



# Redwood Coast Energy Authority

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## **COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

### **DRAFT MINUTES**

**May 11, 2021 - Tuesday, 6 - 7:30 p.m.**

The agenda for this meeting was posted on May 8, 2021. Community Advisory Committee Chair Larry Goldberg called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m., stating that the meeting was being conducted by teleconference pursuant to Brown Act waivers included in Governor Newsom's COVID-19 State of Emergency Executive Orders and in response to local efforts to reduce the spread of the virus. Chair Goldberg stated that the posted agenda outlined instructions for the public on listening to the meeting and providing comment.

#### **Members present:**

Norman Bell  
Elizabeth Burks  
Jerome Carman

Colin Fiske  
Larry Goldberg, Chair  
Catherine Gurin  
Pam Halstead

Roger Hess  
Richard Johnson  
Luna Latimer  
Dennis Leonardi, Vice Chair  
Kit Mann  
Amin Younes  
Stephen Avis, Alternate Board Liaison  
(non-voting)

#### **Staff and others present:**

Aisha Cissna, Regulatory & Legislative Policy Manager  
Richard Engel, Power Resources Director  
Michael Furniss, RCEA Consultant  
Matthew Marshall, Executive Director  
Mahayla Slackerelli, Account Services Manager  
Nancy Stephenson, Community Strategies Manager  
Lori Taketa, Board Clerk

#### **Minutes Approval**

Chair Goldberg invited comment. There were no comments from CAC members or the public. Chair Goldberg closed the public comment period.

**Motion Halstead, Second Johnson: Approve minutes of March 9, 2021, CAC meeting.**

**The motion passed with a unanimous roll call vote. Ayes: Bell, Fiske, Gurin, Goldberg, Halstead, Hess, Johnson, Latimer, Mann, Younes. Noes: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Burks, Carman, Leonardi.**

Chair Goldberg invited public comment on non-agenda items. No member of the public commented. Chair Goldberg closed the public comment period.

### **Non-Agenda Item Public Comment**

Member of the public Suzanne Atiyeh submitted written comment requesting reconsideration of offshore wind over concerns about seabird impacts.

Community member Ken Miller emailed requesting increased support for widespread distributed solar energy and storage. The group discussed how RCEA supports solar energy at all scales and has not focused solely on rooftop solar; how both distributed energy and utility-scale generation are necessary: limiting local energy generation development to fulfil the county's needs does not address more widespread needs; and that developing solar microgrids to fulfil the county's needs would be inequitable, prohibitively expensive and have undesirable environmental effects. Staff was asked to present statistics on dollars RCEA invests per kilowatt by technology type and estimated annual energy production of those sources so the community can compare and see how much of each type is consumed.

Members Burks and Carman and Vice Chair Leonardi arrived during this discussion.

### **Time of Use Rate Report (information only)**

Account Services Manager Slackerelli reported on PG&E and RCEA's rollout of time-of-use billing, part of a statewide push to reduce electricity usage during the early evening when electricity is the most expensive and the dirtiest. Humboldt County residents are expected to do well on the new rate plans due to low air conditioner use. RCEA is offering bill protection during the transition. Coming changes for business and agricultural customers were outlined.

The committee discussed how RCEA provides large customers with rate plan guidance based on use patterns and is researching automated demand response technology to automatically turn off customers' appliances when power prices are high. Staff will provide an update on the CPUC's Self-Generation Incentive Program (SGIP), which is funding \$40 million in battery installation incentives in the county after the Board approves a behind-the-meter resource adequacy contract with Swell Energy. Many of the local SGIP battery systems will be eligible to participate in the program which will aggregate the batteries into a virtual power plant that can increase resilience.

Vice-Chair Leonardi offered to see if individual consultations or workshops on the rate plan changes by RCEA staff would be helpful for agricultural industry customers.

There was no public comment on this item.

### **Biomass Alternatives Subcommittee Update**

Power Resources Director Richard Engel reported on the recently approved contract extension with Humboldt Sawmill Company (HSC) which will help RCEA meet SB 350

long-term power procurement contract requirements reliably. In response to public comment, the Board directed staff to periodically meet with HSC representatives to review alternative biomass uses. Staff requested input from the CAC for a separate memorandum of understanding (MOU) for this review. The committee suggested that the MOU include an HSC commitment to provide data necessary to assess alternative biomass uses, and to consider non-economic benefits, potentially with quantified carbon market data.

Staff requested reconsideration of the Alternative Biomass Uses Subcommittee's sunset date, and expansion of the group's scope of work to include providing input on the memorandum of understanding. The group expressed support for sunsetting the subcommittee upon formation of a Biomass Technical Advisory Group.

The group discussed community concerns over committing to a 10-year contract for non-renewable, carbon dioxide-creating energy generation; how RCEA procures much more solar than biomass energy; how local biomass energy supporters also voiced their views to the agency and Board; how power purchase decisions should be based on carbon emissions and climate change science; how biomass energy helps address mill waste disposal; and how HSC will still sell biomass-generated power to other entities should RCEA end the contract, exporting biomass energy benefits while retaining negative impacts. Member Bell was invited to participate in Alternative Biomass Uses Subcommittee meetings.

Member of the public Dan Chandler inquired whether RCEA would purchase power from the DG Fairhaven biomass plant's new local owner, and about how RCEA could facilitate alternative biomass use factories in Humboldt County. RCEA has no current plans to purchase power from the new DG Fairhaven owner and is in early-stage conversations with County economic development staff members about developing markets for biomass material.

### **Bond Subcommittee Report**

Regulatory and Legislative Policy Manager Cissna reported on the County's request for RCEA to investigate the viability of potential energy resilience and independence revenue bond projects. The Bond Subcommittee assessment criteria valued projects that could generate revenue, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the county's resiliency. Options selected by the subcommittee were: an ownership stake in a small offshore wind project; a feed-in tariff-style local solar project; and a low-interest customer financing for energy efficiency and distributed generation projects.

The subcommittee developed ideas which would not likely generate substantive revenue such as: a subscription transportation service; an advanced particulate emission technology biomass plant; and unfunded projects identified in regional planning documents such as the Humboldt County Regional Transportation Plan update, the Countywide Climate Action Plan and RCEA's RePower Humboldt strategic plan. Staff pointed to new state and federal infrastructure and stimulus plans and asked whether the subcommittee's scope should be expanded to seeking funding for some of these non-revenue generating projects. The new proposed subcommittee sunset date would be the end of 2022. The group expressed support for this expanded scope.

Members Mann and Younes left the meeting at 7:33 p.m. There was no public comment on this item.

### **Member Reports**

- Member Gurin reported the draft Countywide Climate Action Plan will be ready for public review in June.
- Member Fiske stated that the Nordic Aquafarms project CEQA comment period is open. The project's peak electrical load is expected to be 21 MW.
- Vice-Chair Leonardi inquired about plans to install solar energy to offset the Nordic Aquafarm project's average load which is comparable to that of Arcata. Staff responded that conversations have begun on integrating the load and the increased greenhouse gas emissions into the CCE program's renewable energy portfolio.
- Member Hess stated that the aquafarms project would reduce greenhouse gas intensive shipping of salmon from the East to West Coast.
- Member Carman requested that Member Younes present his master's thesis project findings on potential Humboldt County renewable energy development. He also reported that Humboldt County Association of Governments' early Regional Transportation Plan Update drafts showed exciting performance metrics relating to RCEA's RePower Humboldt transportation goals.
- Member Burks reported that different chapters of the Regional Transportation Plan will be available and that she will present the update at the next meeting.

### **Summarize actions, outcomes, Board communication items, next steps.**

- CAC will provide input on Community Choice Energy program decision-making priorities at a future meeting.
- Staff will present statistics on dollars RCEA invests per kilowatt by technology type and estimated annual energy production so the community can see how RCEA considers economics in energy procurement decisions.
- Staff will report on the Self-Generation Incentive Program after the Swell contract approval.
- Vice-Chair Leonardi will reach out to agriculture industry colleagues to see if workshops or individual consultations are needed to work with billing changes.
- A workshop or video to educate small- and medium-size businesses on load-reduction, promoted through local chambers of commerce, was requested.
- Humboldt Sawmill Company will be asked to provide data necessary to investigate alternative biomass uses.
- Member Bell will participate in Alternative Biomass Uses Subcommittee meetings.
- The Alternative Biomass Subcommittee will remain active until a Biomass Technical Advisory Committee is formed.

Chair Goldberg adjourned the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

Lori Taketa  
Board Clerk