

OPALCO Fant questions

OPALCO

1. What is your vision for the future of energy for San Juan County as a whole?

A: San Juan county should be a showcase of how the local electric utility can energize the community to embrace and make individual investments of renewable generation and storage; it will take more than OPALCO leading and investing, it will take the respective governments and local community to participate. Since my background is business and building partnerships, by establishing a broad set of alignments I believe a goal of 50% locally sourced generation and storage is achievable and economically viable for San Juan Islands in the next 10 years.

2. What is your understanding of OPALCO's plan for its future of energy supply?

A: OPALCO's relationship with BPA is the primary source of energy and should be for the foreseeable future. OPALCO should be pushing BPA to expand sources of supply and better transmission grid inter-connect.

3. Given the intermittency of renewable resources, how important is hydropower in your vision for a future energy supply in the islands?

A: Sustainable hydropower both locally (tidal and outflow) is intriguing as it provides round the clock generation, however competing demands (fish, environmental, agriculture) means that it's got to be one of the generation sources. I'm very interested in what can be done locally using hydro as storage of renewable generation (pump up in the day, flow down at night).

4. What role should OPALCO play in the regional power community?

A: OPALCO has already shown leadership in community engagement and sustainable programs. As noted, OPALCO is moving to be a showcase of utility/community joint participation and should then be very public and vocal on the success and challenges of this approach. OPALCO should aspire to be recognized on the national stage as a leader; this means not only expanding our existing partnerships but creating new engagements across the nation.

5. Where will you draw the line between local energy resilience and island aesthetics?

A: The hardest question in this list – while almost everybody in SJC wants sustainable energy sources, NIMBY will prevail as they don't want to see a turbine or solar panel farm in their view (who knows on a tidal generator). I believe that much of the sustainable generators need to be "invited in" by the local community as opposed to pushed in by OPALCO; for example, using rooftops for panels vs. solar panel farms might

be preferred in many locations (I acknowledge the complexity). The individual neighborhoods will be the guide on acceptable island aesthetics.

6. The County Comprehensive Plan cites “energy independence” as a goal. What is your understanding of this goal?

A: I’m sure that the county plan expects energy independence to be “cut the cord to the mainland” and while that is certainly exciting it’s not realistic. To me energy independence means that we give back to the national grid (via BPA) as much as we take. In the cold season, we pull from the grid, in the warm season we push back onto the grid for others to use. If the economics are right, SJC can be energy neutral.

7. How would you propose to keep member’s power bills affordable?

A: Affordability means that we keep OPALCO rates in line with similar communities for both business and residential. The economics of sustainable generation and storage means investment now for future returns. Much of the investment can be gained from grants/loans from Federal and State governments, but some has to be local and the members who can afford to invest in their own generation (that is part of the local grid) need to be encouraged. However, the overall impact of driving to more sustainable generation and storage has to fit within the affordability metrics for similar communities.

8. What role should OPALCO play in the overall sustainability of our island communities?

A: Clean, reliable, economically viable electricity should be a draw for new island residents and the tourists that are the economy backbone. OPALCO is a demonstrator of what the future looks like as we to move to a “mostly electric” for transportation and heating/cooling. First and foremost, OPALCO needs to provide reliable power for all, that’s job one - then using prototypes and working models with partners get the community excited to pull the technologies into the islands and onto the local grid.

9. How aggressive should OPALCO be in pursuing new technologies and energy solutions?

A: We seem to be entering a period when the federal government is going to invest in infrastructure; OPALCO should be at the front of the line to get new technologies and improvements to the local grid (that makes sense for SJC) tested and implemented here. A showcase and a very public explanation of what works and what does not. This can be a business division of OPALCO (OPALCO ventures?) that helps keep member rates affordable.

ROCK ISLAND

1. How important is broadband connectivity to economic development and quality of life in SJC?

A: As a business owner, I see the massive change the fiber backbone has brought to the county; it's vital we keep expanding the backbone to keep jobs expanding in SJC. Service levels need to be as good as the big cities (they are today, so just keep installing). The big challenge will be redundancy, need at least 2 more connections to the world so that a backhoe in Anacortes does not bring SJC to a halt.

2. What is your vision for providing communication technology throughout SJ County?

A: Rock Island should continue the installation of the fiber backbone to all locations where OPALCO provides power at the street, leveraging the deep relationship. I would expand the vision to more wireless (beyond the existing LTE) as the final 100 yds is the most cost prohibitive for the subscriber. Blanket the county with wireless (perhaps metro WiFi) to remove the barriers to connectivity for residents and visitors.

3. What value do you add to assist Rock Island in realizing that vision?

A: Thirty years in the internet business (including a pioneer in the nation-wide TCP/IP network while at the phone company in the 90's) gives me an appreciation for the technology and complexity of the Rock Island work. However, more recent work is about the economics of broadband and building partnerships that deliver value. My most recent experience at telecom and cloud service companies will likely be my most valuable contribution. How to make it work better, faster and at economic scale.