

**OPALCO:**

1. OPALCO’s mission is to provide safe, reliable, sustainable and cost-effective essential utility services with a commitment to the utilization of renewable resources and carbon reduction. How does this mission align with your vision for the cooperative and community?

Response: This mission statement is excellent and I agree with this vision. However, the key word in this statement is “essential”. It needs to be recognized that electricity, like water and land is not an infinite resource and must be conserved with the same care. It is not reasonable, for example, to create a water supply where water is scarce by using energy hungry desalination, except in situations where an existing supply is no longer usable. I think that any development in the islands needs to consider the energy as well as water and land use. I think that OPALCO must be consulted for any new RFD in the county. For example, an energy hungry proposal for a new floating sauna business was recently supported by the Friday Harbor Port Commission. I do not think that the membership should have to install more solar so that tourists can enjoy saunas in the summer. OPALCO should place a priority on communicating with town and county governance to prevent non-essential burdens on the energy supply without mitigation.

2. The region is in a period of major energy transformation away from carbon-emitting sources.
  - a. Where will OPALCO get the capital to invest in required system upgrades and local renewable generators to keep the islands supplied with reliable power during the transition?

Response: This is very similar to question 5. System upgrades should be paid by rate payers. Local renewable generators would be either community solar, funded by member investors, or individual solar projects funded by members, with rebates from grants.

- b. How should OPALCO maintain affordability for all members while complying with legislation for decarbonization?

Response: In order for OPALCO to maintain affordability for decarbonization, OPALCO must recognize that not all electrification transitions are a benefit to the community. For example, OPALCO should not be offering a rebate for installing home electric car chargers, when large vehicles, such as the cyber truck do not represent a step toward sustainability. A Cybertruck, for example, uses as much electricity for 100 miles as a typical household uses in 3 days. OPALCO would be better served to install public paying chargers at their facilities or increase the rebates on solar. In order to maintain affordability, conservation must be a priority.

3. Solar power requires a lot of sunny land for solar arrays. Existing county land use codes favor preserving local rural character over solar generators on open land. How do you think about these potentially conflicting approaches to land use? How can OPALCO work with San Juan County to ensure permitting certainty for these projects?

Response: It seems to me that this question is not posed correctly. The question should really be, how can OPALCO work to ensure that solar arrays are sited to preserve the local rural character. How can OPALCO work with San Juan County to determine how OPALCO should fulfill permitting requirements?

4. How do you engage stakeholders who show up frustrated with the cooperative? What do you do when their claims conflict with engineering/economic reality?

Response: This is not a question that can be answered in general. The response, would of course be first to listen, but how to engage after listening would depend very much on the specific situation.

5. It's estimated that OPALCO's load growth will double between now and 2050 due to the electrification of heating and transportation. Questions:

- a. Where should this new energy come from?

Response: Solar energy is really the only option. Wind energy would be even more

objectional given the noise and danger to birds. Tidal energy is not a mature industry enough for a small cooperative to consider.

- b. Where should new renewable projects be located?

Response: Each island should have a renewable project in order to share in the burden. Each island should also have a campaign to reduce use.

- c. Will local resistance limit siting and permitting?

Response: Of course there will be local resistance. Large solar arrays are not particularly attractive. Every attempt should be made to consult with the membership prior to starting projects. Any siting would need to include an attractive native planting screen that would have to be actively maintained by OPALCO.

- d. Who pays for it?

Response: I like the community solar approach, in which members can sign up to invest in a project.

- 6. OPALCO's current rate structure collects almost half of the revenue to cover fixed costs through the kWh (energy use) charge. As we become more energy efficient and embrace more renewable energy, OPALCO won't collect enough kWh revenue to cover fixed costs. How would you address this rate structure dilemma?

Response: This seems like another question designed to inform the membership, rather than a real question for the candidates. Clearly, the only way to collect enough revenue would be to raise rates to cover the fixed costs. I would hope, however, that the rates could be adjusted so that rate payers who have reduced their overall energy use would get a preferred rate. I understand that at present there are legal barriers to this approach, but I would work toward either modifying these legal barriers or trying to find a work around.

7. What are three things you don't know about running a utility that you plan to learn first?

Response: I would like to learn more about the legal constraints on the utility especially in terms or rate structure. I would like to see the collected data on energy use throughout the islands to identify groups of low, medium and high energy users, as well as how these groups change depending on the season. I would like to see the hiring and retention data of staff. With regard to OPALCO specifically, I would like to visit the Decatur Island solar array in person and see the maps indicating wetlands and conservation easements.

8. The high cost of living in the islands (especially housing) and a very competitive labor pool in the industry has made it challenging to hire and retain staff. What ideas can you offer for hiring and retention of qualified employees?

Response: I would find it helpful to address the challenges of staffing to hear from current employees why they have chosen to work and live on the island. I would also like to read the exit interviews of staff that have left the island. It is assumed that it is the high cost of living that causes hiring issues, but might also be the high number of older residents resulting in a relatively small younger community, or the relative isolation caused by living on an the island, or another factor.

9. A severe winter event causes regional scarcity and wholesale price spikes which will be showing up on member bills. What questions do you ask management as the problem unfolds? What do you communicate to members?

Response: The first question must be how can we reduce use. It would be great to have an alert system in place so that members can be alerted potential price spikes and take individual action to reduce energy use during that period.

10. Member engagement is key to a successful cooperative. How would you encourage greater participation from members?

Response: At present, the memberships seems to be highly engaged because of the proposed solar arrays. This engagement can be encouraged by listening and responding to the specific concerns raised and trying to reach a middle ground. I would hope also that because of concern about large solar arrays, the membership could

also get involved in promoting alternative solar siting by asking, for example, that the home trust include solar energy in any planned development, that the council be encouraged to promote solar energy by requiring solar for new development at any site that has effective sun exposure and that the town and school district be encouraged by members to set an example by siting solar arrays on their existing buildings. Similarly, members should ask that any permits for installation of high energy projects, such as desalination plants, saunas or similar, be linked to a plan for siting solar arrays to power them.

## **ROCK ISLAND:**

11. How important is access to communication technology throughout San Juan County?

Response:

Given that Rock Island already provides internet to nearly 60% of the OPALCO membership, and that there are other options for communication technology, I think that helping Rock Island provide further internet connections should be a low priority for OPALCO.

12. Rock Island provides internet connections to nearly 60% of the OPALCO membership. How should Rock Island and OPALCO prioritize reaching the balance of the membership with access to broadband?

Response: I think OPALCO should prioritize its main mission of providing reliable and reasonable electricity to its members. When OPALCO is undergrounding any electrical lines, it makes sense to coordinate with Rock Island so that fiber can be installed at the same time.

13. Who should pay for the cost of internet connections?

Response: The residents who use the internet connections should pay the cost.

14. What would you bring to the Co-op to help Rock Island realize its full vision?

Response: I am more focused on making sure the members have sufficient electricity, while at the same time promoting conservation.

I would therefore work at identifying what improvements would benefit efficient energy distribution and safety.