

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Climate Action Working Group: September 16, 2016

Mt. Tamalpais Conference Room, 175 N. Redwood Blvd., San Rafael

Present: Doug Wilson, Pam Reaves, Bill Carney, Tamra Peters, Roger Roberts, Belle Cole, Bob Miller, Ed Mainland, Pat Nelson.

Doug called the meeting to order at 9:07.

August minutes. Doug asked if there were any objections to the minutes. None were raised. Approved by consensus.

Adoption of the Agenda by consensus.

Doug announced that Chris Choo will be the presenter at our October meeting. Chris will discuss the rollout of the sea level rise vulnerability study and the strategy re how to present the study, which is likely to be controversial. Roger noted that one issue is whether to implement a flat rate or an ad valorem charge to homeowners. This will be a long process. Tamra noted an article in the Chronicle indicating that people are willing to pay more for renewable energy. This willingness decreases as the amount of the charge increases. Pam noted the online availability of the Game of Floods materials and suggested that we ask Chris about this.

Discussion: Climate Issues and Elections

The Lead on Climate event is coming up on Monday, September 19th. We need to formulate questions.

As a group, we have been focusing on three things:

1. Damon's program for instituting/facilitating the County Climate Action Plan: What kind of role does this entail for us?
2. Sea level rise in the eastern part of the county.
3. Deep Green. Mary Morgan instigated a drive to educate the community on the advantages of MCE's Deep Green alternative. MCL now has a campaign to "rethink" Deep Green.

Comments

Tamra: PG&E now has a solar program too. Sol Shares. This is not a Deep Green campaign but a 100% green program. MCE's program is cheaper for customers.

Ed: Have we looked into PG&E unbundled RECs? Doug: PG&E is likely to be fudging. Ed: Remember the Arcadia power scam. The Sierra Club was sucked in and then backed out; others are still supporting.

Doug: MCL has a history of supporting MCE.

Ed: A portion of Deep Green revenue goes into investment.

Bill: The goal is 100% renewable electricity. This is MCE's objective. PG&E is forced to follow suit, and PG&E now has one-fifth of the market in Marin. Systemic change is a real opportunity. There is a great benefit to the local electricity buyer who remembers and promotes this goal.

Ed: MCE is holding its annual retreat on September 29 at the Marin Art and Garden Center. Attend and say your piece.

Bill: Energy efficiency also falls under this rubric.

Pam: Only 2.3% of Marin customers are Deep Green subscribers. This fact elicited gasps at a recent Environmental Forum of Marin master class presentation at which Pam and Tamra spoke.

Doug: MCE can't do it all at once because of the pricing parity [with PG&E] issue.

Roger: Marketing concerning this issue has been a problem for MCE. Is it a budgeting problem? If so, MCE should seek grants.

Doug: They have an outreach team.

Tamra: The National Advertising Council has a free advertising program. It would be great if MCE could win this.

Pam: Quoting Mary Morgan, "\$5 a month [for Deep Green] is the cheapest way to make a difference."

Bob M.: When will we reach price parity because the price of renewable energy is coming down? Doug: 2025. Bob: What is the thinking behind the date of 2025?

Pam: Put solar on roofs. Use microgrids.

Doug: The goal is to supplant fossil fuel.

Bill: Sea level rise is a high-profile item re adaptation. We should include others. This also gets us into sequestration. Doug: Sequestration is part of the Climate Action Plan. Half of the carbon put into the atmosphere is through agriculture.

Ed: Vegetarians point out the benefits of not eating beef. Pam: Vegetarian farming also contributes to the death of the soil. We need to address the whole package.

Roger: There is an issue re local compost facilities making compost available. Enormous amounts are required.

Bob M.: Re the economics of composting, the new air quality regulations are an impediment to medium-size facilities. They require more expensive methods to reduce emissions. What scale is needed to justify the expense? A variety of regulations from different agencies will make composting more difficult. There are competing environmental values.

Ed: A way out is anaerobic digestion. This is in effect in Germany and Palo Alto. It's a bottom-line issue. There are high capital costs.

Roger: Could there be a pilot project? Exemptions? Ask Huffman about this.

Bob M.: Harmonize the regulations; make the economics better. Bob is trying to track this down, consulting with Lunny at West Marin Composting.

Doug: Jared has proposed legislation.

Bill: The implications of agriculture is a possible topic to raise at Monday's climate event. This is a way of talking to Middle America too.

Tamra: Resilient Neighborhoods has a shopping section in its program. This now includes going vegetarian and also addresses appropriate agriculture.

Pam: Food waste is another topic. This is a national Sierra Club campaign.

Tamra: Zero Waste Marin has a goal of 95% diversion from landfills. County staff is involved. They will link to the Resilient Neighborhoods website.

Bob M.: Wasted food is a part of composting.

Bill: In the Climate Action Plan, the citizen involvement process is important. Also, this goes out to 2020. It will soon need to be in revision mode to fold in the new state goals. We are upping our game. All jurisdictions should have active, updated climate plans.

Tamra: There was feedback by Christine O'Rourke, city by city. The County has hired someone else.

Pam: Who would we like to see on an implementation committee? Doug: People should be a part of it.

Ed: Ed recently had a phone conversation with Geof Syphers of Sonoma Clean Power. He has some novel ideas re community-based systems, distributed renewables, and financial mechanisms to stimulate rooftop solar. Maybe we should get him to talk to us. This is a category of demand management. Micro grids could work, but this is hard under existing monopolies.

Geof has an idea to make Sonoma County a micro grid. Use progress re electric vehicles as a storage mechanism.

Doug: It's a good idea to keep in touch with our neighbors.

Bob M.: Within the county, is there one entity coordinating the cities and county?

Doug: We are fragmented and siloed, but the cities do meet—city managers and planners.

Pam: We are doing a better job of talking to each other, cross-pollinating.

Roger: Staffing and budgets are problematic for smaller jurisdictions. There is a demonstrated project effect from larger entities. The system is laborious, but it is working.

Belle: There could be a smaller committee of trusted people. Talk to Damon about the composition. MCE, citizen groups. Create networking.

Doug: Consider open meetings. There are scale problems. It is harder if you bring in citizen groups after things are already worked out. They want a hands-on process.

Roger: There are two choices: citizens directly involved, or a citizen advisory committee associated and speaking with one voice. The advisory committee reviews decisions and proposes alternatives. They have a representative on a smaller inner committee associated with governmental entities. If the committee is larger than 12, it becomes unwieldy.

Doug: It's a turn-off to be one step removed.

Belle: Damon is using San Rafael as a model.

Roger: There are quarterly meetings re what is being done on the Climate Action Plan—short-term and long-term objectives. Citizens participate. They may have invitees. Cory Bytoff facilitates.

Pam: San Rafael had specialty committees early in the process. This model won't work for the County. They are not yet at a place for quarterly meetings. They need more input, advisory type.

Tamra: Citizens' groups advising on what they are doing is an important piece.

Bill: A sustainability committee was proposed, but there was pushback from staff because they did not have the bandwidth. They had quarterly meetings instead. The process is driven by city and staff. A show-and-tell, not where we are on the issues.

Tamra: Kate Colin now has goals posted.

Doug: We want to be able to push, not just be told. Citizens' groups help to come up with ideas themselves. Our role is to generate ideas and stick up for them.

Pam: Damon needs someone to give him information and suggestions, help him create an agenda re sea level rise. Kristina Hill has spoken and written a recent paper relevant to how to change the interior of the Bay (islands, reefs to change the flow of water) and save marshlands and the coastline. And we can't leave out the impact on human health.

Doug: There has been progress in mapping the North Bay water shed. Two speakers proposed for November.

Reports

Resilient Neighborhoods (Tamra): "Marin Clean Energy" is now "MCE Clean Energy." The name change is related to expansion to include cities outside of Marin. RN now has a second team of 8 members meeting at the San Rafael Community Center. They meet on Tuesdays. There is also a second team of 18 members meeting at the Mill Valley Public Library, meeting on Wednesdays. RN had to divide the teams because of the high number of people signing up. The library has been extremely supportive, providing publicity and promotion and a positive feedback loop. If you drive people to a community venue, this helps to build community within the cities. Novato is doing this as well. Damon said he would do a County team and is consulting with Chris. Greenbrae is forming a neighborhood team. There is a church team in Tiburon.

Sustainable Novato (Ed): The Novato General Plan is up for adoption. It is a 20-year plan. There are two relevant themes: (1) Healthy eating and living and (2) Sustainability. Appendix F lists GHG-reduction measures. There are 29 measures listed. The plan calls for a reduction to 26% below 2005 level by 2020, and a 38% reduction by 2025. This exceeds the state recommendation but is less than is required by the scale of the problem. The Plan is the work of one man, Bob Brown, not an army of consultants. The Plan does a good job of covering the issue, but there is one huge flaw—implementation; the City does not have the staff. Possible solutions include sharing with San Rafael, a grant hire, pro bono work. Resolving the issue of inadequate staffing is the number-one recommendation of Sustainable Novato.

Tamra: Use interns. Under the Strategic Energy Innovations (SEI) program, interns work for one year. Some organizations may leverage Zero Waste funding.

Bill: Find a slot within staff to be augmented with other resources. Tamra and Bill will talk to Bob Brown.

Ed: Can't do everything. Make sure the big-payoff items get done. Narrow down the focus. The big items are:

1. Staff
2. Resource management
3. Green purchasing/procurement
4. Deep Green and Local Sol

5. Zero net energy buildings and time-of-sale audit to tackle existing stock of buildings
6. Roundabouts for certain intersections
7. Real alternatives to auto commuting

The City will present the Plan tomorrow and on Thursday 5:00 – 8:00.

Time to Lead On Climate (Bill/Belle): The “take home” from the event will be information re what we can do, with links provided. These are available on the Lead On Climate website. If anyone has additional actions/links re climate deniers or swing district data, let Bill or Belle know. An OFA statement and online chart lists climate deniers in Congress, but it takes work to get the information. They will ask the moderator to mention the tables of experts at the event and links to phone banks, etc. People can get practical advice.

Doug: Create a list of good candidates to support. Follow up. Collect email addresses of attendees.

Roger: Most attendees are “the choir.” What efforts are being made to bring in others?

Belle: They have a group looking into this—outreach to the faith community, Latinos, those likely to be impacted. Belle spoke recently to a business community group and had the sense that they are not up on the issue, but got a response from one person who intends to attend the event. Also, reach out to the Republican Party.

Bill: They have people on the agenda who will draw attendees from these communities. They have a speaker with a market-driven approach.

Belle: Scare tactics: Huffman will present scenarios. They are promoting via social media.

Roger: Is Dominican engaged in advertising?

Ed: Other universities do this. Dominican does not do inviting. Faculty members are spreading the word—not sure of the extent of this effort. The Committee has invited people from College of Marin, Sonoma State. Lots of high school students are coming.

Announcements

Ed: There is an issue that MCL might take on. A bad CPUC decision was upheld by an appeals court yesterday. The decision authorized 500 megawatts of new fossil fuel capacity in S. California (natural gas). This will add to the PCIA. Consider filing an amicus letter in support of others contesting the decision at the Supreme Court. September 30 is the deadline.

Doug: Is MCE involved?

Ed: This is So. Cal. Edison, but the PCIA as it grows will impact new CCAs.

Adjourned: 11:09/

Next meeting, October 21, a conversation with Chris Chu.

Minutes: PN.