



Your Vote Needed: Mount Vernon Group Elections in January

Members of the Mount Vernon Group (residents of Arlington, Alexandria, Falls Church, eastern Fairfax County and eastern Prince William County) are eligible to vote in the annual election to select members of the group's Executive Committee.

This year we have five candidates for five open positions. After reading the candidate statements below, please use our [online ballot](#) to cast your vote.

If you would like to receive a ballot by U.S. mail, contact Bruce Parker at 827 Fontaine St., Alexandria, VA 22302-3610, 703-549-5792, bruce@chesdata.com.

The deadline for voting is January 8, 2018.

[Jenny Abel](#) | [Ray Atkinson](#) | [Rick Keller](#) | [Pat Soriano](#) | [Rob Swennes](#)

Jenny Abel

I have served on the Mount Vernon ExCom since 2006. I serve as treasurer of the group and write a Meatless Monday column for the *Mount Vernon Sierran*. I have been active in the Group's Ready for 100 campaign in Arlington and helped to organize the pre-rally that we held last April before the People's Climate March. I have also organized several Meatless Monday cooking classes at the Arlington Central Library and hope to do more over the next year. Outside of the club I serve on Arlington's Solid Waste Committee, the R4 (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot) committee, and co-founded the Energy Masters program, an initiative in which teams of volunteers conduct energy and water saving retrofits in low-income apartments. If elected to another term I look forward to continuing to help with local efforts on the Ready for 100 campaign, transportation, waste reduction, and encouraging the adoption of plant-based diets. I will also continue to serve as the group's treasurer.

Ray Atkinson

I started serving as the Transportation Issues Chair for the Mount Vernon Group earlier this year when I learned there was a vacancy. Since I have a Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree with a Transportation Specialization from Portland State University and transportation planning experience, I've been helping the Mount Vernon Group advocate for smarter transportation planning in Northern Virginia. I'm running for the Executive Committee because I feel I can provide a fresh perspective as a millennial. Millennials are quickly transforming Northern Virginia, so I feel we need someone on the Executive Committee that knows how millennials think. Before moving to Arlington last year, I volunteered with the Sierra Club in Portland, OR and Charlotte, NC.

Rick Keller

I have been a Sierra Club member for over 30 years and active in the Mount Vernon Group since 2006. I currently serve as the Group Energy Chair and have been a volunteer for the Ready for 100 campaign (seeking a commitment for 100% renewable energy for electricity in Arlington by 2035) since its inception. I also serve on the Virginia Chapter's Legislative Committee. In becoming more involved in the local and state Sierra Club activities I found that I was provided with a place where my personal commitment to a safer, healthier future could take root in environmental activism. Working with school staff, for example, has provided the opportunity to not only support public education, but to also support the work done in environmental education, more energy efficient schools, and most recently, net zero and solar energy school initiatives.

There is a lot of work to do and I would like to express my appreciation to local Club members for their hours of work on climate change and other issues. I look forward to continuing to expand our cadre of local activists and move the needle forward to achieve our environmental goals.

Pat Soriano

I am proud to be associated with the Sierra Club as an activist, now more than ever. The mission of the Club remains vital since the last federal election, as every week yet another assault on the environment is in the news. I am running for re-election to continue doing my part to protect the environment as an activist, whether at the local level where we are urging community officials to commit to clean energy or at the state and federal level where we are combating new gas and oil pipelines or attacks on our federal lands. To a better future, Pat Soriano.

Rob Swennes

I am completing my eighth two-year term as a member of the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the Mount Vernon Group. Thanks are due to others in the Group's leadership who spend many hours each month ensuring that the Group functions well and tackles the key environmental issues in the region.

I serve as Secretary to the Group and also handle membership matters and new volunteers. I administer the Group's announcement listserv established so that the members of the Group can get more timely reminders of upcoming Club meetings, socials and action activities. (Have you subscribed to the listserv? Information on subscribing is on the Mount Vernon Group web site under the sublink Group Announcements.)

I am active in various civic matters in Arlington. I worked for many years with the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and the Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee. I have chaired the County's Transportation Committee and its Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee—a unique program to conserve and upgrade our traditional neighborhoods rather than let them deteriorate.

I've been actively engaged in trying to gain people in the country access to the Potomac River for non-motorized recreation (rowing and paddling). This can be done in an environmentally responsible way that will also give many more people a better understanding of how our river ecosystem functions and how it can be best protected.

But the bulk of my time over the past 7 years has been involvement in establishing and managing community-based farmers markets in the Northern Virginia area. I'm fully committed to the locavore movement and to our regional farmers and local food producers!

If reelected to the Executive Committee, I will continue to pursue these initiatives and others to improve the quality of life for all in Northern Virginia.

This content originally appeared in the December 2017 issue of the Mount Vernon Sierran, the Mount Vernon Group's quarterly newsletter. For more information about the Mount Vernon Group, please visit virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/.