



Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting Minutes

Jefferson Community Center Auditorium
1000 B Street, Eureka, CA 95501

Tuesday, September 9 2025
6:00 PM

Attendance

Members Present

Norman Bell, Deborah Dukes, Colin Fiske, Benjamin Fordham, Richard Johnson, Chair Ethan Lawton,
Vice Chair Dennis Leonardi

Board Liaison Present

Sarah Schaefer

Members Absent

Luna Latimer, Kit Mann, Pliny McCovey

Board-Nominee Vacancies

Blue Lake Rancheria, Humboldt County (southern), Rio Dell, Yurok Tribe

Staff Present

IT Technician Ken Beals, Executive Director Elizabeth Burks, Power Resources Director Richard Engel,
Board Clerk Lori Taketa

Open Session (Call to Order)

Open

Chair Ethan Lawton called the hybrid in-person and teleconference meeting to order on the above date
at 6 p.m. at the location listed above. The meeting agenda was posted on September 5, 2025.

Consent Calendar

- 3.1. Approve May 13, 2025, CAC Meeting Minutes.
- 3.2. Accept Local Major Projects Staff Notification List – None as of Agenda Publication.

There were no requests from the CAC membership or public for discussion of either item.

Motion Johnson, Second Leonardi: Approve Consent Calendar items.

The motion passed with a unanimous vote: Ayes: Bell, Dukes, Fiske, Fordham, Johnson, Lawton, Leonardi. Noes: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Latimer, Mann, McCovey.

Input on RCEA's Next Integrated Resource Plan

Power Resources Director Engel described the new state deadline for submitting RCEA's electricity procurement plans through 2035. Political, market and internal policy conditions have changed since RCEA last gathered community procurement planning input through the 2023 Humboldt's Electric Future (HEF) process. Staff explained the need to also include projected electricity resource build-out and regulatory constraints in procurement decision-making. Staff asked for committee input on how to fill the gap between RCEA's current long-term contracts and RCEA's customers' projected electricity needs.

Various committee members expressed the following:

- Keep RCEA's greenhouse gas reduction targets.
- Forego pursuing the cheapest energy in favor of providing the greatest savings to customers who need it the most.
- Follow the Strategic Plan's transition away from biomass energy from direct combustion. Do not extend the HSC biomass contract beyond 2031.
- Consider existing large hydropower if the price is reasonable.
- Consider solar + storage as a low-cost clean, firm energy source.
- Focus on cost for procurement planning.
- Identify new renewable energy development hurdles and how RCEA can help streamline processes.

The following prioritizing strategies were suggested:

- Prioritize procurement based on emission profiles.
- Prioritize based on agency and mission survival, community values, market realities and meeting customer needs.

Matt Simmons submitted public comment on behalf of the Environmental Protection Information Center opposing the inclusion of Humboldt Sawmill Company biomass energy after 2031, and any additional biomass, in RCEA's Integrated Resource Plan resource list.

Dr. Wendy Ring opposed inclusion of Humboldt Sawmill Company biomass energy in RCEA's Integrated Resource Plan due to the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve local air quality.

Chair Lawton closed the public comment period.

Annual Report on Humboldt Sawmill Company Biomass Use

Power Resources Director Engel reported on Humboldt Sawmill Company's (HSC) annual data production as agreed upon in a memorandum of understanding between HSC and RCEA. The data was presented to the Biomass Technical Advisory Group (BTAG) and Director Engel presented a summary of that group's discussion as well as the data HSC produced to the committee.

The committee members discussed how HSC's aging biomass plant's relative inefficiency should be factored into future procurement planning, the need to pay attention to some BTAG members' concerns about inadequate air quality monitoring equipment, and what RCEA's role is if there are concerns that the Air Quality Management District is not taking adequate action to address air quality violations. Staff clarified that RCEA engages with the Air Quality Management District, which participates in the BTAG. The Air District and HSC are working through reported violations following standard protocols and RCEA does not find HSC to be out of compliance with their contract. The widely used Purple Air monitors were provided by the Air District. A committee member pointed out that committee and RCEA staff engagement with HSC has positively resulted in: bringing diverse and opposing stakeholders together in the BTAG to discuss concerns; more HSC plant data availability; and a recent, faster Air District approval process for modern equipment installation at the power plant. Based on an alternative biomass use consultant's study, HSC is considering developing a Ukiah BioMAT cogeneration plant to help power a biomass to hydrogen plant.

Dr. Wendy Ring cited unresolved regulatory issues at the Humboldt Sawmill Company biomass plant and urged local action to enforce the federal Clean Air Act in Humboldt County.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Burks outlined renewable energy incentives that the federal government is terminating. RCEA participated in 350 Humboldt's well-attended event about these incentives. RCEA continues to offer rebates to help residents purchase electric vehicles, and the Northern Rural Energy Network's (NREN) residential energy efficiency rebates are being launched locally and across 16 other rural counties in Northern California. RCEA will offer local businesses more energy saving incentives in the new year. The federal government canceled the Humboldt Harbor District's port development grant, but the state budget will fund studies to help the project move forward, as well as funding for the CADEMO pilot offshore wind project. The RCEA Board will consider how to engage in federal government lobbying.

Member and Board Liaison Reports

Member Johnson asked staff to inform the CAC on Board responses to CAC recommendations and input. Member Bell asked to hear from wave and tidal energy developers about how much it would cost and how long it would take to develop Humboldt's resources to commercial readiness.

Close & Adjourn

Chair Lawton adjourned the meeting at 8 p.m.

Lori Taketa, Clerk of the Board