Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Draft Meeting Minutes

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

Tuesday, July 14 2026
6:00 PM

Mid-Klamath Watershed Council Building
38150 State Highway 96, Orleans, CA 95556

Attendance

Members Present

Norman Bell, Deborah Dukes, Benjamin Fordham, Richard Johnson, Luna Latimer (at Orleans meeting location), Kit Mann, Vice Chair Dennis Leonardi, Hope Sakho, Carol Schmitt. Board Liaison Sarah Schaefer (non-voting).

Absences

Chair Ethan Lawton

Board-Nominee Vacancies

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

Staff Present

IT Technician Ken Beals, Business Planning and Finance Director Lori Biondini, Executive Director Elizabeth Burks, Regulatory and Legislative Policy Manager Faith Carlson, Northern Rural Energy Network (NREN) Coordinator Shea Donnelly, Customer Programs Director Stephen Kullmann, Regulatory and Legislative Policy Intern Giovanna Signorelli, Board Clerk Lori Taketa, Deputy Executive Director Eileen Verbeck.

Meeting (Call to Order)

1. Open

Vice Chair Leonardi called the hybrid in-person and teleconference meeting to order on the above date at 6 p.m. at the Jefferson Community Center and the Mid-Klamath Watershed Council Building (remote, public meeting location). The meeting agenda was posted on July 9, 2026. Vice Chair Leonardi welcomed new CAC members Carol Schmitt and Hope Sakho, who introduced themselves and described their backgrounds in low-income housing electrification and Tribal energy sovereignty.

2. Non-Agenda Item Public Comment

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

3. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Burks reported that CAC comments were forwarded to the Board and considered in the development of RCEA's Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) filing. The Board selected a policy-focused portfolio that maintains RCEA's renewable and carbon-free goals and retains biomass energy for now. Staff noted that the IRP is a non-binding, 20-year planning document.

Staff reviewed the draft Humboldt Bay Area Plan update for alignment with RCEA strategic goals and found broad consistency, particularly related to offshore wind development and harbor infrastructure planning. Staff's comments requested more specific plans regarding energy-efficient design, reduction of vehicle miles traveled and natural gas line elimination.

Recruitment has begun for RCEA's Director of Engagement and Regional Climate Planning. The director will oversee community engagement efforts, supervise the Regional Climate Action Plan Administrator, support offshore wind engagement, and serve as the primary staff liaison to the CAC.

Executive Director Burks introduced Regulatory and Legislative Policy Intern Giovanna Signorelli. There was no public comment.

4. Consent Calendar

3.1. <u>Approve March 10, 2026, CAC Meeting Minutes</u>.

Neither CAC members nor members of the public requested Consent Calendar item discussion.

<u>Motion Dukes, Second Johnson: Approve March 10, 2026, CAC Meeting Minutes</u>.

<u>The motion passed with a unanimous roll call vote: Ayes: Bell, Dukes, Fordham, Johnson, Latimer, Leonardi, Mann, Sakho, Schmitt. Noes: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Lawton.</u>

6. Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Update

Executive Director Burks and Business Planning and Finance Director Biondini explained that RCEA electricity generation rates will be higher than PG&E's generation portion of the bill for the first time. Staff asked the CAC to help explain the increase to the community. At the upcoming Board meeting, staff will propose an increase to the generation part of customers' electricity bills. For reference, a 6% generation increase means roughly less than $3 more per month for an average residential electricity bill.

Staff explained that the Power Charge Indifference Adjustment (PCIA) doubled in the past year and makes up over half of RCEA customers' generation charges. Power costs decreased by 1/3 earlier this year, benefiting customers but when combined with the PCIA increase hurt RCEA's ability to cover power costs and keep rates lower than PG&E's. The RCEA Board is committed to maintaining a 100% renewable and carbon-free portfolio, preserving core customer programs, coordinating regional climate action planning and maintaining RCEA's financial viability. The generation rate increase will help RCEA meet the Board's goals and keep financial reserves high enough to avoid power transaction fees.

Committee members discussed customer impacts, opt-out risks, and communications strategies. When discussing the rate change with the community, staff emphasized the need to explain RCEA's benefits to Humboldt County residents: local control and transparency, a higher renewable energy content portfolio than PG&E, local customer programs paid for mostly by funds brought back to the County by RCEA staff, and advocacy efforts on behalf of Humboldt County residents. Up to now, RCEA customers have saved between $5 and $7 million compared with what they would have paid as PG&E customers.

Regulatory and Legislative Manager Carlson explained the PCIA, its origins and effect on community choice aggregators throughout California. Committee members discussed how the PCIA fee sunsets in all other states with CCAs, but not in California. Staff reviewed ongoing PCIA reform legislative and regulatory efforts, including CPUC Assembly Bill 1761. Committee members suggested educational materials, tribal engagement, city council outreach, and future legislative updates.

Member of the public Marty Smukler asked whether the rate increase would impact solar and commercial customers. The proposed changes would not alter solar programs and would apply across customer classes. Vice Chair Leonardi closed the public comment period.

7. CPUC Energy Efficiency Program Survey

Customer Programs Director Kullmann explained how regional energy networks like the Northern Rural Energy Network (NREN) fills gaps in investor-owned utility provided energy efficiency services. RCEA, and more recently NREN, help bring funds Humboldt County customers pay into the Public Purpose Program back to the county in the form of energy efficiency services.

The CPUC is asking for community input on how to evaluate NREN's efficiency and electrification programs in the rural areas it serves. Committee members discussed the need to include measures beyond energy savings alone that reflect the needs of rural and underserved communities. Member suggestions included: contractor education and workforce development measures; long-term customer assistance measures including phone support for new technology adopters; deployment of renewable backup power generation programs to serve people in remote areas with unreliable electricity service; and arguing against disposal requirements for previous generation equipment for low-income rural customers.

Staff requested that members complete and return the CPUC survey individually. There were no public comments on this item.

9. Close & Adjourn

Vice Chair Leonardi adjourned the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

Lori Taketa, Clerk of the Board

During the preparation of this work the author used CoPilot, Otter AI, and Zoom AI to create a draft. The author reviewed and edited the resulting draft and takes full responsibility for this document's content.

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