

# Renewable Energy Advisory Council Meeting Notes

April 22, 2020

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## Attending from the council:

Erik Anderson, Pacific Power  
Josh Halley, Portland General Electric  
Oriana Magnera, Verde  
Andria Jacob, City of Portland  
Kendra Hubbard, Oregon Solar Energy Industries Association  
Jaimes Valdez, Portland Clean Energy Benefits Fund  
Les Perkins, Farmers Irrigation District

Dick Wanderscheid, Bonneville Environmental Foundation  
Rebecca Smith, Oregon Department of Energy  
Anna Kim, Oregon Public Utility Commission  
Max Green, Renewable NW  
April Snell, Oregon Water Resources Congress

## Attending from Energy Trust:

Betsy Kauffman  
Tyrone Henry  
Ryan Cook  
Lizzie Rubado  
Dave Moldal  
Robert Wylie  
Kyle Petrocine  
Anna Kim  
Shelly Carlton  
Matt Getchell

Michael Colegrove  
Hannah Cruz  
Amber Cole  
Shelly Carlton  
Cameron Starr  
Samuel Girma  
Alina Lambert  
Peter West  
David McClelland

## Others attending:

Alexia Kelly, Energy Trust board of directors  
Frank Vignola, University of Oregon

Angela Crowley-Koch, OSEIA  
Susan Brodahl, Energy Trust board of directors

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## 1. Welcome, Introductions and Announcements

Betsy Kauffman convened the meeting at 9:30 a.m. and gave housekeeping notes as this was the first Renewable Energy Advisory Council meeting that was entirely virtual. The agenda, notes and presentation materials are available on Energy Trust's website at <https://www.energytrust.org/about/public-meetings/renewable-energy-advisory-council-meetings/>

## 2. COVID-19 Response

### *Topic summary*

Members provided updates on impacts of COVID-19 and social distancing on their organizations, constituents and customers, as well as how Energy Trust can be supportive.

### *Discussion*

Erik Anderson of Pacific Power said employee and community safety is Pacific Power's highest priority as it is an essential service provider. Provisions for ratepayers have been implemented, such as suspending penalties or disconnections for non-payment. Expenses are being

reorganized as the company would like to avoid increasing rates for customers as a result of the virus. Current residential impacts to energy loads are modest, although it is too soon to tell. There has been no dramatic reduction in commercial or industrial loads, although trends are not obvious yet. COVID-19 has been impacting the ability to work on private property due to social distancing, which could have negative impacts on the upcoming fire season.

Members asked if Pacific Power is focused on back-up power for hospitals. Hospitals typically have back-up power for at least two weeks and are not seen as vulnerable at this point. Moving forward, solar + storage programs could be a potential replacement of traditional fossil fuel backup strategies (Erik Anderson).

Josh Halley of Portland General Electric said PGE recognizes COVID-19 is affecting many people economically and the company is focused on using a stronger equity lens with customers. There are local, state and federal funding streams available for local business and PGE is working to provide funding. PGE has seen an increase in residential electricity use, while commercial loads have decreased. PGE has suspended disconnections and late fees and has been connecting people to energy assistance. It has also been donating to energy assistance programs.

Based on customer feedback, PGE has extended the application deadline for the Renewable Development Fund. The residential and small business marketing plan has been suspended since it could increase people's bills. PGE is continuing with phase two of the Green Tariff work with the Oregon Public Utility Commission.

Council members requested clarification on equity specifics of groups PGE is focusing on and funding (Oriana Magnera). PGE recognizes frontline communities are the most significantly impacted and is open to feedback on specific organizations to provide funding.

Members asked to know the percentage of residential customers who were unable to pay their bills in the previous month and to see this information overlaid with geographic area provided by utilities, as well as effectiveness of energy assistance on these areas as more people continue to lose income (Jaimes Valdez and Oriana Magnera).

Oriana Magnera said the Cully neighborhood has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and Verde has had challenges using traditional community organizing strategies to ensure low-income communities and communities of color have accurate information on safety and health. Social distancing is especially challenging for communities that lack sufficient internet resources, leaving people ill-informed and feeling isolated. Other major concerns for low-income communities include access to food, masks and money for rent. Verde continues to focus on inequities and creative solutions to assisting people who cannot pay their bills, even after the pandemic subsides.

Andria Jacob with the City of Portland said the city has been focused on core services and is in emergency response mode. The city has activated its Emergency Coordination Center in Southeast Portland. About 90% of the initial round of Portland's Small Business Relief Fund went to small business owners of color or women, who have been impacted by COVID-19 the most in Portland. The city budget is running a \$100 million deficit in the first five weeks of the shutdown and some employees have been furloughed. A new budget will be adopted in June. Portland Public Schools has a shortage of technology, and the City of Portland is working on donations to assist with this shortage and developing mobile hot spots.

Angela Crowley-Koch of OSEIA provided an update on the association's activities. The timeline for requesting solar stimulus is unknown but will most likely be after the pandemic subsides, perhaps near the end of May or June. Online permitting and inspections are near-term opportunities for supporting the solar industry and solar jobs. Solar installers are adapting, such as focusing on storage and changing sales techniques.

Jaimes Valdez said the Portland Clean Energy Benefits Fund is in good shape and work continues. The fund is tied to retail sales activity, which is likely to reduce in the coming months. Nonprofits are essential during this time; safety and economic impacts need to be focused on people of color in Portland. All outreach is transitioning to virtual meetings and the focus will be on online training for nonprofits to prepare for applications. Modeling is unknown, but the fund anticipates being a longer-term solution. Officials expect more funding will be available in July with grants in the fall and winter. Electronic permitting pathways can help move the Bureau of Development Services forward.

#### *Next steps*

Responses to some members' questions will be gathered by Betsy Kauffman and sent to council members after the meeting.

### **3. Q&A**

#### *Topic summary*

This was a time for council members to ask questions about changes made in response to COVID-19.

#### *Discussion*

Members asked about impacts on the Oregon Community Solar Program (Andria Jacob). Staff said timelines for the program are not expected to be impacted by COVID-19. The program is still accepting and processing applications and pre-certified projects are moving into the outreach and enrollment stage. The low-income facilitator for the program is reorienting its outreach strategy. Timelines for specific projects may be impacted regarding outreach, construction, permitting and financing. Program administrators are staying in touch with project managers and community-based organizations to understand what challenges they are facing and addressing whether flexibility in program rules are needed.

#### *Next steps*

Staff asked utilities to provide details of any changes Pacific Power and Portland General Electric make to protect essential workers, for review of net metering applications or setting meters.

### **4. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 11 a.m. There was not enough time for Energy Trust staff to discuss the organization's response to COVID-19. A presentation will be sent to council members separately. Staff will gather answers to questions posed by members in the Zoom chat that were not addressed and those answers will also be sent separately to members.

The next Renewable Energy Advisory Council meeting is scheduled for June 17, 2020.