



Redwood Coast Energy Authority

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COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

May 14, 2024 - Tuesday, 6 - 7:30 p.m.

Interim Executive Director Eileen Verbeck called the hybrid in-person and teleconference meeting to order on the above date at 6:03 p.m. at the Jefferson Community Center auditorium, 1000 B Street, Eureka, CA. The meeting agenda was posted on May 11, 2024.

Members present:

Norman Bell

Elizabeth Burks

Deborah Dukes

Christopher Honar

Richard Johnson

Vacancy – County

Ethan Lawton

Dennis Leonardi

Pliny McCovey

Michael Shackelford (arrived 6:12 p.m.)

Vacancy – Rio Dell

Vacancy – Yurok Tribe

Members absent: Colin Fiske, Luna Latimer, Kit Mann

Board Liaison present: Kris Mobley (non-voting)

Staff and others present:

Nancy Diamond, RCEA General Counsel

Stephen Kullmann, Demand Side Management Director

Lori Taketa, Board Clerk

Eileen Verbeck, Interim Executive Director

There were no comments on non-agenda items.

3. Consent Calendar

3.1. Approve March 12, 2024, CAC Meeting Minutes.

Neither committee members nor public participants requested minutes discussion. Legal Counsel Diamond clarified that members may approve minutes for meetings they did not attend and may confer with a member who attended. The vote attests that the minutes were properly transcribed. Member Johnson asked to revise Committee Charter voting procedures due to quorum impacts of long-vacant committee seats.

Motion Honar, Second Dukes: Approve March 12, 2024, CAC meeting minutes.

The motion passed with the following vote: Ayes: Bell, Burks, Dukes, Honar, Johnson, Lawton, Leonardi, McCovey. Noes: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Fiske, Latimer, Mann, Shackelford.

5. Chair/Vice Chair Election

Member Honar volunteered to serve as Chair, Member Lawton volunteered to serve as Vice Chair. New members McCovey and Shackelford were introduced. There was no public comment on this agenda item.

Motion Burks, Second Johnson: Appoint Christopher Honar to serve as Community Advisory Committee Chair for a term beginning May 14, 2024, and ending March 31, 2025.

The motion passed with the following vote: Ayes: Bell, Burks, Dukes, Honar, Johnson, Lawton, Leonardi, McCovey, Shackelford. Noes: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Fiske, Latimer, Mann.

Motion Dukes, Second Leonardi: Appoint Ethan Lawton to serve as Community Advisory Committee Vice Chair for a term beginning May 14, 2024, and ending March 31, 2025.

The motion passed with the following vote: Ayes: Bell, Burks, Dukes, Honar, Johnson, Lawton, Leonardi, McCovey, Shackelford. Noes: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Fiske, Latimer, Mann.

6. New/Existing Member Training

RCEA General Counsel Diamond presented a committee member training on the Brown Act open meeting laws, the Public Records Act transparency law, conflicts of interest and ethical public service conduct. The group discussed previous instances when committee members were perceived to have conflicts of interest on issues the committee considered. Members were advised to consult staff with questions regarding potential conflicts. The Fair Political Practices Commission's authority to enforce transparency and conflict rules were explained. There were no public comments on this item.

7. Subcommittee Volunteer Opportunity/Work Goal Review

Interim Executive Director Verbeck reviewed the active CAC subcommittees and asked new and existing members if they wished to join or leave any work groups. Members Leonardi and McCovey joined the Critical Facilities Subcommittee. Member Burks left the Arcata-McKinleyville Major Projects Subcommittee. Staff Director Kullmann requested that the Customer Programs Subcommittee scope of work include non-Rural Regional Energy Network programs. There was no public comment on this agenda item.

8. Proposed Customer Battery Storage Rebate

Demand-Side Management Director Kullmann reported on battery storage rebate program proposals that the Board requested after solar-friendly net energy metering rates were changed. Under the new tariffs the solar electricity systems can take longer than seven to 10 years to repay the initial investment unless expensive battery storage is added. RCEA's proposed battery storage rebates are meant to encourage more equitable rooftop solar adoption and increase local energy resiliency, both of which are RCEA strategic plan goals. The pilot program would be available for residential customers the first year, adding

commercial customers in the second. The rebates would also support the local solar industry which has been negatively impacted by the rate changes. Staff Director Kullmann described proposed program feedback from a work session with the CAC Customer Programs Subcommittee and local solar installers.

The CAC discussed the business model of out-of-area companies buying and installing solar systems then leasing them back to homeowners. Staff are researching whether RCEA or nonprofits could use that model and instead pass solar installation benefits back to homeowners. RCEA is also assessing whether staff can help customers apply for state Self-Generation Incentive Program funds, which is a complex process. It was clarified that this rebate program is designed to encourage rooftop solar adoption rather than encourage battery installation without solar so homeowners can store electricity when it is cheap and sell when it is expensive. The pilot rebate program's budget is equal to estimated RCEA savings on reduced solar customer net energy metering refunds triggered by the new rate. Member Bell expressed concern whether the rebates, which would benefit up to 50 families, make sense when so many customers are having difficulty paying electricity bills. He proposed using the program budget instead for bill assistance to those most in need.

Motion Burks, Second Leonardi: Recommend the pilot rebate program provide a \$250 per kWh standard rebate and a \$350 per kWh CARE/FERA (low-income rate) and Medical Baseline Rate customer rebates with a budget of \$135,000 and to provide CARE/FERA/MBR customers with upfront funding.

The motion passed with the following vote: Ayes: Burks, Dukes, Honar, Johnson, Lawton, Leonardi, McCovey, Shackelford. Noes: None. Abstain: Bell. Absent: Fiske, Latimer, Mann.

9. Interim Executive Director's Report

Interim Executive Director Verbeck reported on a recent visit by staff and RCEA Board Directors to Massachusetts' working offshore wind areas. Offshore wind curriculum was being taught in classrooms and the Humboldt contingent spoke with community groups. Staff will engage the CAC on public education and as a sounding board for public concerns.

10. Member and Board Liaison Reports

Staff thanked Member Leonardi for his service as Chair. Member Leonardi thanked Committee members and staff for their participation while he served. Vice Chair Lawton welcomed new members. Member Bell requested a presentation by the Harbor District's Rob Holmlund on potential wave and tidal energy development and the harbor infrastructure development's energy needs. Chair Honar asked for a report on overall fiscal impacts of rebate programs separating funds disbursed and costs to administer programs.

Chair Honar adjourned the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

Lori Taketa
Clerk of the Board