

MINUTES - MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2019 AT 1:00 P.M.
RURAL MINNESOTA ENERGY BOARD
CENTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE, SLAYTON, MN

COMMISSIONERS ATTENDANCE:

Blue Earth County..... Will Purvis	Mower CountyTim Gabrielson
Brown County Jeff VeerKamp	Murray CountyDennis Welgraven
Cottonwood County . Tom Appel	Nicollet CountyJohn Luepke
Faribault County Tom Warmka	Nobles CountyGene Metz
Freeborn County Glen Mathiason	Pipestone CountyDan Wildermuth
Jackson County Don Wachal	Redwood CountyDennis Groebner
Lincoln County Mic VanDeVere	Renville CountyDoug Erickson
Lyon County Gary Crowley	Rock CountyGary Overgaard
Martin County Steve Flohrs	Watsonwan County Bob Rinne

OTHERS PRESENT: Tara Ritter (Institute for Ag and Trade Policy), Julie Varek and Tom VonBische (NextEra Energy Resources), Jeff Hammond, Tradewind Energy, Rose Patzer, MN State Energy Ctr of Excellence, Scott Reimer (Federated REA of Jackson) Jason Walker and Annette Fiedler (SRDC).

CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Netty Fiedler announced her retirement effective December 14, 2019.

AGENDA:

M/S/P VanDeMere, VeerKamp to approve the agenda as presented.

MINUTES:

M/S/P Mathiason, Purvis to approve the minutes of September 23, 2019 as presented.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Treasurer Wildermuth presented the financial report and bills; following payment of bills there will be \$121,198.07. Board discussed process for paying MCIT insurance bill. Decided to leave the process "as is"; no action needed.

M/S/P Wachal, Metz to approve the Treasurers Report and payment of the bills: SRDC September and October in the amount of \$1,580 and to Ratwik, Roszak and Maloney for reviewing and revising Joint Powers Agreement, \$450 and to Fryberger for lobbying fees of \$378.10.

SUBCOMMITTEE AND RMEB BUSINESS:

Executive Committee.

M/S/P Luepke, Gabrielson to approve the dues recommendation of \$2,500.

M/S/P VanDeVere, Wachal to approve the CY 2020 draft budget as presented.

Joint Powers agreement still needs to have some questions clarified through the executive committee and staff before being presented to the full board.

M/S/P Wachal, Groebner to approve the SRDC Contract as submitted.

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Nominating Committee: Discussion that Steve Flohrs would go off as Chair and that Gene Metz would be nominated to become the new Chair leaving a need to nominate a new Vice-Chair. Will Purvis, Tom Warmka and Tom Appel agreed to serve on the Nominating Committee.

Tour Committee – Dennis Welgraven offered to arrange a tour of an auto-sort, finisher swine feedlot that is being completed this fall in Murray County. The Board also discussed looking into the biodiesel facility in Brewster or the Wilmarth Power Plant facility on Hwy 14 in Mankato. Also, the Heron Lake Plant used to burn coal. The question arose whether Heron Lake could be converted to burn garbage for the region. Jason Walker will investigate these options and will also ask for further recommendations.

PACE: The PACE program has approximately \$425,400: New State Energy Funds (SEP) funds in the amount of \$325,000 plus \$100,400 of ARRA funds. There is no outreach funds and businesses requesting loans has reduced significantly. PACE Committee requested the Counties assist in getting the word out on the availability of PACE funding. Each Commission present was given a handout and the task to reach out to at least 10 different businesses in their area about PACE funding. Reminder that businesses can request a free energy audit from the Minnesota Retiree Environmental Technical Assistance Program (RETAP <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/quick-links/minnesota-retap>). A request was made to have some specific examples of what energy improvements would qualify for farms.

Legislative Committee: Gene Metz reported that this committee has been looking at MISO trends and investigating what, if anything, should be done about transmission constraints, which led into the first guest speaker.

Clean Grid Alliance – Peder Mewes presented over the phone about current transmission constraints in Minnesota and the MISO West grid that has been stopping multiple projects from moving forward. The issue requires a regional approach, coordination among different systems, and a massive investment in transmission infrastructure. The big questions are, “What do you build?” and “Who is going to pay for it?”

NextEra Energy: Tom VonBische and Julie Volk presented about the Walleye Wind Energy project in Rock County, a 111 MW site with 40 turbines. A trend to overcome transmission issues is to purchase old projects that already have an interconnect agreement. Tom echoed that transmission constraints have become a real issue. When asked about decommissioning blades, they stated that they are working to finalize arrangements with two organizations that will chip and reuse the blades.

Institute for Ag and Trade Policy: Tara Ritter presented on the rural dialogue in Redwood County where all 18 participants agreed that renewable energy should be pursued. All the top benefits were economic in nature. Another dialogue will be taking place in Murray County in February of 2020.

Member Updates:

- Watonwan: A 160 acre solar project near St. James
- Blue Earth – Looking at revisions to the solar ordinance; there has been some push back on the smaller solar arrays, perhaps screening would help.
- Renville – nothing more since last Mtg

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- Rock - the County is being threatened with a law suit regarding the issuance of the CUP for the two 2.45 MW turbines.
- Cottonwood: Jeffers in 2020, Apex in 2021-22, and Plum Creek project in 2022.
- Redwood – transmission line for the Plum Creek project
- Mower – 69 kV overload transmission line question
- Freeborn – Southern Hills project – 3 CUPs for met towers. Possibility of 100 MW solar?
- Brown – no report
- Lyon – small solar 2mw project
- Nobles 2 – 1st stage of construction
- Jackson – Trimont repower; Tradewinds 300 M in SE Corner of county
- Pipestone – Stoneray up and going
- Lincoln – moving forward with the 100 towers this year, and another 100 next year plus a 40 tower repower.

SW CERT

- Presented the 5 projects approved for Seed Grant funding and 1 applicant not approved
- Utility survey went out last week. Still waiting on responses but electric vehicles and small business outreach are trending as topics for assistance
- Reaching out to provide services to ESL students in Worthington

OTHER BUSINESS AND REPORTS – Netty reported out about submitting comments to the Public Utilities Commission and on the Development Agreement Meeting with county engineers from Regions 6, 7 and 8.

NEW BUSINESS – none

NEXT MEETING –

M/S/P VanDeVere, Welgraven to approve January 27, March 23, June 1 (May 25 is Memorial Day), July 27, September 28, and November 23.

FUTURE TOPICS / GUESTS: To be determined

ADJOURN

M/S/P Wachal, Rinne to adjourn the meeting at 3:15 PM

Minutes prepared by Jason Walker, SRDC Development/Energy Planner. *SW*

Reviewed by:

Secretary



Approved by:

Chairman



