

**MINUTES - MONDAY, MAY 24, 2021 AT 1:00 P.M.
RURAL MINNESOTA ENERGY BOARD
CENTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE, SLAYTON, MN**

COMMISSIONERS ATTENDANCE:

Blue Earth County Kevin Paap	Mower County..... Polly Glynn
Brown County..... Jeff Veerkamp	Murray CountyDennis Welgraven
Cottonwood County... Tom Appel	Nicollet CountyJohn Luepke
Faribault CountyJohn Roper	Nobles CountyGene Metz
Freeborn County Brad Edwin	Pipestone County Dan Wildermuth
Jackson County Don Wachal	Redwood CountyRick Wakefield
Lincoln County Mic VanDeVere	Renville County Doug Erickson
Lyon County Steve Ritter	Rock County Gary Overgaard
Martin County Absent	Watsonwan County..... Bob Rinne

OTHERS PRESENT: Jason Walker, Darrick Moe, Rose Patzer, Vince Robinson, Scott Reimer, Jim Haler, and Bruce Anderson, Brian Ross, Priti Patel, Jason Overby, Steve Robertson, Aaron Meyer, Ryan Holtz, John Mueller and Dallas Roskamp (alternates)

CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chair Metz called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Introductions.

AGENDA:

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

MINUTES:

M/S/P VanDeVere/Wachal to approve the minutes from March 22, 2021 as presented.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Treasurer Wildermuth presented the financial report and bills.

M/S/P Veercamp/Welgraven to approve the Treasurer's report as presented.

M/S/P Veercamp/Welgraven to approve the payment of the bills pending totaling \$6,515 which included \$4,000 (Fryberger); \$2,115 (SRDC General); \$100 (SRDC PACE Outreach); and \$300 (SRDC Finance).

Executive Committee: The committee did not meet. Before the next meeting the committee will meet to discuss revisions to the Joint Powers Agreement and to discuss budget recommendations for the next year.

PACE: This committee did not meet and had nothing to report.

Legislative Committee: Started in earnest with some energy bills, but everyone is waiting to see what the special session will bring. A bill did pass that allows Xcel energy to use wood waste for fuel. Nothing seems to be in danger, but there also doesn't seem to be anything positive on the horizon either. Luepke suggested inviting Senator Weber to a future RMEB meeting.

Great River Energy Presentation: Priti Patel, Vice President and Chief Transmission Officer, presented on the challenges of adding more transmission capacity to handle the ever increasing need to add more

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renewables to the system. Coal plants are being decommissioned at an accelerated rate while extreme weather events across the nation are on the rise. The two largest barriers are, 1) Getting consensus on cost allocation, i.e. "Who will pay for it?", and 2) Getting all the different states and regional entities all on the same page to move forward. The full presentation will be available on the RMEB website.

VanDeVere asked about if it's a 10 year wait to utilize the double circuit capability on many of the lines constructed with CapX2020? Patel responded that it would not take 10 years, but that in the latest assessment they decided not to add that capacity at this time, but she said eventually they would likely all get that treatment.

Solar for Clean Water: Brian Ross from GPI; Jason Overby the General Manager of Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water; Steve Roberston from the MN Dept of Health; and Aaron Meyer, a hydrologist/SWP specialist with the MN Rural Water Association, all presented on how solar could be used to assist with water conservation efforts, which also has other co-benefits beyond energy production. One solution to reduce nitrates in the drinking water would be to use land around the wellhead charging areas and put solar on that land. Minnesota currently has about 110,000 acres that is in designated vulnerable wellhead charging areas that is now for farming corn and soybeans.

Being able to do solar in some areas could prevent having to invest in very expensive water treatment solutions, and some wells are being taken off-line due to nitrate levels being too high.

When asked if/how RMEB could help, Chair Metz stated that the organization could include their ideas during legislative outreach. Beyond that, the issue is transmission constraints which is the issue for adding renewables for any project.

Member Updates:

- *Blue Earth* – No updates
- *Brown* – No updates
- *Cottonwood* – Plumb Creek is still moving forward. Big Bend wind is also moving forward – in the hearing process. 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* – No updates
- *Freeborn* – A large solar energy farm – 1,600 acres, expected to generate \$300,000 a year in production taxes is still going forward. Several townships have come out against wind generation.
- *Jackson* – Upcoming open house for Three Waters Wind
- *Lincoln* – Finishing last wind tower project. A 40 tower re-power has been delayed due to contract negotiations for transmission and cost.
- *Lyon* – No updates
- *Martin* – No updates
- *Mower* – Large stack of old wind turbines from a re-power that will get recycled. Their community college has a new wind technician program.
- *Murray* – Plum Creek 400 MW project is going forward. 1 MW Solar in late April.
- *Nicollet* – No updates

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- *Nobles* – The radar detection system on Nobles 2 has over 4,000 parameters and is too sensitive with deer and other non-aircraft making the lights go on. They are still trying to figure out how to set the parameters better.
- *Pipestone* – New community solar gardens getting built.
- *Redwood* – No updates.
- *Renville* – Waiting on a couple solar farms
- *Rock* – Walleye Wind is still going forward, but has opposition from SD landowners. If approved by the PUC, could begin construction in September, 2021. Elk Creek solar being built as early as Fall 2021.
- *Wantonwan* – No updates

SW CERT: CERTs is wrapping up the current round of Seed grants and is getting ready for the next round of solicitations. Be on the lookout for the new application materials at the next meeting in July.

OTHER BUSINESS AND REPORTS: Wildermuth reported on a presentation he gave to the Midwest Governor’s association on the history of wind generation in the region. He emphasized how many different types of groups have to work together to get these types of projects off the ground and running well.

NEW BUSINESS: Grid North Partners (formerly CapX2020) Virtual Conference on June 16 from 8A – Noon.

NEXT MEETING – July 26 -- will be in-person at the SRDC conference room. A Zoom link will be available for any persons unable to make it in-person.

FUTURE MEETINGS – September 27, November 22.

FUTURE TOPICS / GUESTS: To be determined.

ADJOURN

Chair Metz adjourned the meeting at 3:25 PM

Minutes prepared by Jason Walker, Development Planner at SRDC

Reviewed by:
Secretary

Approved by:
Chairman