

# Seward Electric Utility Co-Op Proposal Focus Group Report

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Prepared for: The City of Seward, Alaska  
Research Conducted November, 2025

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# Executive Summary

## Research Context and Objectives

The City of Seward is seeking information related to the potential sale or establishment of a cooperative for its electrical utility. Following the narrow rejection of the sale of the Seward Electric System (SES) to Homer Electric Association (HEA) in May 2023, the City Administration recognized a disconnect between the technical necessities of utility management and public sentiment. The resident's resistance to divestiture, contrasted with a need for infrastructure modernization and rate stabilization, necessitate a strategic pivot. The City of Seward contracted with Hays Research Group to conduct deep-dive qualitative research to explore an alternative governance model: the formation of a locally owned Seward Electric Cooperative.

This report summarizes the findings from two extensive focus groups conducted with a cross-section of Seward residents (residents who live within the city limits). The primary objectives of this research were the following:

- 1. Baseline Knowledge Assessment:** To gauge the community's understanding of the current utility structure, the financial implications of the "status quo," and the technical challenges facing the grid.
- 2. Sentiment Analysis:** To deconstruct the values driving voter behavior, specifically the trade-offs residents are willing to make between "local control" (governance by neighbors) and "economic efficiency" (rates and reliability).
- 3. Concept Testing:** To evaluate the viability of the "Seward Electric Cooperative" concept as distinct from the historically unpopular "sale" to external entities like HEA or Chugach.
- 4. Strategic Communication:** To identify the specific information gaps, trusted messengers, and persuasive narratives required to build a consensus for a potential cooperative formation.

## Key Findings and Strategic Insights

### Reliability and Quality of Electrical Service

While residential users generally perceive Seward's Electric Utility's reliability as "improving" or "adequate" compared to the frequent outages of previous decades, some commercial and industrial stakeholders identified a critical vulnerability: **power quality**. Participants associated with major economic drivers, such as the Alaska SeaLife Center, articulated that "reliability" is no longer merely about duration (lights on/off) but about voltage stability and phase consistency. The current infrastructure, characterized by aging

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substations and reliance on diesel backup, is viewed as a limiter on economic growth. However, the general public remains largely unaware of these technical nuances, judging the utility primarily by the frequency of storm-related outages and the length of time between the power going out and the power coming back online.

### **Billing Frustrations**

A theme across both groups was a frustration with the billing structure, specifically the fixed "Customer Charge" and the Power Cost Equalization/Cost of Power Adjustment (COPA). There is a widespread misunderstanding of these line items. Participants frequently conflated pass-through fuel costs with "taxes" or "profit taking" by the City. This financial opacity creates a feeling of distrust; residents suspect that the utility acts as a "cash cow" for the City's General Fund, extracting value from ratepayers to subsidize other municipal services. This perception is a significant hurdle for any governance change that involves financial restructuring.

### **Trust in Operational Staff – Skepticism in Administration's Abilities**

Participants expressed high levels of confidence in the *operational* staff at the Seward Electric Utility—the linemen and the current contracted management team that were brought over from Matanuska Electric Association (MEA). These individuals are viewed as competent, transparent, and "on the side of the ratepayer." Conversely, the City Council is widely perceived as lacking the specific financial and technical acumen required to govern a \$50 million electrical utility. The "cooperative" model appeals strongly to residents precisely because it promises to transfer governance from a generalist political body to a specialist board of directors.

### **The "Co-op" as a Path to Enfranchisement**

The most compelling argument for the cooperative model identified in the sessions was **enfranchisement**. Approximately half of the SES service area population lives outside City limits, and thus has no vote in City Council elections, effectively suffering "taxation without representation" regarding their utility rates. The cooperative model, which would grant voting rights to every meter holder regardless of municipal boundaries, resonated deeply as a matter of fundamental fairness. This narrative successfully neutralized the fear of "losing local control," re-framing the co-op as an *expansion* of local control to the actual user base.

## **Strategic Recommendations Overview**

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- 1. Decouple from the "Sale" Narrative:** The term "sale" is problematic, associated with the loss of the asset. The formation of a cooperative must be framed as "maturation" or "independence"—granting the utility the autonomy it needs to serve all ratepayers.
- 2. Financial Transparency Offensive:** The City must produce a "plain English" financial audit that explicitly explains the "Customer Charge" and the flow of funds between the utility and the General Fund. The fear that the City will "pocket" the utility's value must be addressed with a clear asset transfer plan.
- 3. Leverage Technical Leadership:** Based on the results of these focus groups, Brian Hickey and Taylor Crocker are the most trusted voices on utility matters. They should be the primary spokespersons for the technical and operational benefits of the co-op model, shielding the initiative from the political polarization associated with the City Council.
- 4. The "Cordova Model" Narrative:** The success of the Cordova Electric Cooperative in utilizing local hydro and stabilizing rates was a highly effective proof point. This analogy should be central to the campaign, painting a vision of energy independence and renewable investment. It should be noted that there are a small but significant subset of ratepayers in Seward who do not believe hydro power is viable or practical, so this angle should be approached carefully and with clear justification.

## Introduction and Situational Analysis

### The Historical Context of Utility Reform in Seward

The Seward Electric System (SES) is an anomaly in the Alaskan Railbelt—a municipally owned utility operating in a landscape dominated by large cooperatives like Chugach Electric Association (CEA) and Homer Electric Association (HEA).

For decades, the City has grappled with the challenges of maintaining a small, isolated utility. The infrastructure, much of it dating back to the mid-20th century, requires significant capital investment to meet modern standards. In recent years, the City attempted to solve these capital constraints by proposing a sale of the utility.

- **The 2000 Vote:** A proposal to sell the utility failed by 61 votes.
- **The 2023 Proposal:** In May 2023, a special election was held to authorize the sale of SES to HEA for approximately \$25 million plus future payments. Despite a campaign emphasizing rate stability and access to HEA's larger resource pool, the measure failed by a razor-thin margin of seven votes.
- **The Aftermath:** Following the failed sale, the City Council was forced to implement significant rate increases—raising the base rate by six cents per kilowatt-hour in late 2023—to fund deferred maintenance and operational deficits.

This history has created a climate of "reform fatigue" among residents. They have been asked repeatedly to vote on the utility's future, and they have repeatedly chosen the status quo, largely out of a fear of the unknown. The current initiative to explore a *Seward-based cooperative* is an attempt to thread the needle: addressing the structural weaknesses of municipal ownership without triggering the fear of foreign (i.e., non-Seward) control.

### The Technical Reality

The focus groups were conducted against a backdrop of significant technical activity. The City has secured a transformative \$45.7 million EPA grant to install shore power for cruise ships, a project that will fundamentally alter the load profile and revenue potential of the utility. Simultaneously, the City has entered into a management agreement with MEA, bringing in external expertise to stabilize operations. These developments were partially known to participants, serving as both sources of hope (new revenue) and confusion (who is actually running the grid?).

## Research Methodology

Hays Research Group employed a qualitative research approach, designed to uncover not just *what* residents think, but *how* they construct their opinions.

- **Stimulus:** A semi-structured discussion guide was used to lead participants through a hierarchy of topics: General Perceptions -> Governance Values -> The Cooperative Concept -> Communication Preferences.
- **Sample:** Two groups of 8-10 participants were recruited from residents within the city limits of Seward.
  - **Group 1** skewed toward long-term residents, civic leaders, and professionals (e.g., SeaLife Center executives, educators).
  - **Group 2** skewed toward pragmatic, trade-focused residents and retirees, representing the "average ratepayer."
- **Analysis:** Transcripts were coded for thematic density, sentiment polarity, and semantic associations (e.g., what words are associated with "City Council" vs. "Lineman").

## General Perceptions of the Electric Utility

This section analyzes resident responses to the baseline questions regarding reliability, rates, and service quality. It reveals a community that is generally forgiving of environmental challenges but deeply critical of administrative opacity.

### Reliability: The “Alaskan Standard” vs. The “Industrial Standard”

When asked to describe the current electric service, participants operated with two distinct definitions of reliability.

#### The Residential View: "It Happens, It's Alaska"

For the average homeowner, reliability is measured by the frequency of sustained blackouts. By this metric, the utility scores surprisingly well. Long-term residents provided a longitudinal perspective that is critical for context.

- **Historical Improvement:** Multiple participants noted a drastic improvement over the last decade. One 30-year resident in Group 1 remarked, "We used to have quite a few... about 3 years ago, they spent a whole bunch of money and did a lot of line clearing. And since that happened... the power outages have been gone".
- **Forgiveness for Nature:** Outages caused by severe weather (windstorms, avalanches) or wildlife (eagles hitting transformers) are generally forgiven. As one participant in Group 2 noted, "Lately, it's sucked... but mostly natural. I mean, there were, you know, a windstorm... and then an eagle flew into the transformer". This indicates that the utility has a reservoir of goodwill regarding "Acts of God."

#### The Commercial View: The "Dirty Power" Problem

A more critical insight emerged from participants connected to Seward's industrial base. One participant, a former executive at the Alaska SeaLife Center (the utility's largest customer), highlighted that reliability is insufficient for sensitive equipment.

- **Voltage Instability:** "It's not just the on and off. It's that quality of the power... the power quality that we have had... destroys equipment at places like the Sea Life Center with pumps... freezers would die".
- **The Economic Consequence:** This feedback suggests that while the lights stay on for residents, the grid's technical instability acts as a hidden tax on local businesses, forcing them to invest in expensive power conditioning and backup generation. This is a crucial argument for the "modernization" narrative that a cooperative could champion.

## Rates and Affordability: The “Customer Charge” Agitation

The discussion on rates revealed that the *structure* of the bill is more contentious than the *total amount*. While residents acknowledged that energy in Alaska is expensive, they view the specific line items on their bill as arbitrary and punitive.

### The "Customer Charge" as a Lightning Rod

The fixed monthly fee (often referred to as the "Customer Charge") is a major source of irritation. In Seward, this charge is perceived as exceptionally high compared to other utilities.

- **Regressive Impact:** "My biggest complaint here is they charge us to be their customer... ours is \$21 plus 7% tax". Participants compared this unfavorably to Chugach Electric in Anchorage, noting the disparity.
- **The "Tax" Perception:** Because the utility is City-owned, these fees are often conflated with taxation. Participants expressed a belief that the City uses these high fixed fees to pad the General Fund, rather than for grid maintenance. This suspicion undermines trust in any rate increase proposed by the City Council.

### The "COPA" Confusion

There is significant confusion regarding the Cost of Power Adjustment (COPA). Several participants struggled to name it ("Is it Coca? Cola?"), and many view it as a hidden profit center rather than a pass-through fuel cost.

- **Lack of Education:** "That code is fake to me... strictly limits price gouging". The utility has failed to effectively communicate that this charge is driven by Chugach Electric's wholesale rates and natural gas prices, not by local decision-making.

## Customer Service: The Human Element

A distinct separation exists in the minds of residents between the "Utility" (the administration/billing) and the "Linemen" (the workers).

- **Heroism in the Field:** The line crews are universally respected. "It's local people who know how important it is... and they're still out there. And as bad as the weather can be".
- **Billing Transparency:** Group 2 participants praised the recent administrative shift that separated the electric bill from the water/sewer bill. "I support what the electric department did in our bill... everybody gets the bill. Everybody's getting the information". This suggests that small moves toward administrative clarity can yield significant dividends in public trust.

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## The Governance Dilemma: Local Control vs. Expertise

This section analyzes the deep-seated tension between the desire for local autonomy and the recognition of the City Council's limitations. This dynamic is the pivot point for the co-op decision.

### The "City Limits" Disenfranchisement

A structural flaw in the current municipal model is the disenfranchisement of the "Greater Seward" population. A significant portion of the ratepayer base lives in Bear Creek, Lowell Point, and along the highway—areas outside the City limits.

- **Taxation Without Representation:** Participants in both groups identified this as a fundamental injustice. "The big gaping hole... is only people that vote for this that are in the city limits have a say... people outside the city limits, theoretically don't have any say".
- **The Annexation Fear:** The solution of annexing these areas into the City was dismissed as politically impossible ("Oh, they would be really pissed").
- **The Co-op Solution:** Consequently, the cooperative model is viewed not just as a business decision, but as a *democratic correction*. By basing voting rights on *meter ownership* rather than *residency*, a co-op solves the representation gap without the toxicity of annexation. "I think the biggest challenge is giving the greater Seward area a voice... we're kind of divided where only some of us get to choose".

### The Competence Gap: Council vs. Board

Perhaps the most damning finding for the status quo is the widespread lack of confidence in the City Council's ability to manage a utility. This is not necessarily a personal attack on council members, but a structural critique of the municipal model.

- **Generalist vs. Specialist:** Participants argued that a City Council focused on parks, police, and zoning cannot adequately supervise a complex electrical grid. "I quite frankly have never trusted our city council to understand finance... I've watched them talk about budgets... city council is not, in general, have the skill to manage an electric utility".
- **The "Revolving Door":** The frequent turnover of Council members and City Managers was cited as a cause of strategic drift. "The city administration in the past... were so transient. People would quit... there was no continuity of local government".

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- **The Desire for Experts:** Residents expressed a strong preference for a specialized Board of Directors, comprised of individuals with technical or financial backgrounds. "I want them to really understand it well... I mean, there's the science expertise, like that's who I want to be in charge".

## The “Sale” Trauma and Asset Protection

The failed votes of 2000 and 2023 have left a scar. The concept of "selling" the utility is associated with a loss of identity and control.

- **The Fear of "Being Sold Out":** Residents fear that a sale to HEA or Chugach would make Seward a low-priority outpost. "When it hits the fan... Coming all the way from Homer... that was my big concern". "You also are at the mercy of another board that doesn't really care about what's happening here".
- **Asset Value:** Participants recognize the utility as a valuable asset that the community has paid for over generations. "It's our asset, and if they sell it, it's gone... The government... never saw a dollar of yours they couldn't spend better".

**Table 1: Sentiment Polarity regarding Governance Options**

Governance Option	Sentiment	Primary Driver	Primary Deterrent
Status Quo (City Ownership)	Negative	Inertia; Fear of change.	Lack of representation for out-of-city; Council "incompetence"; Revenue raiding.
Sale to Third Party (HEA/CEA)	Very Negative	Potential for lower rates (short term).	Loss of local control; Loss of asset; Fear of being a "priority last" service area.
Formation of Seward Co-op	Positive	<b>Enfranchisement of all ratepayers; Specialist Board; Retention of Asset.</b>	Fear of startup costs; Uncertainty about debt load; "Brain drain" (finding board members).

## The Cooperative Solution: Concept Testing and Viability

This section synthesizes the reaction to the specific proposal of forming a Seward Electric Cooperative. This concept was the clear winner in terms of public reception, though significant informational hurdles remain.

### The “Cordova Model” as a Proof Point

The moderator introduced the example of the Cordova Electric Cooperative, which successfully transitioned to a local co-op model and invested heavily in local hydropower to stabilize rates. This analogy resonated powerfully with participants.

- **Aspiration for Independence:** Seward residents see themselves as similar to Cordova—a coastal, independent community. The idea that Cordova has achieved "energy independence" via hydro is a source of envy and inspiration. "I think Cordova's half our population and they have two [hydro projects]... I'd like to see Seward getting there someday".
- **The Economic Logic:** The narrative that a co-op keeps the "profit" in the community to reinvest in infrastructure (rather than sending it to Anchorage or Homer) is persuasive. It aligns with the "shop local" ethos prevalent in Seward.

### The Bridge to Credibility: The MEA Management Contract

A critical finding is the role of the current management agreement with MEA. The participants in Group 2, in particular, were highly complimentary of the "new guys"—referring to Brian Hickey and Taylor Crocker.

- **The Best of Both Worlds:** This arrangement is seen as a "soft co-op"—bringing in professional utility expertise while retaining City ownership. "These guys have been here for 2 years and they've made a lot... more headway than anybody has done in decades".
- **Recruitment Reality:** Participants acknowledged that Seward cannot afford to pay the salaries required to attract top talent directly. The management contract (and potentially a future co-op structure) is seen as the only way to secure high-level talent. "Why hasn't the city got him to work for us?... The salary and benefits are pretty rough... It's hard to hire anybody right now".

### Obstacles to Support

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Despite the enthusiasm, three specific fears emerged that could derail a co-op vote if not addressed:

- **The "Debt Transfer" Fear:** Participants struggled to understand how a co-op would "buy" the utility from the City. They fear the co-op will start with massive debt, forcing immediate rate hikes. "So now we're giving the city council \$50 million?... And how are they going to finance that \$50 million asset?".
- **The "Brain Drain" Fear:** In a small town, the same few people volunteer for every board. There is skepticism that Seward has enough *new* qualified individuals to staff a competent Co-op Board. "It's a revolving door of people, the same 7 or 8 people... I don't see people wanting to take on running a utility".
- **City Revenue Collapse:** Astute participants realized that the City relies on utility transfers to balance the municipal budget. They fear that if the utility separates, the City will raise property or sales taxes to fill the hole. "The city... is so used to millions of dollars every year funneling from the electric utility... that's what makes the city reluctant".

## Values and Priorities: The Renewable Energy Mandate

Contrary to the stereotype of conservative Alaskan resource extraction communities, the Seward electorate displayed a robust appetite for renewable energy, provided it fits the local "aesthetic" and "logic."

### Hydro: The Holy Grail

Hydropower is viewed by many as the only "sensible" renewable for Seward. Residents are baffled that a city surrounded by mountains and waterfalls relies on diesel and natural gas. There are a minority of rate payers, however, who are adamantly opposed to any renewable energy proposals, seeing them as impractical, impossible, or not feasible.

- **The Grant Lake/Snow River Hope:** Participants repeatedly mentioned stalled hydro projects. They believe a co-op, with a single-minded focus on energy, would finally execute these projects where the City has failed. "We have hydro all around us... It's strictly a matter of getting it online".
- **Cost Stability:** Renewables are viewed through an economic lens, not just an environmental one. Residents understand that hydro has high upfront costs but low operating costs, offering protection against volatile gas prices.

### Wind: The "Ugly" Alternative

Wind energy was met with skepticism and aesthetic repulsion.

- **Visual Pollution:** "I don't want those windmills... Destroy the skyline".
- **Reliability Concerns:** "Wind energy's proven to be not... reliable. You know, they've got those big windmills... it produces maybe 5% of their power".

### Tidal: The Missed Opportunity

Several participants expressed frustration that tidal energy was not part of the conversation, particularly given the new port expansion. "I've been talking about tidal energy for 25 years... I swear it's so insane to me". This suggests an appetite for innovation, provided it is tied to Seward's maritime identity.

## Communication and Engagement Strategy

To successfully move forward with a cooperative formation, the City must overhaul its communication strategy. The current environment is characterized by "Safeway Aisle" rumors and Facebook debates, rather than authoritative information.

### The Information Vacuum

Residents feel uninformed. They rely on the "Seward Electric" Facebook page (which is trusted) but lack a comprehensive understanding of the financials.

- **Social Media is King:** The "Seward Electric" Facebook page, specifically under the management of Taylor Crocker, has built significant trust through "visual transparency"—posting photos of trees on lines during outages. "Once they gave him control of the Facebook page... he'll post pictures of the trees... we get a lot of information".
- **The Bill Insert:** Surprisingly, the physical bill insert remains a potent channel. "Mailers do work here... If it says it's got the city logo on it, I flip it over". Most participants were familiar with recent engagement and updates from the utility in the most recent utility bill insert.

### The Need for "Plain English" Financials

The single biggest barrier to support is the lack of a clear financial comparison. Residents rejected "cents per kWh" messaging as confusing. They want "Total Bill Impact."

- **The Spreadsheet Demand:** "You need to put them side by side... compare the financials... what's going to happen to your power cost".
- **The "Buying a Car" Analogy:** Residents are wary of "teaser rates." "That's like buying a new car, no payments for one year. And then all of a sudden you're just hammered".

### Trusted Messengers

- **High Trust:** The "New Guys" (Brian Hickey/Taylor Crocker), Linemen, Independent Engineers.
- **Low Trust:** The City Council, The City Manager (viewed as political), The "Finance Department."

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## Strategic Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the focus group data and the historical context provided, Hays Research Group outlines the following strategic roadmap for the City of Seward.

### Phase 1: Re-Branding the Initiative (The “Independence” Narrative)

**Objective:** Decouple the Cooperative concept from the "Sale" narrative.

- **Recommendation:** Stop using the word "Sale" immediately. The formation of a cooperative should be branded as "**Energy Independence**" or "**Local Unification.**"
- **Key Message:** "We are not selling our utility to outsiders. We are maturing our utility into an independent, locally governed organization that gives a vote to every ratepayer, not just those inside city limits."
- **Tactic:** Launch a "Know Your Power" campaign that focuses solely on the benefits of local governance (Board of Directors) and enfranchisement (voting rights for Bear Creek/Lowell Point).

### Phase 2: The Transparency Offensive (Financial Education)

**Objective:** Demystify the "Customer Charge" and the "Debt Transfer."

- **Recommendation:** Publish a "**Seward Energy Audit**"—a plain-language document that explains exactly where every dollar of the \$21 Customer Charge goes. Show a pie chart: "This pays for poles. This pays for wires. This pays for the linemen."
- **Recommendation:** Address the "City Revenue" fear head-on. Explain the transition plan for the City's finances. If the Co-op pays the City a franchise fee or a payment in lieu of taxes (PILT), explain that clearly. "The City will not lose money; the money will just come via a transparent contract rather than a hidden transfer."

### Phase 3: Leveraging Operational Trust

**Objective:** Use trusted messengers to convey technical realities.

- **Recommendation:** Brian Hickey, Taylor Crocker, or other trusted sources should be the faces of the campaign, not the Mayor or City Council. They should host "Coffee & Kilowatts" town halls at neutral locations (e.g., the Library or AVTEC) to answer

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technical questions. Their framing should be: "As utility professionals, we believe a Co-op structure gives us the agility to serve you better."

- **Recommendation:** Utilize the "Seward Electric" Facebook page to showcase the technical limitations of the current grid (e.g., photos of the aging Spring Creek substation) to build the case for the *necessity* of capital investment, which a Co-op can finance more effectively.

## Phase 4: The Renewable Promise (The “Cordova” Vision)

**Objective:** Inspire voters with a vision of the future.

- **Recommendation:** Explicitly link the formation of the Co-op to the development of local hydro. Use the slogan: "**Local Power, Local Projects.**"
- **Recommendation:** Highlight the EPA Shore Power grant as a "revenue engine" that the Co-op will manage to subsidize residential rates. Frame the cruise ships as "anchor tenants" that help pay for the grid upgrades everyone needs.

## Phase 5: The “Side-by-Side” Assurance

**Objective:** Eliminate fear of the unknown.

- **Recommendation:** Produce the "Apples-to-Apples" comparison sheet requested by participants.
  - **Column A:** Status Quo (Projected 5-year rate increases to fund deferred maintenance).
  - **Column B:** Co-op Model (Projected rates with debt service, but stable long-term).
  - **Column C:** Sale to Third Party (Loss of control, uncertain rates).
- **Crucial Detail:** Show the impact on a *monthly bill* (e.g., "\$250 vs \$265"), not just kWh rates.

## Conclusion

The residents of Seward are not opposed to change; they are opposed to *loss*. They fear losing their asset, their control, and their financial security. The failure of previous "sale" votes was a rejection of loss.

The Cooperative model offers a unique opportunity to reframe the conversation around *gain*: gaining a vote for disenfranchised neighbors, gaining a specialized board of experts, and gaining the ability to invest in local renewable projects. The data shows that the community is ready for this conversation, provided it is led by trusted operational experts and supported by financial transparency. If the City can prove that a Co-op is not a "sale" but a "graduation" to a more mature, independent form of local ownership, the path to voter approval is viable.

## Appendix A: Data Tables

Table 1: Sentiment Analysis by Topic

Topic	Group 1 Sentiment	Group 2 Sentiment	Dominant Theme
<b>Current Reliability</b>	Improving, mostly adequate. Concerns about "power quality" for industry.	Mixed ("sucks" lately due to storms), but historical improvement noted.	<b>"It's better than it was, but not perfect."</b>
<b>Rates</b>	High anger regarding "Customer Charge" and taxes.	Resigned to high costs ("It's Alaska"), but fearful of spikes.	<b>"Structure is opaque/unfair."</b>
<b>City Management</b>	Low trust in financial acumen. Perception of "slush fund" usage.	Low trust in past admins; High trust in current MEA contractors.	<b>"Good people trapped in bad bureaucracy."</b>
<b>Co-op Concept</b>	Intellectual curiosity. Concerns about "brain drain" for board.	Cautiously positive. Seen as solution for "Greater Seward" voice.	<b>"Right model, but can we execute?"</b>
<b>Renewables</b>	Strong interest in Hydro. Dislike of Wind.	Strong interest in Hydro/Tidal.	<b>"Why aren't we doing what Cordova does?"</b>

Table 2: Participant Information Channels

Channel	Reach	Trust Level	Notes
<b>Facebook (Seward Electric Page)</b>	High	High	Photos of linemen/repairs build high credibility.
<b>Utility Bill Inserts</b>	Medium	High	"If it has the city logo, I flip it over."
<b>"Safeway Aisle" / Word of Mouth</b>	Very High	Low	Source of rumors and misinformation.
<b>City Council Meetings</b>	Low	Low/Mixed	Viewed as "political theater" by some.
<b>Newspaper (Seward Journal/Folly)</b>	Low	Medium	Readership appears fragmented.