

**MINUTES - MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2020 AT 1:00 P.M.
RURAL MINNESOTA ENERGY BOARD
CENTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE, SLAYTON, MN**

COMMISSIONERS ATTENDANCE:

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|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Blue Earth County Will Purvis | Mower County..... Jeff Baldus |
| Brown County..... Anton Berg | Murray County Dennis Welgraven |
| Cottonwood County . Tom Appel | Nicollet County John Luepke |
| Faribault County Tom Warmka | Nobles County Gene Metz |
| Freeborn County Glen Mathiason | Pipestone County Dan Wildermuth |
| Jackson County Don Wachal | Redwood County Dennis Groebner |
| Lincoln County Mic VanDeVere | Renville County Doug Erickson |
| Lyon County Steve Ritter | Rock County Gary Overgaard |
| Martin County Steve Flohrs | Watsonwan County..... Bob Rinne |

OTHERS PRESENT: Rose Patzer (Energy Center), Jason Walker (SRDC), Robin Weis (SRDC), Ralph Dickinson (RETAP); Joel Haskard (CERTs); Al Kruse; Joyce Peppin (MREA); Kyle Oldre (Rock County Admin); Mark Lennox (NextEra); Mike Franklin (NextEra); Rachel Stuckey (NextEra); Jeff Bryce; Michael Moges (SRDC)

CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chair Metz called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Introductions. Metz called for a moment of silence in honor of Tim Gabrielson's passing.

AGENDA:

M/S/P Wildermuth/Warmka to approve the agenda as presented.

MINUTES:

M/S/P Purvis/Flohrs to approve the minutes from September 28, 2020 as presented.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Treasurer Wildermuth presented the financial report and bills. He thanked Brooke Swart for putting everything together.

M/S/P VanDeVere/Warmka to approve the Treasurer's Report and payment of the bills pending totaling \$6,365.60 which included \$1,420.60 (Fryberger); \$3,375 (SRDC General); \$1,250 (SRDC PACE Outreach); \$320 (SRDC Finance).

CONTRACT RENEWAL WITH SRDC:

Walker presented overview of the contract.

M/S/P Ritter/Welgraven to approve contract as presented.

SUBCOMMITTEE AND RMEB BUSINESS:

Executive Committee: This committee has not met since last June. The board is mourning the passing of Tim Gabrielson. The RMEB sent a card and flowers to his wife in his memory. Jeff Baldus attended in Tim's place and will serve until Mower County appoints a new member. Jeff updated the board about some of Tim's health issues.

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PACE: Wachal reported that the PACE Committee met at Noon on November 23, 2020 via Zoom. All members were present. They discussed a new PACE loan to El Rancho Auto Sales \$74,040 that is set to close in a couple days. At present there is \$118,800 in ARRA funds and \$242,400 in other funds available. If the loan to El Rancho Auto Sales goes through, then \$44,760 will remain in ARRA funds. Wachal thanked Will Purvis for serving since this will be his last meeting and encouraged members to think about serving on the PACE committee in 2020.

Ralph Dickinson, with the Minnesota Retiree Environmental Technical Assistance Program (RETAP), presented on their energy assessment program. They are free, qualified energy audits that can be used for PACE applications. They usually do 20-30 audits a year and Robin has referred a number of people to their program over the years. They get utility bills and other data from the organization, enter it into a spreadsheet, then they do some initial benchmarking and analysis and then arrange a site visit. The end product is a report with 5-10 recommendations and projected energy and financial savings. They have a consultant moving to Fairmont over Thanksgiving break, which will add capacity to the southern Minnesota region.

In January Robin will give a 20-30 minute refresher/orientation on the PACE program to the board.

Legislative Committee: Tom Warmka will be leaving this committee and the commission by the end of the year. Metz thanked him for his service. Metz informed the board that it's looking like all legislative meetings will be virtual for the foreseeable future. Wildermuth and Warmka encouraged commissioners to consider serving on this committee in 2021.

The board had no objections to moving forward with the Fryberger Legislative Services 2021 Agreement as presented. A formal contract will be presented in January.

NextEra Presentation with Update on Walleye Wind in Rock County: Mike Weich, Developer, and Mark Lennox gave an overview of the company and their work in Minnesota (The presentation slides will be uploaded to the website and sent out with the minutes). Their current projects in the pipeline in the RMEB area are: Walleye Wind in Rock County – 110 MWs; Buffalo Ridge Wind in Lincoln County – 110 MWs; and Three Waters Wind in Jackson County, as well as Osceola and Dickinson counties in Iowa – 280 MWs. As food for thought, they talked about the exciting possibilities that “green hydrogen” presents. Mathiason asked about how feasible it is to hit net zero goals by 2050. The response was that with current technology, it's feasible to get to 80%, and the other 20% depends on new technologies that have yet to be developed.

Transmission Summit Discussion: During the discussion commissioners expressed that they learned a lot and found it quite informative, but were frustrated that it's such a long, convoluted process to get transition built and it's still unclear about what needs to be done to stay involved. RMEB has a strong legislative committee. . . one idea would be that if GPI could help identify key policies/laws/reforms that need to be made, the RMEB could potentially be an advocate for those. Also, the RMEB would like to keep up regular communications with the PUC and stay up-to-date with what is happening at MISO.

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Member Updates:

- *Blue Earth* -- No update
- *Brown* – No update
- *Cottonwood* – Big Bend wind is moving forward. Looking at 55 towers or so. Substation sites and transmission lines identified. Late 2021 or 2022 construction. Also, will have an 846-acre solar farm
- *Faribault* – NW part of county – solar project of about 4000 acres
- *Freeborn* – getting some towers built
- *Jackson* – Not much change from last report
- *Lincoln* – 100 tower project – only 6 towers left-need heads and blades, 40 tower re-power is starting in December
- *Lyon* – Ok from board for CUP - solar
- *Martin* – Quiet except for Big Bend
- *Mower* – Some blade replacement taking place – more details next time
- *Murray* – Plum Creek 400 MW, public hearings delayed. Decommissioning some blades in Chandler. Solar – hog barn with dual axis trackers and smaller ground mounted systems without permits.
- *Nicollet* – No update
- *Nobles* – Nobles 2 is up and running, system has radar detection on them; Nobles 1 to be repowered in 2021 and 2022
- *Pipestone* – Solar – small community solar N. part of Pipestone
- *Redwood* – Six 1-mW community solar going up
- *Renville* – No updates
- *Rock* – See Walleye Wind update from above; Geronimo with 80 mW solar is due to be started August of 2021
- *Wantonwan* - Solar project in the works south of St. James, a local farmer is putting up a 47kw solar project with financing from PACE (Port Authority).

SW CERT: Walker reported on how 3rd party solar is not currently going to work out for Pipestone Area Schools. The project would not create enough cost savings to be worthwhile. The next step is to address energy efficiency and their high demand charges. He also explained the 5% and under campaign at CERTs to lower the percentage of their budget that people pay for energy costs.

Joel Haskard from CERTs shared their concerns about transmission lines. He highlighted the RETAP program for businesses or nonprofits around the state. He also asked members for referrals to mobile home managers – he has 18 prepaid credit cards with \$300 each to get weatherization projects done in trailers.

OTHER BUSINESS AND REPORTS – VanDeVere reported that UCAP received another 1.6 million dollars to help people with utility bills.

NEW BUSINESS – Appel thanked Warmka, Mathiason and Purvis who are all ending their time of service. Metz and Flohrs thanked them for being such great mentors. Warmka wanted everyone to understand that they are the eyes, the ears and the voice for renewable energy in Minnesota.

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In January the board will need to elect new officers.

NEXT MEETING – January 25 at 1pm

FUTURE MEETINGS – March 22, May 24, July 26, September 27, November 22.

FUTURE TOPICS / GUESTS: Citizen’s Utility Board will present.

ADJOURN

Chair Metz adjourned the meeting at 2:35PM

Minutes prepared by Jason Walker, Development Planner at SRDC

Reviewed by:
Secretary

Approved by:
Chairman