Monthly Public Meeting

Accelerating the transition away from fossil fuels as we collaborate, cooperate and coordinate with climate crisis fighters in and around Santa Fe

Date: July 11, 2020
Place: via Zoom
Attendees: Robert Cordingley, facilitator; Paul Biderman, facilitator; Eduardo Krasilovsky, Julia Ying, Greg Sonnenfeld, Beth Beloff, Gary Payton, Diane Fuller Brown, Jim Eagle, Judith Stanley, Jean Darling, D. Reed Eckhardt, Barbara Sinha

Current Business

Welcome and introduction
The meeting began at 10:00 am. Robert confirmed that everyone on the call has experience with Zoom meetings. New people introduced themselves and gave affiliations with other groups.

Team Progress Reports

The Climate Action Simulation Team is led by Jim Eagle. Jim, Robert and Adam have completed the eight sessions of training for the En-ROADS climate solutions simulator developed by Climate Interactive. Jim said he will provide a link to the introduction video as well as the simulation itself; he encouraged people to try it out. He will be taking the steps to become an Ambassador.

Paul’s update on the Carbon Pricing Team team included the fact people from 350 Santa Fe and other groups lobbied members of Congress in June, asking them to support the RECLAIM Act designed to help distressed coal communities. That act was recently passed by the U.S. House of Representatives as part of a large infrastructure bill.

Greg Sonnenfeld, team lead for the Climate TRAC team, said the regenerative farming project has taken off as a collaborative effort with Extinction Rebellion and other interested individuals. Greg is writing a white paper on state-wide electric vehicles, solar canopies and the reserve margin. He estimated that some members of his team want to learn more about these topics but they will probably not substantially contribute to the white paper. Another current project of the team is to review a Santa Fe Institute roadmap.
Greg gave a PowerPoint presentation about the San Juan Replacement Power Case [19-00195-UT]. The hearing examiners for the Public Regulation Commission (PRC) made a decision about this case. One of the results is that the hearing examiners decided the Energy Transition Act does apply in full to the case. Greg covered four other questions addressed by the PRC. They strongly recommended against carbon sequestration. PNM’s RFP was found to have multiple problems but there will be no additional RFP because of time constraints. The Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy had offered an all-renewable portfolio; the hearing examiners accepted their portfolio while rejecting PNM’s Preferred Portfolio. Greg provided a link to his PowerPoint.

Robert is the lead for the **Communications Team**. He said there has been progress on three projects:

1) Weekly News Digest ~ the first digest was sent out by MailChimp this week; Reed did an excellent job with the content using a layout provided by Robert
2) Quarterly Newsletter ~ a template has been developed; the newsletter will contain longer articles
3) Wiki ~ is now available to the general public at 350santafe.wiki; there is also a link on the 350 Santa Fe website

Regarding the **Legislative Action Team**, Paul said there will be a team meeting on Wednesday, July 15th starting at 2:00 pm. The team will discuss how to proceed on:

1) transportation initiatives
2) Community Solar Act
3) an Environment Amendment to the constitution
4) state methane rules.

The **Positive Public Education Team** is led by Adam Wasserman. Adam was not present at this meeting so no update was given.

Robert recommended if someone is interested in any of the teams, they can reach out to the person noted in the agenda or use the ‘Contact Us’ page of the website.

**Invited Talk**

**2021 Community Solar Bill Plans**

Speaker: **Beth Beloff**, Executive Director of the Coalition of Sustainable Communities New Mexico

Speaker note: A major policy goal of the Coalition is to develop a meaningful community solar program in New Mexico. Ms. Beloff is working in collaboration with a number of other diverse groups seeking to ensure an inclusive stakeholder process in developing community solar parameters through the working group established in Senate Memorial
63 from the 2020 session. This effort will ideally result in a winning community solar bill for the next legislative session.

Ms. Beloff has a long history of community service and social entrepreneurship, having founded and lead a number of nonprofit organizations. Her professional work over the last 30 years has been to integrate sustainability into decision-making for all types of organizations: governmental entities, businesses, and nonprofits. Prior to being in the sustainability field, she taught and practiced architecture and urban planning, and was a strategic management consultant.

Following a recommendation of the Santa Fe Sustainability Commission, she was asked by Mayor Webber to establish and become Executive Director of the Coalition of Sustainable Communities New Mexico in 2018. The Coalition’s membership is made up of elected leaders from local governments in NM – cities and counties, and eventually tribal entities.

Beth has a BA from University of California, Berkeley, a Master of Architecture degree from UCLA, and an MBA from the University of Houston.

Ms. Beloff used the screen sharing feature of Zoom to give a slideshow explaining community solar and the initial thoughts of the coalition of members. Although community solar offers many benefits (more access to solar energy, creating jobs, saves the subscriber money, electricity goes to the utility grid), there are still challenges to enact legislation about it. The challenges come from investor-owned utilities (IOUs), rural electric cooperatives, some small solar installers, rate payers and tribal entities. The proposed legislation for 2021 is relatively complex. The Public Regulation Commission would do the rule making and regulation. PNM is concerned about potential loss of their large customers, e.g., governments. The bill is meant to give an opportunity to low-income households, who spend a disproportionate amount of their budget on electricity, to utilize solar energy. Low and middle-income households are more likely to be renters, or to have a poor roof or to have bad credit, all factors preventing them from installing household solar panels. Senate Memorial 63 created a process for a working group composed of diverse entities; Paul Biderman will be the facilitator for this working group, which will meet for the first time on July 16 from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. The working group will produce a report to be presented to legislative committees in November.

Q & A section
- What is the effect on CO2 emissions if the bill is approved and implemented? Answer ~ Do not have that amount but it can be calculated.
- How can a person participate in the working group or the first meeting? Answer ~ Send a request to Paul, who will notify Beth Beloff.
- Is there a potential for overloading the electrical grid? Answer ~ In theory yes, but on a practical level, it won’t happen.
- What are the objections of tribal entities? Answer ~ Many tribes are in rural electrical cooperative regions. The bill as drafted in 2018 specified these co-ops
could opt in, then the next year that was changed to specify co-ops could opt out. Tribal entities typically are in favor of the opt-in choice. The tribes want to provide electricity to large users, which is prohibited under the 40% specification. That would make them competitors with IOUs.

- Does the bill include job training? Answer ~ It does not right now and PRC does not have the authority to regulate that. However, community colleges might be able to provide related job training.
- Discussion of restrictions by home owners associations and also about the financial realities under which the IOUs operate
- Ms. Beloff expounds on how the State Land Office is a big player in this issue and the agency does support community solar. Also, the State Investment Council has been directed to determine how to increase solar investments in New Mexico. Storage facilities are also part of the overall picture.
- How does the bill rectify “time of use” electric generation costs with our current static rate structure? This puts the expense of generation onto people who don’t have their own solar energy source. Answer ~ It would be worth considering how to include something about battery storage, which could mitigate that issue.
- Is there a heat island effect from a solar array? Answer ~ Greg says he read an article in Nature saying there is a temperature increase compared to wild lands.

**Next meeting**

The next meeting will be Saturday, August 8th.

Meeting ended at 11:45 am

Notes taken by Barbara Sinha