

Conservation Advisory Council Meeting Notes

April 22, 2020

Attending from the council:

Alyn Spector, Cascade Natural Gas
Anna Kim, Oregon Public Utility
Commission
Emily Moore, Northwest Energy Efficiency
Alliance (for Julia Harper)
Dave Moody, Bonneville Power
Administration
Jason Klotz, Portland General Electric
Kari Greer, Pacific Power

Kerry Meade, Northwest Energy Efficiency
Council
Lisa McGarity, Avista
Rick Hodges, NW Natural
Tim Hendricks, BOMA
Wendy Gerlitz, NW Energy Coalition
Warren Cook, Oregon Department of
Energy

Attending from Energy Trust:

Hannah Cruz
Alex Novie
Kirstin Pinit
Thad Roth
Peter West
Amber Cole
Tyrone Henry
Julianne Thacher
Spencer Moersfelder
Fred Gordon
Scott Leonard
Eric Braddock
Peter Schaffer

Quinn Cherf
Steve Lacey
Jay Ward
Marshall Johnson
Mark Wyman
Sue Fletcher
Melanie Bissonnette
Tom Beverly
Cameron Starr
Caryn Appler
Jay Ward
Shelly Carlton

Others attending:

Don Jones, Jr., Pacific Power
Lindsey Hardy, Energy Trust Board
John Molnar, Rogers Machinery
Alan Meyer, Energy Trust Board
Elee Jen, Energy Trust Board

Shelly Beaulieu, TRC
Whitney Rideout, Evergreen Consulting
Dan Tillis, Cascade Natural Gas
Andrea Estrada, ICF International
William Rector, BPA

1. Welcome and Introductions

Hannah Cruz, senior communications manager, convened the meeting at 1:30 p.m. The meeting was held as a video conference. Prior council meeting notes are posted [online](#) and the council accepted them with no changes.

Hannah Cruz welcomed Rick Hodges from NW Natural to the council. He is replacing Holly Meyer, who served on the council for 11 years.

The council was to give input on the development of Energy Trust's 2021 organizational goals on this day in a workshop. Instead, members will have an opportunity to give feedback at the council's June meeting. By then, goals will be near final, and council input will be referenced by staff members as they move into drafting action plans.

2. COVID-19 Updates

Topic summary

Council members provided updates on how COVID-19 has affected their organizations and how they are responding to the pandemic and social distancing requirements.

Discussion

Tim Hendricks of BOMA described conditions at buildings in his portfolio. Most people are working from home. They've adjusted HVAC schedules to unoccupied modes. Sanitizing is a focus area. They are starting to look at how they will re-admit people into buildings while maintaining social distancing and sanitary conditions. They've been asked to put all discretionary spending on hold.

Council members asked if energy efficiency upgrades are considered discretionary and about opportunities for work in light of high vacancy rates (Emily Moore). Tim Hendricks said both answers depend on the organization or company.

Kari Greer of Pacific Power described actions taken by the utility. Most staff are working from home. Pacific Power has suspended disconnections for nonpayment, is waiving late fees and has flexible repayment plans for customers. Employee safety is a priority. Pacific Power is trying to forecast revenues and usage and has seen a significant shift from commercial to residential, which is to be expected.

Pacific Power is now one full billing cycle into the stay-at-home order and starting to see what will happen to customers' ability to pay. Unpaid balances will begin to accrue. Chambers and economic development groups have advised in urban areas, 10% of businesses won't come back after restrictions are eased; in rural areas, 30% won't come back.

Dan Tillis of Cascade Natural Gas said the utility is getting calls from customers with bill payment difficulties and is working with those customers. Cascade is not disconnecting customers for nonpayment or charging late fees. The utility's winter help fund, which is funded by donations, had \$100,000 in it as of a few weeks ago. Customers can request help or receive a hardship grant if they were laid off or if their work hours were cut back.

Cascade does not yet have data to share on changes in energy use.

Dave Moody of Bonneville Power Administration said as a wholesaler, BPA will lag behind utilities in terms of financial impact. Staff is working remotely. Load has shifted slightly toward the evening. Most consumer-owned utilities have halted in-home work and efficiency programs have been curtailed or halted other than processing invoices.

BPA is working to support consumer-owned utilities. Trade ally workshops have been converted to webinars and strategic energy management offers have gone remote. Some projects are ongoing, but discretionary projects will stop. In the short term, BPA sees a significant impact in the pipeline, but it's too early to tell for the long term.

Lisa McGarity of Avista said it is suspending late fees and proactively communicating payment and assistance options to customers. Avista has scaled back all nonessential field work and everyone is working remotely.

Community Action Partnership agencies have stopped weatherization work for now and are doing intake via email, mail and phone. There still is money in Avista's low-income assistance budget. Avista is offering energy savings tips, building shutdown checklists and HVAC system change lists for commercial customers. Avista also created a small business resource handout

for customers to know how to access federal funds, made additional donations to nonprofits responding to the crisis and is staying in touch with local leaders to assist where possible.

Jason Klotz of Portland General Electric said PGE has suspended disconnections and late fees and is making payment arrangements to help customers or connecting them to energy assistance. PGE has closed community offices for safety reasons and waived credit card fees for small businesses. Regional outreach managers are in contact with key customers and sending internal weekly reports on what they hear.

PGE has committed \$1 million for food insecurity and educational programs and has committed funding to community action organizations and the Oregon Business Foundation.

PGE has seen a drop in sales and revenue. It has reduced spending on operations and maintenance. There's a 6.5% shift to residential usage and a shift in the time of day when customers are using power. The non-residential load is down. Hardest hit sectors are restaurants and lodging with a 25% reduction in usage. PGE fielded an international survey and found most countries are seeing an 8% to 25% reduction in overall load.

Council members asked if there have been reductions in customer demand response programs including smart thermostats (Rick Hodges). Jason Klotz said PGE suspended some marketing and will ramp back up in early May. There are also concerns with Google Nest and migration that has impacted how customers sign up and stay engaged. Test Bed activity timelines have changed, and PGE may request an extension from the OPUC depending on field work.

Rick Hodges of NW Natural said it won't know quarter one impacts until early May but that impacts so far have varied sector to sector. Some hotels are operating with very low occupancy; some restaurants are remodeling kitchens to accommodate takeout orders; most food processors are busy; auto and airline part shipments are way down, but cardboard production for Amazon is up. Elsewhere, schools that have bond funds that need to go toward energy efficiency are moving forward with projects.

Rick Hodges said low- and no-cost project messaging from Energy Trust is helpful, while bill assistance calls should go to the utilities.

Council members asked about the future of natural gas commodity costs given the decline in demand for gasoline (Alan Meyer). Rick Hodges noted oil and natural gas prices are somewhat linked. Lisa McGarity noted natural gas prices are combined into long- and short-term contracts and that savings will be on short-term contracts.

Kerry Meade of Northwest Energy Efficiency Council said it is working remotely, still loaning out tools and working with a Building Operator Certification program online.

Wendy Gerlitz of NW Energy Coalition said it is working to protect customers, particularly low-income customers. It is requesting Congress put additional funding into the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which received \$900 million in the CARES Act. The coalition is also advocating for state funds to help low-income customers.

Warren Cook of Oregon Department of Energy said nearly all department staff is working remotely. There hasn't been a slowdown in its solar rebate program.

After the meeting, Emily Moore of Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance provided an update via email. NEEA is tracking supply chain insights and gathering insights from trade associations, manufacturers, distributors, retailers, contractors and utilities from around the region. Like NW

Energy Coalition, NEEA is working on a market insights summary that can be shared when ready.

Next steps

None.

3. Energy Trust COVID-19 Response

Topic summary

Peter West, Energy Trust's director of energy programs, described changes Energy Trust has made to customer offerings, including short- and long-term adjustments. Project counts are down substantially this year compared with last year. Energy Trust's response has been targeted industry by industry. For instance, residential markets aren't being impacted as much. Staff is looking at what customers are experiencing right now and what can be done to meet their needs. From now through May, several new offers will be made available.

Discussion

Members asked about a list of 12 renewable energy projects Energy Trust submitted to Sen. Jeff Merkley's office for possible future funding (Lisa McGarity). Peter West said the list had irrigation modernization efforts in Klamath Falls and east of the Cascades.

Next steps

None.

4. Public Comment

None.

5. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3 p.m. The next council meeting is scheduled for June 17, 2020.