

Greater Omaha Chamber 2026 OPPD Board of Directors Candidate Questionnaire

Instructions: Please answer each of the following questions. Please keep each response to 150 words or fewer. Responses will be shared with Chamber members as submitted.

Candidate Name: Carol Blood

OPPD Subdivision: Three

Occupation/Background (Limit to 200 words): I am a lifelong Nebraskan, raised on a farm in central Nebraska where I learned the values of hard work, accountability, and service. My husband, Joe, and I raised our three children in Sarpy County, which we have proudly called home since 1992.

As a business consultant since 2005, I have helped entrepreneurs, nonprofits, and organizations achieve their goals through business planning, feasibility assessments, grant writing, employee training, and strategic development. Prior to starting my business, I served as CEO of the La Vista Area Chamber of Commerce, where I championed economic growth and strengthened partnerships between businesses and government.

My commitment to public service led me to serve as the At-Large Representative on the Bellevue City Council from 2008 to 2016. There, I focused on responsible growth, infrastructure improvements, public safety, fiscal stewardship, and transparent government. Building on that record, I served in the Nebraska Legislature from 2016 to 2024, earning a reputation for bipartisan problem-solving, government accountability, and practical policymaking that delivered results for Nebraska families, businesses, Veterans, Military Families, and communities.

Throughout my career, I have also been involved in community service, including work with the Bellevue Public Safety Foundation, Sarpy County Museum, and Bellevue Farmers Market.

Questions

Each question includes a short background note in italics to help readers understand the issue.

1. Planning for Growth

Background: *OPPD is updating its long-range plan (the 2026 Integrated System Plan), which forecasts how much electricity the region will need in the years ahead. If that forecast is too low, new and expanding employers may not be able to get power when they are ready to open.*

Greater Omaha is competing with other regions for major employers, including advanced manufacturing and technology projects that need large amounts of power. How would you make sure OPPD plans for enough electricity to support that growth, and how would you manage the risk of building too much too soon?

As someone who has spent years conducting feasibility assessments and helping businesses plan for growth, I understand the importance of getting projections right. If we're too conservative, we risk losing jobs and economic opportunities. If we overbuild, ratepayers end up carrying the cost.

Nebraska's public power model is unique because our focus should always be on providing reliable, affordable service for our customers, not generating profits for shareholders. That's why I believe OPPD needs a balanced approach that keeps multiple tools in the toolbox. We should continue exploring renewable energy options, storage technologies, and other innovations, while recognizing that traditional generation sources still play an important role in maintaining reliability.

The key is making data-driven decisions, phasing investments when possible, and regularly reviewing demand projections. That approach allows us to support growth, remain competitive for new employers, and protect the interests of the ratepayers who own the system.

2. OPPD as an Economic Development Partner

***Background:** Site selectors often rule out communities that cannot promise reliable, affordable power on a fast timeline. A utility that works closely with economic developers can be a deciding factor in where companies invest.*

What should OPPD do to help Greater Omaha win new business investment and jobs? How would you work with the Chamber, local governments and site selectors while treating all customers fairly?

Having worked in economic development and conducted feasibility assessments for businesses, I understand that reliable, affordable power is often a deciding factor in where companies choose to invest. OPPD should be a strong partner to Chambers, local governments, and site selectors by maintaining open communication, planning ahead for growth, and ensuring infrastructure is ready when opportunities arise.

Because Nebraska is the nation's only state served entirely by public power, our first responsibility is to the ratepayer owners of OPPD, and the OPPD Board's responsibility is to ensure affordability, reliability and sound financial planning. OPPD can support economic development by making data-driven investments, coordinating with community partners, and maintaining a diverse and dependable energy portfolio. When we balance opportunity with accountability, we can attract new jobs and businesses while continuing to serve existing customers fairly and responsibly.

3. Serving Large New Customers

Background: *Data centers and large manufacturers bring significant investment, jobs and tax base, but they also need large amounts of power and new infrastructure.*

What principles would guide how OPPD serves very large new customers? How would you keep OPPD competitive in attracting these projects while making sure existing homes and businesses are not left paying costs that belong to someone else?

I support responsible economic growth because strong communities need good-paying jobs and a healthy tax base. Every project should be evaluated on its own merits. As someone with a background in business planning, I believe large customers should demonstrate a clear long-term benefit to the communities they serve and the public power system they rely on.

OPPD's first responsibility is to its ratepayer owners. Existing homes, farms, and businesses shouldn't subsidize infrastructure or power costs that are directly tied to a new customer. Those costs and risks should be transparent and appropriately allocated, with large load customers paying their fair share.

OPPD should remain competitive for economic growth by planning ahead, providing reliable service, and working collaboratively with economic development partners. My guiding principle is simple: support projects that strengthen Nebraska's economy while protecting our natural resources, maintaining reliability, and ensuring that existing customers' rates don't subsidize large load customers.

4. Building the Grid Ahead of Demand

Background: *Transmission lines and substations can take years to plan and build. Communities that wait until a project is fully committed can lose it to a competitor whose sites are already powered and ready.*

When should OPPD invest in transmission, substations and other grid infrastructure before a customer has signed on? How would you manage the financial risk of those investments?

Having worked in economic development, I know that communities prepared for growth are the ones most likely to attract jobs and investment. If we want to remain competitive, OPPD cannot always wait until an opportunity is at our doorstep before planning for it.

That said, because OPPD is owned by its ratepayers, investments must be guided by solid data, realistic growth projections, and clear economic benefits. I would support strategic investments in transmission, substations, and other infrastructure when there is strong evidence of demand and a reasonable expectation that they will benefit both future development and existing customers.

The key is balancing readiness with fiscal responsibility. We need to position our region to compete for opportunities while carefully managing risk through phased investments, regular

review of forecasts, and transparency with the ratepayer owners who ultimately fund and depend on the system.

5. An All-of-the-Above Energy Mix

Background: *OPPD produces power from a mix of sources, including natural gas, coal, wind, solar and purchased power. Relying too heavily on any single source can increase costs and reliability risks.*

Do you support an all-of-the-above approach to power generation? How would you balance natural gas, coal, wind, solar, battery storage, nuclear and other resources, and which factors (such as reliability, cost and speed to build) would carry the most weight in your decisions?

I support an all-of-the-above approach because no single resource is the answer to our energy future. As Nebraska grows, OPPD needs a diverse toolbox that balances reliability, affordability, and environmental responsibility.

As a public power utility, our responsibility is to make decisions based on what is best for our ratepayer owners. That means carefully evaluating costs, reliability, environmental impacts, and long-term sustainability before making major investments. I want OPPD to maintain a balanced portfolio that includes traditional generation, renewables, storage, and emerging technologies as they prove themselves. My priority will always be providing reliable, affordable power while protecting both the health of our communities and Nebraska's precious natural resources.

6. Keeping the Lights On

Background: *In February 2021, extreme cold across the region forced rolling power outages in OPPD's service area. Reliable power around the clock is essential for employers, hospitals and families.*

What should OPPD do to make sure the power stays on during extreme weather and periods of record demand? What role should always-available ("dispatchable") generation play in that plan?

The February 2021 outages reinforced a simple lesson: reliability must remain OPPD's top priority. Hospitals, businesses, first responders, and families depend on power being available when they need it most, regardless of weather conditions.

I believe OPPD needs a balanced energy portfolio that includes dispatchable resources capable of producing power on demand, along with renewables, storage, and emerging technologies. Every resource has strengths and limitations, which is why diversity matters. Putting too much reliance on any single source creates unnecessary risk.

As a public power utility, OPPD's responsibility is to its ratepayer owners. Decisions should be driven by reliability, affordability, system resilience, and long-term sustainability. We must continue investing in infrastructure, fuel security, grid modernization, and resource planning that prepares us for extreme weather and growing demand.

My goal is straightforward: ensure OPPD delivers reliable, affordable power while responsibly managing resources and protecting the long-term interests of the customer owners.

7. Nuclear and Emerging Technologies

Background: *Advanced nuclear, including small modular reactors, could provide around-the-clock power with no carbon emissions, but these technologies are still early in commercial development.*

Should OPPD pursue advanced nuclear and other emerging technologies as part of its long-term plan? What would you need to see on cost, timeline, safety and regulatory approval before supporting a major investment?

I believe OPPD should continue evaluating advanced nuclear and other emerging technologies as part of a long-term strategy, but we must do so with our eyes wide open. The utility industry has seen examples where new technologies promised more than they delivered.

As a public power utility, OPPD's first obligation is to its ratepayer owners. Before supporting a major investment, I would want clear evidence of safety, regulatory approval, realistic construction timelines, proven reliability, and a cost structure that protects customers from unnecessary risk.

We should explore technologies that provide reliable, around-the-clock power while reducing environmental impacts, but we should not bet the future on any one solution. My approach is the same one I used in business and public service: evaluate the data, understand the risks, learn from past experiences, and make decisions that balance affordability, reliability, environmental stewardship, and long-term value for Nebraska families and businesses.

8. North Omaha Station

Background: *OPPD's current policy allows North Omaha Station to keep operating as it does today. OPPD's long-range plan assumes the plant's three oldest units (Units 1, 2 and 3) will eventually retire and its two newer units (Units 4 and 5) will be converted from coal to natural gas.*

What conditions must be met before OPPD retires or converts any North Omaha Station units? Please address replacement power, transmission readiness, reliability, cost, environmental impacts and impacts on the surrounding community.

As a public power utility, OPPD has a responsibility to balance reliability, affordability, environmental stewardship, and the well-being of the communities it serves. Omaha residents – particularly those living in closest proximity to the power plant – deserve transparency and meaningful engagement when decisions affect their health, neighborhoods, and future.

Before retiring or converting any generating unit, I want to see reliable replacement power in place, necessary transmission upgrades completed, and a clear plan to maintain system reliability without shifting costs onto ratepayer owners. Environmental impacts must be carefully evaluated, and OPPD continues pursuing opportunities to reduce emissions while maintaining dependable service.

OPPD should communicate honestly about timelines, challenges, and costs. Public trust is built when commitments are paired with realistic plans and measurable progress. My focus would be on making decisions that protect reliability, improve community health, respect surrounding residents, safeguard Nebraska's resources, and provide long-term value for the ratepayer owners.

9. Balancing Environmental Goals with Reliability and Growth

Background: *OPPD has set a goal of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. At times, that goal may compete with keeping power reliable, rates affordable and capacity available for new growth.*

If meeting the 2050 goal on its current schedule would threaten reliability, raise rates or limit OPPD's ability to serve new customers, how would you set priorities? Would you support adjusting the goal's timeline or approach?

I support OPPD's goal of reducing emissions because protecting our environment and the health of our communities is important. As Nebraska's public power utility, OPPD's first responsibility is to provide reliable, affordable service to its ratepayer owners.

As a business consultant, I've always viewed strategic plans as living documents, not something put on a shelf and forgotten. The best plans are regularly reviewed, updated with new data, and adjusted as circumstances change. I believe OPPD's path to net-zero should be approached the same way.

If new information shows the current timeline could jeopardize reliability, significantly increase rates, or limit our ability to support responsible growth, I would support revisiting the approach while keeping the goal in sight. That's not abandoning a commitment, it's exercising good stewardship. My priority will always be making data-driven decisions that balance environmental progress, reliable service, economic growth, and affordability for the Ratepayer owners.

10. Rates and Affordability

Background: *Competitive electric rates are a key advantage for Nebraska employers and households. OPPD will need major investments in new generation and grid infrastructure to keep pace with growth.*

How would you keep OPPD's rates competitive while making the investments needed for growth? How should rate impacts factor into the timing and scope of major projects? Competitive rates are one of Nebraska's greatest advantages for both families and employers, and protecting that advantage should be a priority.

As a member of the OPPD Board, my role would be to be a voice for the ratepayer owners, not the voice of the boardroom. My top priorities are low electric bills and reliable service. Growth requires investment, but every project must be carefully evaluated for its cost, timing, risk, and long-term benefit. My experience conducting feasibility assessments has taught me that successful organizations don't simply ask whether a project can be done; they ask whether it should be done, when it should be done, and how it will impact stakeholders.

I support strategic investments that improve reliability, support economic growth, and prepare for future demand. Rate impacts should always be part of the discussion. OPPD must continue making data-driven decisions, phasing investments when appropriate, and ensuring ratepayer owners receive value for every dollar spent while maintaining reliable, affordable service.