

MINUTES - MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 2023 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..... Dan Sparks
Brown County..... Absent	Murray CountyDennis Welgraven
Cottonwood County... Tom Appel	Nicollet County Kurt Zins
Faribault County Sara Hauskins	Nobles CountyGene Metz
Freeborn County John Forman	Pipestone County Dan Wildermuth
Jackson County Don Wachal	Redwood County Dennis Groebner
Lincoln County Mic VanDeVere	Renville County Absent
Lyon County Todd Draper	Rock County Gary Overgaard
Martin County Steve Flohrs	Watsonwan County..... Absent

OTHERS PRESENT: Jason Walker, Molly Malone (Murray alternate), Dalla Roskamp (Pipestone alternate), Rose Patzer (MnWest), Rich Davis (Commerce), Jamie MacAlister (Commerce)

CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

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

AGENDA: M/S/P VanDeVere/Metz to approve the agenda.

MINUTES:

M/S/P Paap/Overgaard to approve minutes from November 28, 2022.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Treasurer Wachal presented the financial report and bills.

M/S/P Wildermuth/Welgraven to pay the bills.

M/S/P Metz/Wildermuth to accept the financial report.

SRDC SERVICE CONTRACT:

Executive Committee: Tom Appel and Molly Malone provided a report on the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) meeting in December. They felt the PUC understood their concerns about curtailment and transmission constraints and were using the tools at their disposal to address those concerns, including putting pressure on utilities to move faster on their end to get projects built. The PUC plans to invite RMEB members to future meetings. PUC Commissioners also requested that RMEB members serve as Wind/Solar siting ambassadors to other counties to educate and assist with managing wind/solar developers coming to them. RMEB members agreed that this would be a good use of their time. Stevens County was mentioned as a “hot spot” since it has excess transmission capacity with multiple developers looking to site projects there.

PACE: Commissioner Wachal reported on PACE. Potential applicants are still awaiting ReTAP assessments. SRDC staff has been working on outreach. Current funds available include \$168,482 (SEP) and \$82,256.73 (ARRA). They will be closing soon on a \$100,000 PACE loan and at least one other project could possibly close soon. Also, interest rates have been increasing. The committee recommended that interest rates for

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PACE funds should be as follows: 3% under the prime interest rate; with a 3% floor as the lowest interest rate available. The rate would be effective at the time the loan is approved.

M/S/P VanDeVere/Welgraven to approve the recommended interest rate structure.

With new members on the RMEB, they requested that Robin give a brief overview of the program at the March meeting.

Legislative Committee: Members reviewed how their meeting went with Senator Frentz in Mankato. About 8-10 members attended and provided educational materials and insight into renewable energy in Southern Minnesota and how it fits with the state vision for clean energy. Members felt that Senator Frentz was receptive to the information and that they were well received. They thanked board member Kevin Paap for organizing the meeting and they said it was a valuable use of their time.

Gene Metz provided an overview of the Clean Energy Bill (HF 7/SF 4) that was moving rapidly at the state legislature. The bill would set a goal of 100% clean energy by 2040. The biggest concern within the bill is that waste-to-energy would no longer qualify as a renewable energy source. Climate bills are also looking to provide match dollar for new federal funding, funds for weatherization, energy apprenticeships, solar-for-schools, and access to EV infrastructure.

Finally, Gary Overgaard and Dan Wildermuth updated the board about Nature Energy approaching Rock and Pipestone counties to explore building new biogas facilities in their respective counties. These are \$100 - \$140 million projects that would convert manure from cattle to natural gas.

Member Updates:

- *Blue Earth* – Reiterated concern that waste-to-energy may no longer be considered a renewable energy source
- *Brown* – No updates
- *Cottonwood* – Mentioned the long timeline of projects – up to 12 years for the Big Bend Project
- *Faribault* – No update
- *Freeborn* – No update
- *Jackson* – No update
- *Lincoln* – The repower is online now.
- *Lyon* – No updates.
- *Martin* – Compliments on the Senator Frentz meeting
- *Mower* – No updates
- *Murray* – No updates
- *Nicollet* – No updates
- *Nobles* – Two windfarms in county do not always synchronize FAA warning lights. NextEra stated it is a learned technology and may take 6-12 months.
- *Pipestone* – Update on Nature Energy project proposal for a biogas facility
- *Redwood* – No updates
- *Renville* – No updates
- *Rock* – Walleye Wind is online.

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- *Wantonwan* – No updates

SW CERT: Walker gave update on final Seed Grant reports.

OTHER BUSINESS AND REPORTS: Dan Sparks of Mower County offered to sit on the legislative committee.

NEXT MEETING – March 27

FUTURE TOPICS / GUESTS: Members requested that Nature Energy present to the RMEB in March. Staff will invite Jesper Nielsen from Nature Energy to the next meeting. Robin will give an overview of PACE. Jason will give an overview of RMEB as an organization as a refresher/orientation.

Chair Appel adjourned the meeting at 2:46 PM.

Minutes prepared by Jason Walker, Development Energy Planner at SRDC.

Reviewed by:

Secretary

Approved by:

Chairman