

2023 Director Candidate Profiles



Gary C Elrick Jr **Flagler Candidate**

Hello!

My name is Gary Elrick. I reside in Flagler and I am married to Angie. We started our company, Green Horizons Turf & Tree Care, 36 years ago serving a big portion of Eastern Colorado and we continue in that enterprise today. We have two adult children. Our daughter, Jana, sells real estate locally and runs a farming operation north of Genoa with her husband, Chester Ewing. Our son, Bryant, is in orthopedic surgery residency at UC Medical in Denver, and his wife, Emily, is a business advisor for Denver Health Hospital. We were blessed with our first granddaughter, Essie, 10 months ago and now believe all the comments are true, "Grandkids are the best!"

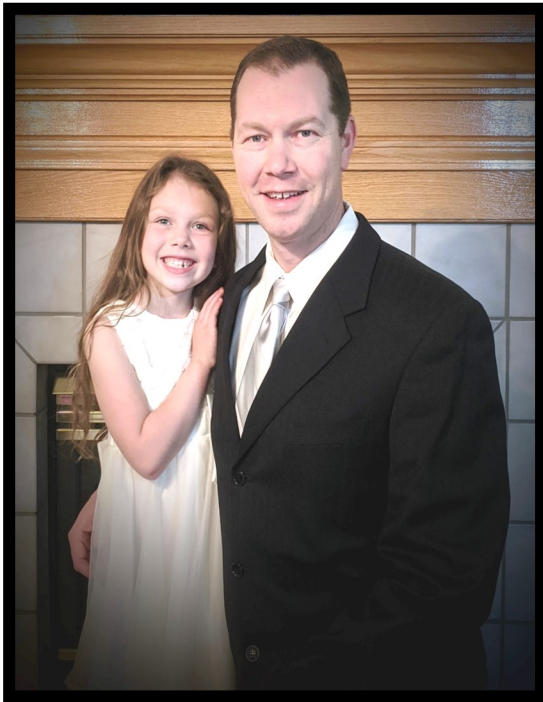
I believe community involvement is important. I have served on the Flagler Town Council, Volunteer Fire Department, Community Ambulance Service, FFA Vo-Ag Advisory Board, Alumni Association and as the First Congregational Church Trustee and Moderator. I am currently serving on the Arriba-Flagler School Board.

I am seeking a position on the Eastern Slope Rural Telephone Board because I believe in the business model Eastern Slope strives to maintain. Eastern Slope is progressive in an ever-changing technology industry while still maintaining a solid financial structure. I whole heartedly believe in this concept and would like to join the team at Eastern Slope. Keeping businesses strong is necessary, especially in our rural communities. I am hoping to be an asset to the Eastern Slope Rural Telephone Board by bringing my business, community and leadership experiences to the table.

Thank you for your consideration.

Gary

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Jon Smithburg Flagler Candidate

I am Jon Smithburg--a husband, father, son, and brother; a farmer with 20 years of experience in technology, currently serving as Director of Cybersecurity for High Plains Bank and Technology Director for Arriba-Flagler Schools. My background and experience in technology would be unique to the board of directors. These days, every business relies on technology daily; most could not function without it. Eastern Slope Rural Telephone (ESTech) can support the myriad of technology needs in our communities.

Several years ago, a fiber line was severed along the front range, and many schools in our area lost their connection to the internet through BOCES. Eastern Slope came in and installed their internet, so we would not be down for several weeks. We never received a bill. We were simply told, "Don't worry about it. We just wanted to help out." That is the advantage of a local co-op. If a global company served the internet in our area, I doubt the outcome would have been the same. I would hate to lose the genuine community spirit of having locally-owned and operated co-ops and companies.

I value ESTech's mission and believe the cooperative is integral to our communities. If elected, I will work to ensure that ESTech remains strong by continuing its history of being well-managed, financially sound and innovative. I am confident that I can positively contribute to the board of directors and help ESTech support our community's technology needs well into the future.

I appreciate your consideration.

Jon

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Shane Lessenden
Haswell Candidate

I am Shane A. Lessenden from Haswell. I stepped onto the board in 2021 to finish out Virgil Lessenden's term, otherwise known as my dad. I wasn't sure that I was the guy for this. I have had success on other boards and organizations such as Kiowa County Fair Board and our local 4-H program. But this seemed a bit out of my league. I told my dad that I would give it a shot and see how it goes. I am very glad I did. I am learning and eager to do so.

My wife and I have been married for thirty-two years, we have 2 kids of which are both married with their own families. Together they have provided us with 5 little best friends. They are ranging in age from 9-4. We have a small cattle herd that we pasture just west of our place about 6 miles. I have worked for Kiowa County Road and Bridge since 1993. This employment opportunity came to us while living in Ordway. We were so glad to bring our family back home.

I look forward to seeing what Eastern Slope Rural Telephone future is and am very happy to be a part of that. My main goal for our cooperative is to continue to focus on strengthening our communities and to provide the best options for staying connected.