REDWOOD COAST Energy Authority

Arcata | Blue Lake | Blue Lake Rancheria | County of Humboldt | Eureka | Ferndale | Fortuna | Rio Dell | Trinidad | Yurok Tribe

Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Draft Meeting Minutes

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

Tuesday, September 8 2026
6:00 PM

DRAFT

Attendance

Members Present

Norman Bell, Deborah Dukes, Benjamin Fordham, Richard Johnson, Chair Ethan Lawton, Vice Chair Dennis Leonardi, Hope Sakho.

Absences

Luna Latimer, Kit Mann, Carol Schmitt. Board Liaison Sarah Schaefer (non-voting).

Board-Nominee Vacancies

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

Staff Present

Grants and Contracts Analyst Ronnie Chaussé, Executive Director Elizabeth Burks, Power Resources Director Richard Engel, Customer Programs Director Stephen Kullmann, Board Clerk Lori Taketa.

Meeting (Call to Order)

1. Open

Chair Lawton called the hybrid in-person and teleconference meeting to order on the above date at 6:03 p.m. The meeting agenda was posted on September 3, 2026.

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 on wave energy developments in Oregon and ongoing Power Charge Indifference Adjustment (PCIA) advocacy with CalCCA, including a pending California Supreme Court decision regarding the market price benchmark methodology. Both the PCIA and market price benchmark affect RCEA customer electricity bills. The Board-approved generation rate adjustment to 6% above PG&E rates became effective September 1, 2026. RCEA has not experienced an increase in customer opt-outs following the change. Staff continue customer outreach work.

In September, the RCEA Board will consider the Regional Climate Action Plan Memorandum of Understanding (RCAP MOU), which outlines local jurisdictions' participation in the Regional Climate Committee and support for the Climate Program Manager position. Participating jurisdictions' governing bodies will consider signing the MOU in the coming weeks. Emily Benvie will be the new Director of Engagement and Regional Climate Planning and the CAC's new staff liaison. The group discussed a PG&E announcement regarding capital expenditures which staff did not anticipate would impact RCEA customers. There was no public comment.

4. Consent Calendar

3.1. Approve July 14, 2026, CAC Meeting Minutes.

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

Motion Dukes, Second Leonardi: Approve July 14, 2026, CAC Meeting Minutes.

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

6. Customer Programs Overview

Customer Programs Director Kullmann presented an overview of RCEA programs serving residential, commercial, and public-agency electricity customers. RCEA distributes free home energy-saving kits; does over-the-phone home energy-efficiency assessments; provides rebates for induction stoves, heat pump space and water heaters and pool heaters; partners with local contractors to install energy efficient devices in homes and businesses; and participates in workforce development and training programs with local agencies. RCEA also helps public agencies, Tribes, fire, water and school districts pursue funding for energy efficient equipment and provides installation project management support. NREN is developing a program to help public-agencies and businesses pay for energy improvements with no- to low-interest loans through North Edge.

In 2026-27, RCEA's Customer Programs will bring in $5.6 million in outside funding from the Northern Rural Energy Network (NREN), PG&E's Local Government Partnership, and competitive grants. Local CCE dollars fund a small portion of RCEA's customer programs. Historically, Humboldt County and other rural residents paid into the statewide Public Purpose Program (PPP) through their utility bills without benefitting much from PPP-funded energy-saving programs. Staff pursued NREN formation to bring PPP funds back to rural Northern California customers for these programs.

Director Kullmann explained electric heat pump operation, efficiency and available incentives. Contractor direct-install programs currently receive higher payout incentives. Enhanced incentives are available to customers enrolled in qualifying income-based assistance programs.

Committee members and staff discussed program outreach, administrative costs, lower-greenhouse-gas natural refrigerants and heat pump service needs and operating lifespans. Assessments, project management, inspections, and other staff-intensive work are program requirements for higher-incentive projects. Executive Director Burks encouraged CAC members to promote RCEA programs through their community networks. Staff described outreach to contractors and appliance retailers.

Member of the public and EPIC Environmental Attorney Matt Simmons suggested reaching out to realtors because equipment replacement decisions often occur during property transactions.

Member of the public Marty Smukler inquired whether the rate increase would impact solar and commercial customers. The proposed changes do not alter RCEA's solar programs. The rate change applies across customer classes. Chair Lawton closed the public comment period.

7. Annual Report on Humboldt Sawmill Company Memorandum of Understanding

Power Resources Director Engel presented Humboldt Sawmill Company's (HSC) annual information disclosure under its memorandum of understanding with RCEA. RCEA's power purchase agreement with HSC runs through 2031. RCEA's Integrated Resource Plan includes possible procurement from HSC beyond 2031 but does not commit the agency beyond the current agreement.

Diesel use for cold plant restarts decreased from approximately 80,000 gallons to 40,000 gallons annually, due to fewer shutdowns and closing off a steam loop formerly used to heat Scotia homes. Biomass-related carbon dioxide emissions remained level and are high compared with other California biomass plants, possibly due to wetter fuel used at the HSC plant.

There were no new notices of violation during the reporting period. A draft health risk assessment prepared at the Air District's direction determined that modeled cancer risk due to emissions fell below public notification or remediation thresholds. The Biomass Technical Advisory Group (BTAG) was unable to convene this year. Staff received little written feedback after distributing the annual data. Committee members expressed concern about the level of BTAG participation, discussed carbon dioxide and particulate emissions, respiratory health concerns, and how CAC involvement has led to greater transparency about HSC biomass plant operations and emissions.

Member of the public and EPIC Environmental Attorney Matt Simmons stated that EPIC considers biomass procurement inconsistent with RCEA's mission. He expressed hope that energy storage and other dispatchable clean resources could support a transition away from biomass by 2031. There were no other public comments.

8. Member and Board Liaison Reports

Members requested a future presentation from wave and tidal energy technology developers in Oregon and a wind energy update.

9. Close & Adjourn

Chair Lawton adjourned the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

Lori Taketa
Clerk of the Board

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

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