

CEC Minutes: December 1, 2022

Attendees: Rein van West, Dave Jones, Terry Schuyler, Wiley Freeman, Jake Niece, Kim Wheels, Sean Hart, Deb Coates, Alex Shelley, JT Thomas, Judi Chamberlin, Don Swartz, Austin Ray, Mark Smail, Tom Heffernan, Joyce Huang, Wendy Fenner, Anthony Gegauf, Carolyn McAndrews.
(This meeting was held in person and by Zoom.)

EcoAP – Sean is now heading the *EcoAP Energy Outreach* and Green Business programs. He shared a handout providing information on the new IRA rebates and tax credits which led to a discussion about these future programs. Sean is currently researching those new incentives and will keep us posted as these programs develop. Jake requested that the BOCC get an update on the new incentives once they are all clear.

Sean also related that there are a couple of *new Green Businesses*, including the Ouray School, an initiative led by a group of middle school students with a recycling focus.

Kim relayed that San Miguel and Ouray counties won both *DOLA and CEO planning grants for EV charging infrastructure!* EcoAP will be leading that effort with the help of a committed Masters student, Zander, who hopes to finish his research by April 2023. Interviews with key stakeholders will be held soon. As part of EV readiness, Zander also plans to hold two *EV ride-and-drive events* next summer, perhaps out of the Ouray 4H Center.

Kim also related that there are some changes to the *Truth or Dare* program this Spring to include a new online animated footprint calculator.

Kim's new seat on the new *CO Energy Code Board* has been quite time intensive. So far they have had two long meetings, and in the latest, they reviewed current energy codes around the State. All sessions are recorded and available on the Energy Board website for those interested. There was some discussion of the upcoming *Electric Ready requirements*, their definition, and whether the Town of Ridgway might be able to implement these changes during their current moratorium on new multi-unit dwellings. Joyce mentioned that the Town is updating

and streamlining their current building code processes and didn't expect other code-related changes. There was next some discussion of heat pumps and rebates. Kim stated that it is now in the EcoAP contract with SMPA to figure out how to synchronize and implement the federal, state, and local rebates. There are certainly installer challenges and workforce development will be a key target.

SMPA - Terry mentioned that *the current multi-family developments in our region are all being built all-electric*. The local contractors with the most heat pump experience prefer those larger building projects. Terry wondered if it might make sense to require all multi-unit dwellings to be all electric prior to placing that requirement on individual homes. He wondered how we might incentivize the workforce to do more electric installations.

A discussion of how *electrification might increase our local peak energy demand* ensued. In addition to the SMPA heat pump rebate, Wiley explained that a *new rebate for ETS (Electric Thermal Storage)* is now available. These ETS units take off-peak energy and store it by, for example, heating bricks insulated with thermal tiles. An ETS unit can be integrated with a heat pump to shave peak-load energy demand. If/when time-of-use electricity rates are implemented, such programmable units could be valuable for our local consumers. They could also spread a home's electricity demand, staggering loads so that a home's service panel might not need to be upgraded, despite electrification and increasing electricity demand.

Ouray County – Jake stated that the *Ouray County Master Plan update* process is moving forward with a kickoff meeting scheduled for early 2023. A contractor has been hired and work sessions have begun. The County also budgeted \$150k for planning and initial work on a facilities update plan.

Unfortunately, Jake's colleagues were not in support of our proposal to rewire county fluorescent fixtures and convert the bulbs to LEDs, even though the SMPA load tool projected only a \$6,000 cost with a 9.5 month payback.

SMPA – Terry and Wiley discussed briefly the *\$2 increase in residential base rates* that will be implemented in January. Hourly rates will remain the same. This rate increase will help better balance the high infrastructure and grid maintenance costs in our region, a significant portion of which now have to be paid through hourly rates.

Terry related that Policy 119, under which TriState would allow SMPA an additional 2.5% of local power generation, is stalled. However, there is *still capacity for an up to 2 MW Solar Garden* under our current 5% local generation cap. He has been narrowing in on possible viable sites in the area including the Green Street Park, an area south of the current soccer fields, and a site in Colona owned by a private homeowner and large enough to field an 800 kW system. Terry anticipates that SMPA will *add battery storage to any new PV system* they add. Locating community solar by batteries also helps leverage funding.

JT mentioned that DMEA is working in Paonia with a private land owner on an *agrivoltaics* project. JT recently took a tour of Jack's Solar Garden on the front range and was told that the system cost had only been increased 1% by the needed changes, mounting the solar panels 8 feet above the ground and keeping the cables inside the piping was key. (They found 6 feet was too low for their tractors.) However, bottom line, he felt that because Ridgway is not a community of farmers and the Green Street plot has really poor soil, a local agrivoltaics project was unlikely to be very successful. Animal husbandry under panels might work better? Terry wondered if native wildflower planting might help transform the soil.

Sean wondered if, in the Enchanted Mesa area, the hill above the dam might be a good location for a solar array. The Bureau of Reclamation apparently owns the property and there might be a way to tie a feeder line into the grid by the dam. Jake mentioned that both the Ridgway State Park and Bureau of Land Management had expressed a lack on interest in approving float-o-voltaic panels on the lake near the dam. Deb mentioned that TriCounty plans to bring water N from the dam to a plant just S of Colona where it will be treated and piped into the river. This "Project 7" facility might be another potential site of a solar farm.

Wrap-up and future: Rein informed the group that, after seven years,

he has decided to step down as the Co-Chair of the CEC. Dave expressed a willingness to continue the committee but wondered whether the CEC should continue to meet, given the plethora of new committees and groups focused on clean energy in our area. After a brief discussion and many kind words highlighting past accomplishments, the decision whether to disband was tabled for future discussion.

Next Meeting: Thursday 23 February, 2023 from 0900-1100 in the SMPA Conference room and by Zoom.