



La Plata Electric Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

July 23, 2024

NEWS

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Candidates qualified for LPEA’s 2024 director elections

DURANGO, Colo. – La Plata Electric Association’s (LPEA) independent election supervisory committee (ESC) has qualified candidates for the cooperative’s 2024 Board of Directors election. LPEA has four director districts, established geographically. Each year, LPEA’s membership elects four representatives to the LPEA Board of Directors, one from each district.

“LPEA is a cooperative, which means we are owned by our members,” said Graham Smith, LPEA Interim CEO. “I encourage members to learn about the candidates and vote to make sure their voice is heard in the LPEA boardroom.”

Qualified candidates for the 2024 director elections are as follows:

- **District 1, Archuleta County:** Dusty Mars is running against incumbent Kirsten Skeehan.
- **District 2, South and West La Plata County:** Incumbent Kohler McInnis is running unopposed. Pending formal approval by the LPEA board, McInnis will be declared elected.
- **District 3, City of Durango:** Incumbent Ted Compton is running unopposed. Pending formal approval by the LPEA board, Compton will be declared elected.
- **District 4, North and East La Plata County:** Incumbent Tim Wheeler is running against candidate John Purser.

Director candidate statements (as submitted by candidates):

Dusty Mars (District 1 Archuleta County)

“I’m uniquely qualified to serve as a board member of LPEA. Having extended family that are current members, and roots here that run back to the 1800’s, what transpires to keep affordable and dependable energy delivered in the cleanest manner possible is of great importance. My education in engineering and application of this knowledge to provide energy in the San Juan Basin makes me well suited to understand the dynamics in continuing this effort through LPEA.

I'm a successful business owner and understand the dynamics of running an organization. A vote for me is a vote for common sense and innovative solutions to supplying our community's energy needs for today and the future."

Kirsten Skeeahan (District 1 Archuleta County)

"These are rapidly evolving times at LPEA as we diversify our supply sources - and that's why Kirsten's expertise and experience make her an ideal board member for you. Her focus continues to be: RELIABLE, SECURE, AFFORDABLE electricity. During her 26 years in Pagosa Kirsten's community service has been highlighted through her involvement with LPEA and the Archuleta County Housing Authority. As co-owner of Pagosa Baking Company she provided employment, growth opportunities and contributions for hundreds of folks and countless community projects. Kirsten is a small business owner with a technical background: BS from the U.S. Naval Academy; Naval Intelligence; information systems and worldwide secure communications; MBA; computer operations and project management. The age of relying on single electricity sources is past and LPEA is embracing the challenge. Growing pressure on the grid by increased demands and aging infrastructure requires complex solutions. The experienced leadership Kirsten brings is more important than ever as we build these solutions together. Kirsten is:

- Always aware of how your livelihood and daily life depend on electricity in the right place at the right time.
- A curious and inquisitive decision maker. She learns from her own and others' successes and failures.
- A proud nerd, using research and analysis to inform decisions in business and at LPEA.

As Electric Coop members we are responsible to each other. Kirsten will continue to work with you to ensure we have the RELIABLE, SECURE, AFFORDABLE energy we need now AND in the future. Please vote for her."

Kohler McInnis (District 2 South + West La Plata County)

"As the District 2 incumbent I stand strong for you, the members of La Plata Electric Association (LPEA), and look forward to collaborating with my colleagues to lead LPEA forward. As a Director on the LPEA Board my actions will continue to be focused on:

- Keeping your electric bill as low as possible. Lower rates provide you more freedom to live a quality life. Electricity is a necessity, not a luxury.
- Knowing your health, safety and security are dependent upon reliable electric power when you need it, 24/7. This includes everything you do: heating & cooling, communicating, food preparation, and more.
- Providing dependable and affordable power, which requires oversight of capital project budgets, power supply contracts, and operational needs.

- Using common sense to address the challenges and opportunities of the remarkable changes facing the electric power industry. This approach provides the ability to continue improving your local electric service.
- Expanding and improving current technologies which will lead to a cleaner environment, higher efficiency, and reduced costs.
- Staying engaged in research and strategy by working with the staff, directors, and members to make sustainable decisions about LPEA's future power supply.
- Working to keep LPEA financially strong and viable and returning your Capital Credits on a timely basis.

I would appreciate your vote and look forward to serving another term representing District 2 on the Board of Directors of La Plata Electric Association. Thank you for your support.”

Ted Compton (District 3 City of Durango)

“My first term as an LPEA Director has been eventful to say the least. I ran for the board to help make positive change and once the members gave me their vote of confidence by electing me, I wasted no time getting deeply involved. I served on the Finance and Audit Committee and as Chairperson of the Committee on Policies. I have a deep understanding of LPEA's finances and governing documents. I am currently the LPEA Board President and greatly enjoy and respect the responsibility of this executive leadership role.

As a fourth generation Durangoan I have a lot of local pride. One of my primary goals on the board was to find a way for LPEA to take local control of our energy future. In March of this year the board voted to exit its outdated and restrictive 50-year power supply contract. In my view, this is the most beneficial step LPEA has taken for its members in its long history. This newfound independence will allow more opportunities to partner with local organizations, create jobs, develop clean and affordable energy, improve reliability, and keep more money in our local and regional economy.

But this decision is only the first step. If LPEA is to successfully maximize this energy independence to provide the clean, reliable, and affordable energy that our members deserve, continued board guidance is critical. I hope that you will allow me to continue to provide that guidance by reelecting me to the LPEA Board.”

Tim Wheeler (District 4 North + East La Plata County)

“I am grateful to have served you and LPEA over the past six years. During this time, I've worked diligently for you as the Board Treasurer, Chairperson of the Finance & Audit Committee, and on the Board of FastTrack. I am motivated by members' desire to decide our own energy future, working conscientiously to provide affordable, local, clean energy while building the utility of the future. Nevertheless we've faced limitations in our progress from the restrictive long-term power contract with Tri-State (TSGT).

Despite these restrictions during my time at LPEA:

- We reduced our emissions by over 10%
- We cut wholesale rates by 4%
- We returned \$3-4 Million per year in capital credit refunds to you
- We kept controllable costs well below our peers
- We sold our subsidiary FastTrack Communications returning funds to our members
- The 1.7MW Sunnyside Community Solar Garden began operating, offering locally generated solar power with reduced electric bills for income-qualified members
- We greatly improved system reliability

With our recent vote to exit the restrictive power supply contract with TSGT on April 1, 2026, we can finally take control of our energy future by providing more local, clean, reliable, and affordable power. While LPEA has accomplished much during my tenure, more still needs to be done to meet our shared vision.

I am asking that you re-elect me so that I can apply the knowledge, experience, and wisdom I've gathered to make sure our transition into our energy future meets the promise it foretells.”

John Purser (District 4 North + East La Plata County)

“You should be concerned with your cooperative! The LPEA board has committed us to leave Tri-State, the non-profit cooperative that has a long history of reliably providing our electricity. Our board has not told us the cost of exiting our contract, regulatory filing indicates it's \$207 million. With approximately 36,000 members this comes down to \$5,750 of debt per member. This debt is not to provide electricity, this is to break our contract with the non-profit cooperative that has reliably provided our power! Our board has provided no firm plan for replacing this power

The board reasoning? To have "local control." For you and me "local control" means hitting the on switch and getting dependable power at a reasonable cost. For favored local businesses "local control" means reaching into the pockets of our 36000 members for money each month. Based on their actions "local control" for our board means picking favored members, favored businesses and giving them special concessions. Guess who pays for these favors?

I believe in serving the common good with common solutions for common problems. I will not segregate our membership into the favored and those who pay for the favors. I will advocate for transparency in our decision making, purchasing, and contracting policies. I will not be intimidated by the rude personal attacks from current board members. I will represent all members in a manner consistent with the LPEA mission of providing members with safe, reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost while being environmentally responsible.”

Ballots will be mailed to LPEA members in mid-August. To be counted, ballots must be received no later than 4 p.m. on September 17, 2024. Alternatively, members are invited to vote in person at the Annual Meeting. Detailed submission instructions will be included in the ballots.

Election results will be confirmed at LPEA's Annual Meeting, scheduled to take place on Wednesday, September 18 at LPEA's Durango office from 12:30-1:30pm. For the latest details on the Annual Meeting, visit LPEA's [website](#).

Photos of candidates available by request.

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