy. Shifting toward renewable electric sources of power for members' energy needs may cut down on the total energy dollars members spend. Total energy dollars include electricity as well as gasoline, propane, fuel oil, and other fossil fuel sources. Yes, your electric bill may go up as you use more electricity to power cars and home heating and cooling; at the same time, your gasoline and fossil fuel home heating bills will shrink or perhaps disappear as you make the shift. WEC's new rate design lowers the kWh charge in part to help members nudge down overall household energy spending.

3. Share the Co-op's infrastructure costs more equitably among members

Fairness was a major concern among participants in WEC's November listening groups ("Listening for Consensus," January 2018). By increasing the fixed monthly fee and decreasing the kWh charge, everyone using WEC's lines—high energy users and careful conservers, net metering members and power purchasing members, renters and owners, households and businesses—contribute to and benefit from the Co-op's grid in a way that makes more sense than the current structure.

How it will help

Vermont is at a crossroads. Controlling air emissions is not only the right thing to do but is now a state requirement. The reality is replacing combustion engines and appliances with electric ones is part of the solution to fight climate change and reduce harmful air emissions. Beneficial electrification will also help minimize future rate increases for all members: as WEC's sales increase, the Co-op requires fewer, smaller rate increases over time. Compared to fossil fuels, WEC's electricity is a cleaner, smarter, more efficient way to power household energy needs.

1. Reduce greenhouse gases and global warming

WEC can help members make a real impact in reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions by switching off fossil fuels and moving to clean, renewable electricity. WEC is one of only two utilities in the state that provide power from 100% renewable sources.

Changing how we charge for electricity encourages beneficial electrification, reducing fossil fuel use overall. This aligns with the state's Renewable Energy Standard mandate, passed by the legislature in 2015 through Act 56. WEC's Button Up program is a direct response to these new laws and helps members afford to purchase new energy efficient appliances, home weatherization, and new this year, electric vehicles.

Helping members afford electric vehicles is also a big part of the solution. So is helping members heat homes and water with efficient technologies that use electricity rather than propane and oil. Global warming has a dramatic effect on our environment—locally. We see it firsthand in more frequent and extreme storms. We are also seeing the onset of invasive bugs and disease brought by changing weather in our region. The effects of climate change caused the Co-op Board to issue a statement on the topic—the first among state utilities (p. X). This and Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard drive our efforts to help members switch from fossil fuels to clean electric energy.

2. Cost savings

Whether your bill is lower or higher at the onset of the new rates, we want you to look at how much you spend on all forms of energy. Under the new rates, switching from gasoline powered cars to highly efficient electric vehicles may decrease dollars spent in total on energy. Your electric bill may increase, but if you are saving more on other forms of energy, you may see less money out the door while also investing in locally owned infrastructure that supports the much needed shift to renewable energy sources. These savings are especially strong if you use WEC incentives to lower the cost of weatherizing your home and purchasing renewable electric appliances and tools, such as electric vehicles.

Timing and member input


The Board has been discussing rate design for over a year. In November, 2017, listening groups provided valuable

input from a representative sample of WEC members. WEC developed this new plan based on the board's review and member feedback,

Late this year, WEC will file the new rate structure with the Vermont Public Utility Commission (PUC). We anticipate the regulatory process to take several months, meaning the new structure will likely go into effect in 2019 or even possibly in 2020.

This article is the first step in going over WEC's plans with members. Before filing with state regulators, the Co-op Board and management welcome open discussion of the new rate design proposal with all members. A public meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 19, 2018 from 6:30 to

8:00 pm at the Old Brick Church in East Montpelier (next door to WEC's main office: 40 Church Street, East Montpelier).

Members are also invited to send their questions and feedback to the Board at wecmembers@wec.coop or send written comments by mail to Dawn Johnson at PO Box 8, East Montpelier, Vermont, 05651. 

Read past Co-op Currents stories about WEC's rate redesign:


- "Listening for Consensus," January 2018
- "WEC Eyes Changes to Its Rate Structure," June 2017

WEC First Utility in State to Release Climate Change Statement

WEC is the first utility in Vermont to take a formal position on climate change. In keeping with the Co-op's longtime commitment to the environment and its members' quality of life, the Board of Directors adopted the following statement at the Co-op's May 30 board meeting. The statement reads in full:

The WEC Board of Directors acknowledges that rapid global warming and associated climate instability are real, and are significantly attributable to human activities. We are concerned that global warming presents great risk of serious and negative economic, environmental and health ramifications to humans, along with challenges to the continued existence of numerous other forms of life on this planet.

WEC urges NRECA [National Rural Electric Cooperative Association] and NEAEC [Northeast Association of Electric Cooperatives] to support meaningful efforts on the part of the electricity sector to address global warming, including legislation at the federal, state, and local levels to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change. An effective response must also address financial impacts incurred by cooperatives burdened with legacy power supply commitments.

In a press release, General Manager Patty Richards said, "As with everything, change starts at home: our primary focus is on the four rural Vermont counties we serve. We intend this statement to have a local impact, guiding policies that positively affect our members. On a national level, we will work within our member organizations to rally support for utilities concerned about climate change." 


State Approves WEC Rate Increase, Eliminates Seasonal Rates

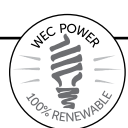
On June 29th, Vermont's Public Utility Commission (PUC) approved a 3.72 percent rate increase for WEC members, following the recommendation of the Public Service Department (PSD).

The rate increase took effect July 1. In an order, the PUC noted that WEC announced the increase over several platforms (at the Annual Meeting, in Co-op Currents, in a press release, in the Times Argus, on its website, and on bills) and no public comments were filed. The order also noted that the PSD went over the proposed increase thoroughly with WEC staff and "the Department stated that WEC has demonstrated that its proposed revenue requirement is both necessary and sufficient to cover its costs and expenses during the rate year."

The PSD agreed with WEC's request to eliminate seasonal rates, which affected fewer than 400 WEC members. Most seasonal accounts were originally set up because electric use was low during many months of the year and it was difficult for members to keep the meters accessible to WEC meter readers. Since WEC converted to automated meters, access is no longer a concern.

Members used to seasonal rates may see several advantages in converting to the regular Residential Rate class. The first is a possible reduction in cost. Another advantage is the comfort in knowing that if there is an unexpected use of electricity at the location (such as a pump failure or appliance left plugged in), members will be alerted by the next month's bill. Under seasonal billing, members with unexpected seasonal energy use were occasionally surprised by a much larger bill than anticipated at the end of six months. With monthly billing, problems become obvious quickly and can be addressed right away.

Satisfied that WEC's proposal was sound, the PUC agreed with the PSD's recommendation and passed the rate increase without a hearing or investigation. 



2018 Button Up Offers Announced, Including New Electric Vehicle Incentives for Income Eligible WEC Households

Program helps members replace fossil-fuel burning devices to use clean energy and improve efficiency

WEC's Button Up program offers members cash incentives toward energy-efficient weatherization and heating equipment installations. 2018 brings a new incentive in the Button Up menu: loan pay-downs toward all-electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles for income eligible members. WEC is also continuing to offer cash toward purchasing other items, like cold-climate heat pumps and pellet boilers.

WEC's Button Up program grew out of Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard, which aspires to get the state to use 90 percent renewable sources to power across all sectors, including heating and transportation. Also known as Tier III, Button Up is WEC's effort to help members retire fossil-fueled devices. Cash incentives directly help members afford to transition instead to energy-efficient appliances and vehicles that use WEC's 100 percent renewable power mix. "The idea is to reduce the harmful emissions that contribute to global warming and climate change. Members may want to switch to cleaner cars and home heating, but there's

often a financial hurdle in making an investment of that size. Button Up cash can bridge that gap," said General Manager Patty Richards.

Income-eligible members may receive \$1,900 to write down the auto loan for a purchase or to offset the full lease of a qualifying EV, or \$950 towards a new plug-in hybrid, from any dealership.

WEC's EV and plug-in hybrid incentives come from remaining funds from a grant from Vermont Low-Income Trust for Energy (VLITE). The grant helped WEC install five Level II EV charging stations in its service area. VLITE has agreed to let WEC repurpose remaining monies to help qualifying members afford the shift to an electric car.

Members interested in claiming the EV incentive may fill out a form available on washingtonelectric.coop or by contacting Bill Powell (energycoach@wec.coop, 802-224-2329). That form includes income guidelines. For example, for a family of two to qualify for the incentive, their gross income may not exceed \$52,750;

for a family of four, the limit is \$65,900.

In addition, VSECU is partnering with WEC to streamline the financing process of EV's for members interested in securing loans with VSECU.

Financing through VSECU allows members to apply the incentive directly, without having to pay costs up front and wait for reimbursement.


"These EV incentives make transitioning away from fossil fuel vehicles as easy and affordable as possible for our members," said Richards.

One of the most significant fossil fuel reduction improvements is through home weatherization. Indeed, it makes little sense to invest in major home heating appliances if the home itself is not properly weatherized. A weatherized home has a measured heat load, which is achieved through comprehensive diagnostics, insulating, and reducing air leakage through the building shell.

Members may now receive up to \$2,000 for home weatherization costs. WEC also offers \$250 toward cold climate heat pumps (HP) when the building is verified to meet thermal standards, \$250 toward heat pump

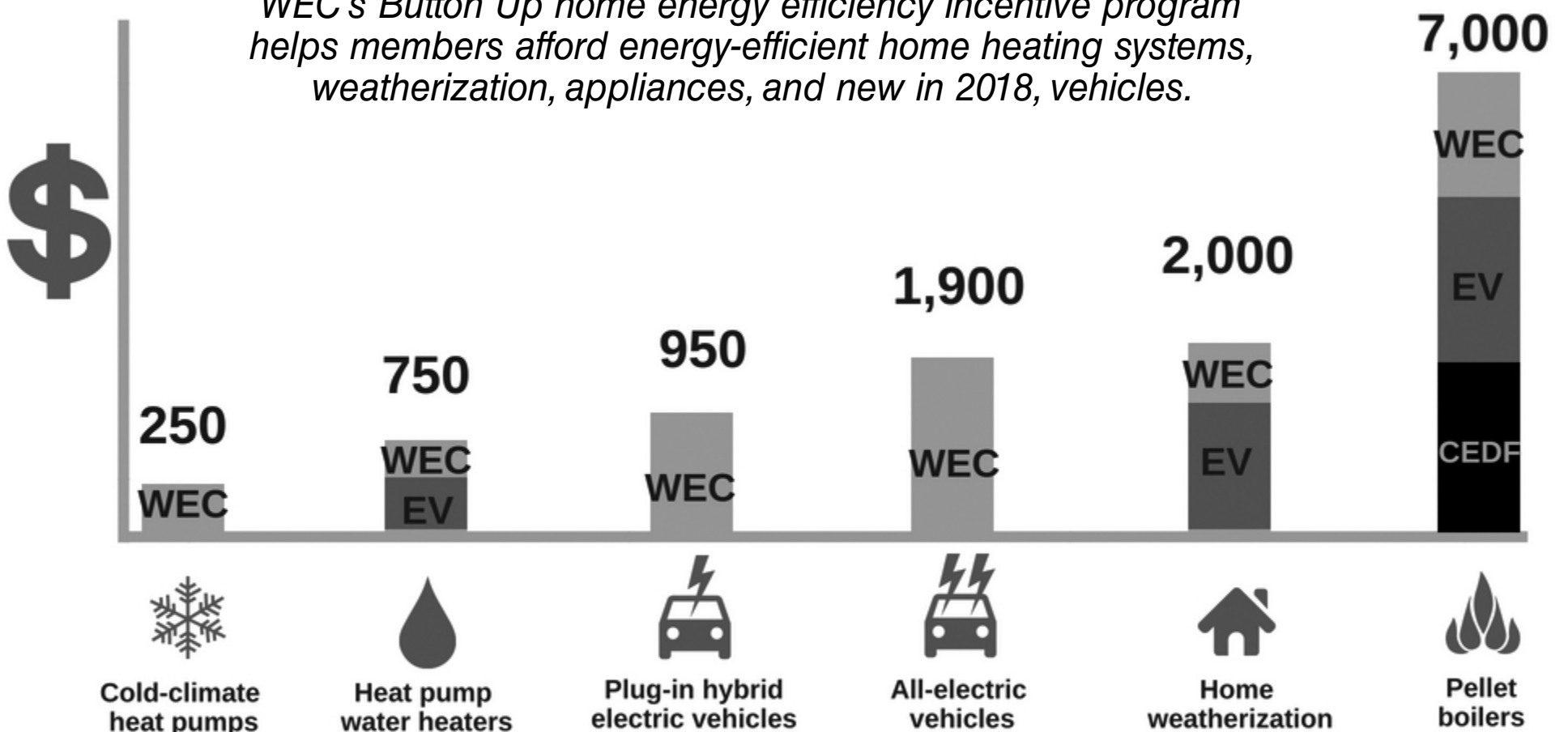
water heaters (HPWH), \$950 toward solar hot water heaters, and \$1,000 toward pellet boilers and pellet furnaces. See the adjacent chart for a handy list of WEC's Button Up offerings effective July 2018.

Efficiency Vermont offers separate incentives that, combined with WEC's increases, can amount to substantial savings. Powell invites members to contact him when considering major purchases in energy-efficient home heating, weatherization, or transportation. Not only can he guide members through WEC's incentives, but he can help members uncover other incentives, solve root causes (for example, you may not need the dehumidifier if your home is properly insulated and ventilated), and connect members with qualified contractors.

There are a limited number of dollars available for each type of purchase. Members interested in taking advantage of any Button Up incentive should call Powell as soon as possible to discuss how to switch to a greener choice as affordably as possible. 

What's My Incentive to Button Up in 2018?

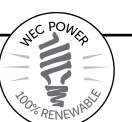
WEC's Button Up home energy efficiency incentive program helps members afford energy-efficient home heating systems, weatherization, appliances, and new in 2018, vehicles.



EV = Efficiency Vermont; CEDF = Clean Energy Development Fund. Plug-in hybrid and all-electric vehicle incentives are available only to members who qualify as low- or moderate-income. Additional incentives may be available. Before you buy any new appliance or vehicle, contact Energy Coach Bill Powell to learn how much you can save.

802-224-2329

energycoach@wec.coop



Turning Point Center

continued from page 1

Street in Barre, which supports people in recovering from substance misuse. Richards asked Purvis if he'd like to apply for a Community Fund grant.

Obviously, his answer was yes.

It isn't easy for Turning Point to raise money, he explained recently. "Eighty-five percent of our budget comes from the state health department, and we've been struggling with level funding [from that source] for four years. It's really not sustainable. It's hard for a program like ours to raise additional money because, with human services, there's a feeling among people that the state is supposed to do that."

Turning Point also contends with geographical limitations to its fundraising. "There are twelve recovery centers in Vermont," Purvis said. "Which means that we're confined to our local area for fundraising."

Purvis and a small group of supporters work to supplement the state's allocation with local fundraising, but it's an uphill climb. The unsolicited, unexpected call from Richards was like the sun coming out.

"I was stunned," he said. "In all my years, I had never had a donor ask me if I wanted to apply for a donation!" Purvis learned his organization was recommended to WEC by a recovery center outside WEC's service area. "Shortly thereafter we received an extremely generous donation. Fundraising is difficult in our area of work. Patty's initiative in reaching out to us made us feel valued in the community. My experience with Washington Electric Cooperative has been uniquely gratifying in my 35 years working in the nonprofit sector."

As Richards explained, the executive director of Turning Point of Chittenden County, in Burlington, called her to inquire about a donation (most, but not all, of the state's recovery centers have Turning Point in their name.)

"I was very moved by his explanation of the work they do to help people suffering from addiction," said Richards. "The Turning Point staff are people who have dealt very personally with their own addiction issues, working intimately with others who are suffering and struggling, and trying to lead them and stand with them as they seek to become sober and straighten out their lives, and their families' lives."

"Unfortunately," Richards continued, "I had to tell the director from Burlington that our Community Fund limits its donations to central Vermont, where our members' money will have a local impact. That's when he told me about Bob Purvis and Turning Point Center of Central Vermont, and that's what led me to call Bob."

All of the Fund's donations are



Turning Point of Central Vermont's Bob Purvis and Brandie Litchfield outside the recovery center's office on North Main Street in Barre.

Will Lindner

good ones, in Richards's view. They all enhance the quality of life in our towns and villages.

"But this one, the Turning Point Center, is one we wouldn't have wanted to miss," she said. "What could be more important than helping people empower themselves and basically save their own lives? And become contributing members of society as well?"

Peer-to-peer and tailored programs

"Once you have a few years of sobriety, it really enhances your own recovery to do service and give back."

That's how Brandie Litchfield, the facilities manager at Turning Point Center of Central Vermont, described the experience of working with others who are trying to overcome their own addictions. Litchfield is one of just two full-time employees at the Center. "And 'facilities manager' doesn't reflect all the things she does," said Purvis, who's the

other one.

"We provide peer services," Purvis explained, "and we don't charge for the work we do. What we bring to our work is our personal experience with addiction and recovery. We're at great pains to make a distinction between the clinical world and the peer world. It doesn't start with an appointment and payment, and end with the completion of a course of treatment. It lasts as long as people

want it to last, and for some, that's years. That's the key: we're a place where our visitors can always talk to someone."

Turning Point reaches people grappling with different and multiple addictions, from opioids to alcohol. "Alcohol is actually the most dangerous substance to withdraw from without medical assistance," said Purvis.

One way that people get acquainted with Turning Point is through Washington County Mental Health's

"Lighthouse Public Inebriate Program." An alternative to jail or a hospital, it provides a safe and comfortable residence where police can take someone badly intoxicated. Later, with that person's permission, Brandie Litchfield reaches out to offer support and assistance.

But despite the dangers of alcoholism, it's opioids, Purvis said, that present the most terrifying form of addiction. The opioid epidemic plaguing our state and the nation has received a great deal of attention. The Vermont Department of Health has reported a precipitous rise in overdose deaths each year since 2014.

"They create a level of craving that's unknown in other areas. Your brain is telling you from the bottom up that you need these drugs to survive," said Purvis. "The person who goes down into that serious addiction has caused a lot of problems, for themselves and others, so it takes many years to repair the damage."

Turning Point's staff and volunteers work to build skills beyond their impressive patience, good will, and intuition. Litchfield, for example, will soon take a five-day, 30-hour course provided by the statewide recovery network to become a recovery coach.

The training "sharpens their understanding of things like how to listen accurately to people," Purvis said. Coaches also become knowledgeable about the array of services available to help people in varying circumstances, such as employment assistance, income support, and medical care. An insightful thing that coaches do, highlighted in a program brochure, is to help people "focus on the present and the future, not the past."

There is, in the addiction recovery world, a divergence between abstinence-based recovery and medically assisted therapy (MAT). Both approaches can be accessed at Barre's Turning Point Center. The facility makes its spacious meeting room available to abstinence groups like Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, which run their own sessions and pay rent for the space.

For some people addicted to

opiates, however, abstinence programs aren't the right fit. MAT programs support people using medications like methadone, which Purvis describes as a "partial opioid." Purvis is particularly pleased that his center provides a "Pathways guide," a volunteer trained in the Vermont Recovery Network's "Pathways to Recovery" program. He calls it "the gold standard for opioid addiction." Pathways guides collaborate with inpatient treatment centers, and work with individuals and in groups to help people set goals in recovery and attain them.

"Last year there wasn't a single death of a person engaged in medically assisted treatment," said Purvis. "If there's one thing we know about addiction, it's that almost nobody gets it right the first time. People relapse. People stumble. As long as they don't give up, that's all we care about."

WEC gift leads to new website

No organization these days can maximize its potential without an effective media platform. An addiction recovery center is no exception.

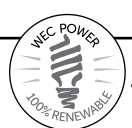
"Everybody that we deal with," said Purvis, "has a phone, and they all have Facebook. But our social media was in tatters; it was basically useless. We needed to bring someone in who could redo it."

When he received Patty Richards' call, he knew immediately how he wanted to use a Community Fund grant. Combined with a small amount of money he had set aside from another source, WEC's donation enabled Turning Point to hire a consultant to redesign and update its website.

"He had to start from scratch," said Purvis, "so it's still a work in progress. But when it's done the website will be the repository for information about what we do. It's something we've really needed, and thanks to WEC we're going to have it."

Check out the site at www.tpcv.org.

"The consultant we hired," Purvis added, "is in recovery himself. That's the beauty of it. People who get into recovery often have a commitment to help other people."



Community Fund 2017 Report

In 2017, the WEC Community Fund gave \$38,465 to 74 charitable organizations in our service area. These nonprofits address a range of causes: hunger, mental health, arts, youth and senior programs, natural resources, and many others.

The fund, overseen by a volunteer board and staff committee, responds to requests for donations on a monthly basis. Donation amounts range from \$100 to \$1,500.

All money in the Community Fund comes from the 14% of WEC members who generously donate their capital credits in order to support community causes. To redirect your capital credits to the Community Fund, please fill out

the form below, or call Dawn Johnson at 802-224-2332. Thank you!

2017 Community Fund donation recipients are:

- All Star Hockey Classic
- Barre Area Veterans Council
- Barre Heritage Festival
- Barre Opera House
- Blake Memorial Library
- Brookfield Community Partnership
- Capstone Community Action - WARMTH
- Central Vermont Adult Basic Education
- Central Vermont Council on Aging
- Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice
- Central Vermont Humane Society
- Champlain Valley Exposition - Vermont
- Agricultural Hall of Fame
- EarthWalk

- Faith in Action Northern Communities - Cabot
- Food Share
- Friends of the Winooski River
- Girls/Boyz First Mentoring
- Good Beginnings
- Good Samaritan Haven
- Green Mountain Council
- Green Mountain United Way
- Green Up Vermont
- Groton Community Club
- Hardwick Trails
- Home Share Now
- Jaquith Public Library
- Keeping Track
- Kellogg-Hubbard Library
- Lotus Lake Discovery Center
- Mad River Valley Rotary Club
- Montpelier High School Project Graduation
- Montpelier Senior Activity Center
- North Branch Nature Center

- People's Health and Wellness
- Plainfield Historical Society
- Prevent Child Abuse Vermont
- Rural Vermont
- Spaulding High School Project Graduation
- Tender Loving Respite House
- The Governor's Institutes of Vermont
- Turning Point Center of Central Vermont
- Vermont Center for Independent Living
- Vermont Community Fund
- Vermont Council on Rural Development
- Vermont Farm Bureau
- Vermont Foodbank
- Vermont Horse-Assisted Therapy
- Vermont Land Trust
- Washington County Mental Health Services
- West Danville Community Club
- Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department
- Worcester Fourth of July Committee
- Youth Service Bureau

Members Write

Dear Washington Electric Co-op, Inc.,

I wanted to write and tell you what exceptional people you have working for you. In a society these days where it seems sometimes like there is no kindness, no compassion, it is refreshing to know there are people like your employees. Last weekend when Mother Nature slammed us with yet another storm, it hit around my place bad. Like so many others, there was destruction everywhere. I live alone with my kids (Willow – my horse, Libby – my dog, Charlie, Buddy, Sammy – my cats) – all rescues, my family. Being without power from Friday to Monday as you can imagine was very difficult.

By the time Monday rolled around I was an emotional mess, to say the least. The drinking water was gone, my Buddy kitty is diabetic and I had to ship him and the insulin out of here by four-wheel drive, which added to the stress. The reason I am going into a little depth of my story is to affirm how I was.

When I saw through the maze of broken trees the yellow flashing light of the power company truck at the end of the road, hope welled up inside that it was maybe my turn. Next thing I saw was that pickup truck driving up to me, and it was your man Larry. He held my hand and assured me everything was going to be okay. This man gave me his lunch (my food was gone) and made sure I had fresh drinking water. I could not have asked for anyone to have been more considerate. Larry was wonderful and I want you to know this and be proud to have people like him in your company.

Others in your company deserve my recognition and thanks. Dawn, Elaine, and Beth to name a few. They have always been so kind when I have called.

I felt it was important for you to know this and know how much I sincerely appreciate the kindness that has been given to me, not only last weekend but in all the years I have been a customer. You have set the bar high and other companies can only hope to achieve this.

Thank you again, Larry, from my heart for everything you did for me; thank you to all the men in the crews.

May God always bless you all and keep you safe in the hard work you do.

Sincerely and best always,
Deidra J. Thurston



Right of Way Manager Larry Gilbert is recognized for his consideration in this letter. Many thanks to Deidra Thurston for writing in.

Got something to say?

Letter to the editor, comment, or a story tip? Drop us a line at currents@wec.coop or Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 8, East Montpelier, VT 05651, Attn: Co-op Currents.



Capital Credit Authorization to WEC Community Fund

Capital credit donations support worthwhile non-profit groups and projects in WEC's service territory and in central Vermont.

I wish to donate this year's and all future years refunds

I wish to donate only this year's refund (Year: _____)

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Capital credit and/or Account # _____ Telephone _____

Signature _____

Please return to WEC, P.O. Box 8, East Montpelier, VT 05651

Thank you for your considerate donation to the WEC Community Fund!

Roger Hill

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That means, he said, knowing all the factors that affect the picture: from local microclimates to the behavior of the jet stream.

The cold rain and snow

Global warming is changing the picture entirely. And much of the warming that affects our weather, Hill said, is not so much the atmosphere warming—but the oceans. 96% of warming is absorbed by the ocean, and just 4% enters the atmosphere, Hill explained, and melting sea ice causes the jet stream to slow down, which causes weather to get stuck in hazardous patterns. "There'll be some years we have a super cold winter and the rest of the world is on fire," he explained. "While we were below zero, they had 90 degrees in LA. Drier areas are getting drier; wetter areas are getting wetter."


But paradoxically, climate change also leads to wide swings in the weather. Hill points to January of this year, when the mercury dove to 40 below, then to 40 above, then back down and up again. To those who point to those 40 below days as evidence that global warming is nothing to worry about, Hill said, "40 below used to be more common. It's less common. When you do get it, it's a function of climate change, it's a function that that warming went into the ocean, which melted the ice, which displaced arctic air south into New England."

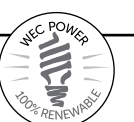
And this, in addition to high winds,

affects utilities. Snow used to be more powdery, but now it's wetter, Hill says, and wet snow, freezing rain, and ice storms cause outages. Damaging weather is expensive, Hill says, but we haven't figured out a way to attach financial value to good weather—to incentivize preserving it. "We're not putting a value on it. That's my biggest complaint," he explained. "To me, a smoggy day in LA is such a low value, and a sunny winter day in Vermont is such a high value."

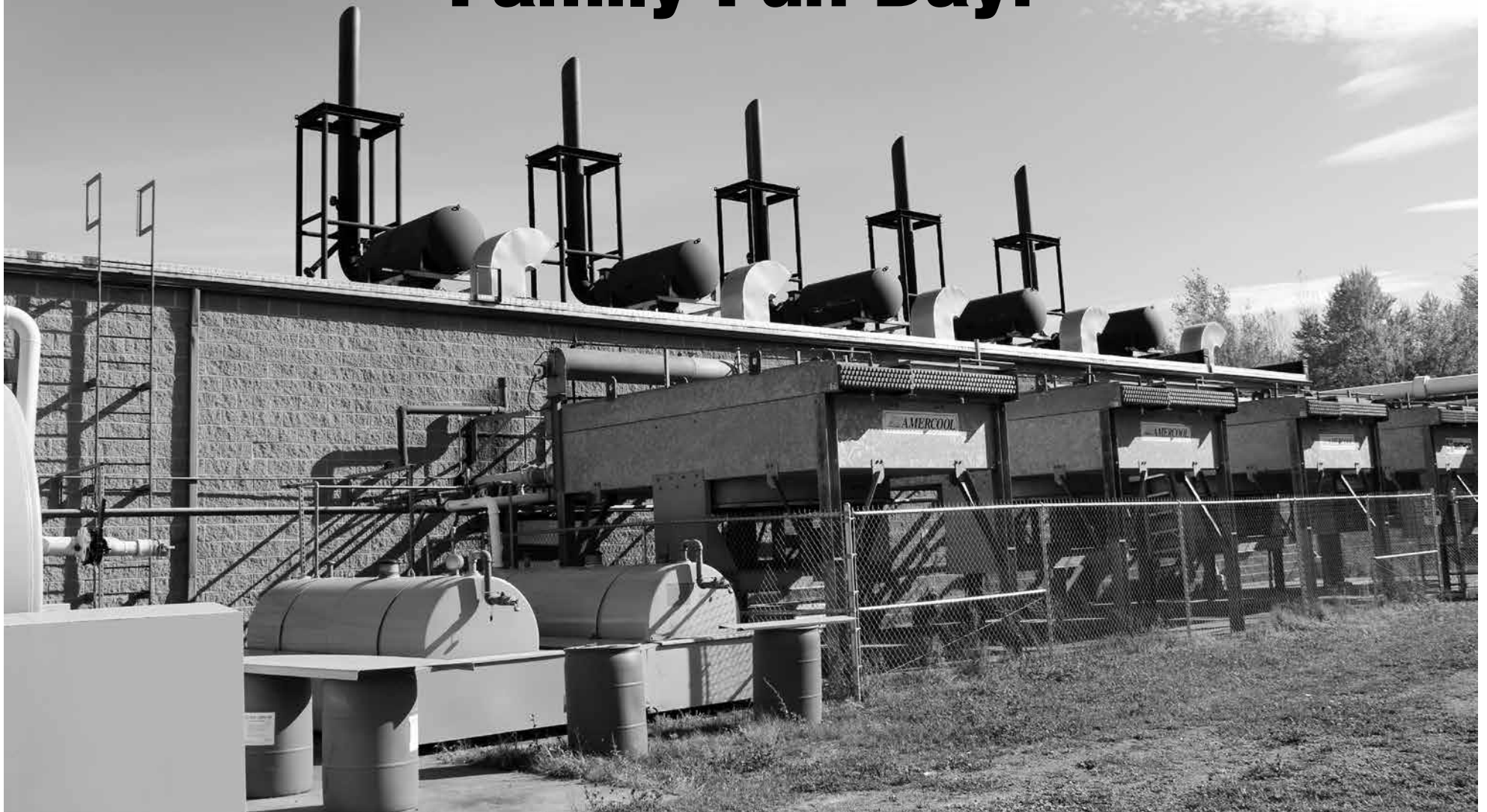
Shelter from the storm

That's part of why Hill is pleased to be a member of the Co-op. "We really have to turn the corner and get off fossil fuels. I'm really glad WEC has no fossil fuel footprint," he said, adding that WEC's transition to 100% renewable energy proves that other utilities can make the change without demanding people change their lifestyles.

We're on the cusp of energy change, he said, and "WEC is small enough that it's not unwieldy for it to do the creative thing." That means investing in Coventry and Sheffield Wind, offering incentives toward members' electric vehicle purchases, issuing a policy statement against climate change. "Who would have thought we have cars that run on electricity and drive themselves?" he asked. The immediacy of climate change's threat also makes now a time of innovation and excitement, he suggested. "It's the equivalent of getting off the horse and buggy and moving to the automobile. Now we're moving off the automobile." 



Coventry Open House and Family Fun Day!



Join WEC and Casella Waste Management on September 15 for an open house at Coventry Landfill!

Tour WEC's generating plant and learn how WEC uses renewable landfill gas to make electricity. Lunch and activities provided. Plus: great prizes!

Saturday, September 15 • 10:00 am - 2 pm • Rain or shine
21 Landfill Lane (off Airport Road), Coventry, VT 05825

RSVP to Dawn Johnson: dawn.johnson@wec.coop or 802-224-2332
See you there!

Tim Newcomb



Summer guests: Layout guru and WEC member Tim Newcomb hosted a robin family on his house in Worcester this summer. He snapped a photo of these baby birds a day before fledging.

Manager's and President's Report

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and we're furthering a history that began in the 1930s to bring electricity to our communities and support the communities that make up our co-op family.

Patty: It's a great opportunity to bounce things off other co-ops. They're just like us: they're not for profit, they're figuring out how to meet members' needs in rural areas. That rural landscape is a fundamentally different thing. At the meeting we can ask each other, hey, what are you doing on this challenging issue? We can ask, what else could we be doing? We learn from others to make sure we are doing the best we can.

We're all focused on reliability. We've got most of our lines away from the roadside, and we've got significant right of way clearance areas. How best do we manage that? That's the benefit

of talking with other co-ops. We had a linemen panel, which was great. When we learn about what other co-ops are doing we're better able to meet best practices.

Barry: The meeting also brings in speakers from the National Rural Electric Co-op Association (NRECA) network so we can learn what other electric co-ops in the country are doing. It's important for all of us to remember there are close to 1,000 electric co-ops in very rural areas that have a long history of bringing electric service to the farms, homes, and small businesses of our members on the back roads, when investor-owned utilities refused to because there just was not enough profit for them to make.

For our members, it's about fulfilling a very basic need. Electricity is something we take for granted, but without these lines going to our households, we'd still be in the dark. 