



Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting Minutes

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

Tuesday, January 13 2026
6:00 PM

Attendance

Members Present

Norman Bell, Deborah Dukes, Colin Fiske, Benjamin Fordham, Richard Johnson, Luna Latimer, Chair
Ethan Lawton, Vice Chair Dennis Leonardi, Kit Mann (arrived 6:05 p.m.), Pliny McCovey.

Board Liaison Present

None.

Members Absent

None.

Board-Nominee Vacancies

Blue Lake Rancheria, Fortuna, Rio Dell, Yurok Tribe.

Staff Present

IT Technician Ken Beals, Executive Director Elizabeth Burks, Regulatory & Legislative Policy Manager
Faith Carlson, Power Resources Director Richard Engel, Board Clerk Lori Taketa, Northern Rural Energy
Network Portfolio Manager Patricia Terry, Deputy Executive Director Eileen Verbeck.

Meeting (Call to Order)

1. 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 January 9, 2026.

2. Non-Agenda Item Public Comment

There were no non-agenda item public comments received for this meeting.

3. Consent Calendar

3.1. Approve September 9, 2025, CAC Meeting Minutes.

3.2. Accept Local Major Projects Staff Notification List – None as of Agenda Publication.

3.3. Adopt 2026 CAC Annual Meeting Calendar.

Members Fiske and Johnson requested discussion of the Local Major Projects Staff Notification List. No other discussion requests from members nor the public were received.

Motion Dukes, Second Latimer: Approve Consent Calendar items 3.1 and 3.3.

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

4. Items Removed from Consent Calendar

Member Johnson requested criteria for RCEA involvement in major project development. Member Fiske reported that a major distribution center is in early planning stages in McKinleyville that will likely require energy and transportation planning. Staff will report on major project engagement criteria at a future meeting.

5. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Burks reported:

- RCEA joined LEAN, a nonprofit organization dedicated to accelerating community choice aggregation expansion. Membership affords access to federal legislation tracking.
- The Foster Clean Power solar and battery storage system project is online. This local solar and storage project can generate enough power for up to 3,000 homes.
- Six remote Humboldt County fire stations deployed mobile solar and battery storage trailers through the Regional Resilience Grant Program. The trailers integrate into fire station electricity panels and can power the stations during emergencies when the grid shuts down.
- The County adopted the Regional Climate Action Plan in December. Cities will be adopting the plans next. RCEA is exploring hosting RCAP personnel and tasks.
- Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District withdrew its RCEA membership to refocus efforts on water supply responsibilities. Chair Lawton, the HBMWD's CAC appointee, reapplied and has been appointed to the County 2 seat.

Power Resources Director Engel reported that the 2 MW North Coast Solar Project will start supplying electricity to RCEA's customers through the Feed-In Tariff program in January or February. There was discussion of including solar storage in the Feed-In Tariff procurement program going forward.

6. 2026 RCEA Policy Platform

Regulatory and Legislative Policy Manager Carlson asked the Committee for input on draft 2026 RCEA Policy Platform updates. The Platform was revised to focus on RCEA advocacy effort outcomes. The Committee clarified Platform edits, and requested a more consistent naming convention for Tribal governmental entities, clearer term definitions and more examples to understand the different platform

areas. The group supported broadened language defining areas in which staff could advocate, given the current national political climate.

7. Northern Rural Energy Network Status, 2028-2031 Business Plan

Northern Rural Energy Network Portfolio Manager Terry reported on NREN's work to date and plans for the 2028-2031 business cycle. Uptake of NREN residential energy efficiency offerings has been greatest in Lake and Mendocino Counties, which lacked similar energy saving programs for the past five to 10 years. Commercial and public agency energy efficiency programs, including incentives, and workforce development training programs will launch in 2026.

NREN's next eight-year plan is due to the CPUC in March. The business plan will offer the same programs, expanding service areas to Yolo County, and conducting a study to determine needs in other rural and remote northern California counties that are not receiving PG&E energy efficiency services. Potential future NREN territories include Colusa, Glenn and Tehama counties. NREN programs, and RCEA's role as program administrator, are funded through the Public Purpose Program Surcharge, which adds pennies to each ratepayer's bill. RCEA has been advocating heavily at the CPUC against cutting this energy efficiency program funding.

Committee members suggested working with the County Workforce Development Board. NREN's workforce development efforts may align with and expand the local Board's work. The group asked whether NREN programs could help implement Regional Climate Action Plan measures and supported NREN program roll out in Pacific Power territory.

8. Sandrini Battery Storage Project Community Benefits

Power Resources Director Engel described the Sandrini Battery Storage Project's \$250,000 community investment fund, how these benefits are negotiated in contracts or considered in project proposal scoring criteria, and how benefits can be divided when a project is built in a different location than the area benefiting from the project's output. In the Sandrini project's case, funds can be spent in Humboldt County or in Kern County, where the project was built. Staff reported that the project was located on land that was no longer productive for farming due to groundwater contamination, and not a biologically diverse site.

Staff asked the committee for input on how to use the funds.

Committee members supported using the funds to:

- Attract wave and tidal and other renewable energy developers to assess Humboldt County's project development potential
- Educate local decision makers on renewable energy technologies and development to prevent susceptibility to misinformation or NIMBYism
- Create an endowment if there is no pressing immediate need
- Fund initiatives that NREN cannot fund, including deeper equity rebates for energy efficiency measures for lower income customers
- Leverage endowment fund interest to fund more workforce development initiatives, especially in non-energy efficiency areas that could not be funded through NREN
- Share with Kern County, as project impacts are focused there
- Address the cost of energy and support those struggling to pay their electricity bills.

9. Member and Board Liaison Reports

Vice Chair Leonardi inquired whether battery storage could be included in the Highway 36 solar feed-in-tariff project. Chair Lawton thanked committee members and staff for their participation.

10. Close & Adjourn

Chair Lawton adjourned the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

Lori Taketa
Clerk of the Board