

Climate Defenders New Mexico

Date: November 9, 2019

Place: Santa Fe Public Library, Washington Street

Attendees: Paul Biderman, co-chair; Bob Kreger, co-chair; Mark Bourke, Maj-Britt Eagle, Dick Cramer, Frank Wechsler, Jim Bradbury, Claudia Borchert, Gregg Manoff, Jonah Kurman-Faber (phone), Michael Green (phone), Barbara Sinha

Meeting started at 10:10 am

Introductory remarks

Dick is especially interested in power lines. He wrote a letter to the editor of the *New Mexican* suggesting New Mexico use some of the oil and gas revenue stream to build power lines.

Status of state legislation

Paul stated that Representative Abbas Akhil, who was going to sponsor the state carbon pricing legislation during the 2020 legislative session, is not running for re-election. The new sponsor will be Representative Matt McQueen, who is chair of the (New Mexico) House Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Committee. Rep. McQueen has already been active in providing suggestions about how to write a tax-related bill. The proposed bill has gone to the Legislative Council Service.

Robb Hirsch, Tabitha Hirsch and Wendi Odai are the leads for the bill. The latest draft of the bill would tax gasoline and diesel but exclude diesel used on farms and ranches. The bill currently sets a tax of ten cents per gallon on gasoline and includes an increase of five cents each year for the next four years. The revenue would be distributed with one-third going to each of three categories: a) dividends for low-income people, b) infrastructure, and c) roads. The tax would not be taken at reservation gas stations.

Paul believes a key piece will be getting the governor or her administration to take the lead on the bill. There has already been a meeting with Caroline Buerkle, Deputy Chief Operating Officer for the Governor. Efforts will be made to obtain meetings with the Secretaries of the Environment Department and the Department of Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources.

Paul asked for volunteers to attend meetings and provide input about the legislation. Maj-Britt Eagle, Dick Cramer, Jim Bradbury, Barbara Sinha, Jim Eagle, Mark Bourke and Gregg Manoff all agreed to help out to the extent their schedules permit.

Claudia asked whether it would be possible to make the gas fee variable, with a higher tax rate when larger amounts of gasoline are purchased. People felt it would be possible but also there would be virtue in keeping the bill as simple as possible.

Claudia brought up the fact oil companies are facing court cases claiming they had knowledge of the effect burning fossil fuels has on climate change. She wondered whether the proposed state legislation if passed would insulate the companies from those court cases. Paul responded that the court cases in federal courts would not be impacted by this state legislation.

Another question raised was whatever happened to the notion of taxing electric vehicles so owners are still contributing to road maintenance. Paul said there is a proposal to add a flat fee paid when electric vehicles are purchased.

Climate XChange involvement

[Jonah joins the meeting by phone at 10:35 am and Michael Green a bit later]

The phone connection was not ideal, resulting in parts of the conversation on both sides difficult to hear. Jonah reviewed his involvement with drafting the proposed carbon pricing legislation, working with Robb and others in New Mexico.

Questions for Jonah:

- 1) Members had questions in particular about the infrastructure portion of distributing revenue. Mark and Claudia had concerns regarding who would make decisions and be in charge of deciding how the money is used. Jonah said the current outline of the bill does specify the Department of Transportation as the agency in charge of that distribution. The Department of Transportation may include items financed by that revenue into their plan, which is required every two years. Jonah mentioned there is a laundry list of possible uses of that portion of the money.
- 2) Paul asked about the status of a regional coordinator based in Santa Fe. He noted Claudia is an applicant for the job and wondered whether she should leave the room. Michael said she did not need to leave the room. Michael described the progress toward arranging this position as slower than they had planned. Staff at Climate XChange have been devoting time and energy to multiple events and fundraising efforts. They originally thought of the coordinator as a temporary position, mostly for the two months around the time of the state legislative session. Now they are re-thinking that aspect. Paul asked about the size of the applicant pool. Michael responded it is about ten people. He also noted he will be in Santa Fe from November 16 through the Thanksgiving weekend so perhaps he would be able to meet up with Paul and others during that interval.

[Jonah and Michael leave the meeting]

National legislation

Paul reported that H.R. 763 will be presented to the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis on Members' Day [November 14]. Representative Ben Ray Lujan will bring it to the committee following communication and coordination with the national Citizens' Climate Lobby. The presentation will be available by live streaming on the website of the committee (and perhaps later on their YouTube channel).

Outreach

Tabitha Hirsch reaches out to students in a variety of ways. For example, in mid-November she will attend the 2019 Charter School Conference along with other students. The conference is put on by the organization Public Charter Schools of New Mexico and offers professional development for teachers and administrators of charter schools.

Co-chair

Bob has accepted a job that will require him to be in Wyoming six months out of the year. The project helps the environment because Bob was able to convince the developers to make all one hundred homes have zero-emission design. Here are examples of what Bob currently does as co-chair:

- 1) Distributes newsletter, notices and minutes
- 2) Reserves the meeting room
- 3) Liaisons with other groups
- 4) Conference planning
- 5) Handles audio/visual equipment

Paul outlined the choices. We could elect a co-chair with the same responsibilities Bob is handling, change the position of co-chair to be on a rotating basis, pay someone to be chair or merge Climate Defenders New Mexico with another group.

Bob described Retake Our Democracy as a large, active group that people might want to get involved with. The organization has a Climate Action Team (CAT) and does support carbon pricing.

Paul asked who would like to be co-chair. There were no volunteers. Paul asked Frank whether he would be able to take over the responsibility of using Mail Chimp to send items to the listserv. Frank said he is not a writer but as long as he does not have to write the material, he will learn how to send it out.

Paul is willing to continue doing what he has been doing but he needs help. Here are examples of what Paul does as co-chair:

- 1) Strategizes
- 2) Chairs meetings
- 3) Coordinates our support in Congress
- 4) Liaisons with CCL national and regional, including attending the national conference
- 5) Supports state legislation (meetings, bill development, supporting information)
- 6) Liaisons with other CCL chapters in New Mexico
- 7) Coordinates with Climate XChange
- 8) Works with students
- 9) Conference planning

Paul asked who would like to help him with these tasks. There were no volunteers. Paul asked Claudia whether she would be willing to help him at least through the state legislative session. She agreed to do what she can and they will confer on what form that takes.

Final questions

Barbara asked what is happening with a local chapter of 350.org. Bob replied that a local chapter is still being pursued, with the impetus coming from Unitarian Universalist Church members. He also noted that Tom Solomon, coordinator of 350 New Mexico, will support state carbon pricing legislation.

Mark wanted to know whether there is an opportunity for an individual to have an impact on how revenue from the proposed state legislation would be spent or does that happen behind closed doors. Paul and Claudia expressed their view that people can draw on their own professional background and have input during meetings with the bill leads and state agency personnel.

Meeting ended at 11:50 am

Next meeting

The next meeting will be Saturday, December 14th, at the Public Library downtown. Bob will reserve the room 30 days in advance by calling the Reference Desk and requesting the Pick Room. He said Citizens' Climate Lobby has a contract with the library for room use but it will need to be renewed within a year. He strongly suggests someone follow up each month even after a reservation is made, perhaps two weeks later, to confirm the room is still in our name.

Minutes taken by Barbara Sinha

CDNM minutes