

Saturday, February 19, 2022

## 2-19-22 GrassRoots Institute - Climate Crisis Workgroup (GRI-CCW) Meeting Notes

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Attending: Sandy Turner, Jim Tarbell, Carrie Durkee, Peter McNamee, Eileen Mitro, Jim Schoonover, Richard Hubacek, Jessica Stull-Otto and George Reinhardt

- Attendees did self introductions
- **MTA Electrification** - Richard Hubacek lives in the Woods subdivision and was interested in finding out when Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA) would start expanded service to that community. Jim Tarbell said that MTA was having problems recruiting enough drivers. Recruitment efforts were on going. Also, the switch to EV at MTA was slowed by supply chain problems being experienced by manufactures of the vehicles.
- **Workforce Development** - Peter McNamee noted that in almost every sector of the counties economy employers were blaming a lack of workers as a problem in their businesses. Yet the community has not addressed this problem in any comprehensive fashion. The solution is linked to increasing wages, better working conditions, more flexibility in worksites accommodating worker needs and investments in incumbent workforce training programs by employers.
- Jessica Stull-Otto used her own experience as a mother being forced out of her county job because the county would not accommodate a flexible work environment that would allow her to both take care of a new born and continue working for the county.
- **Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF) Tour** - Eileen Mitro reported on her participation in a tour of lumbering sites in JDSF led by John Anderson a local owner of a lumber company and two JDSF staff foresters. Eileen commented that while the timber industry's view of forests undervalues trees as factories for sequestering carbon from the atmosphere, the tide is slowly turning and there is evidence that the industry is evolving slowly in response to climate change - but not nearly fast enough, given the pace of Climate Change.
- **Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) Rural Regional Energy Network (REN)** - Eileen Mitro and Jessica Stull-Otto summarized the discussion at the last

MCOG meeting regarding Mendocino and Lake counties joining a multi-county Rural REN currently lead by Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) in Humboldt county. RCEA reported that it is now in the process of developing a five year business plan and will subsequently include Mendocino and Lake counties, that for the present will be subcontractors. There is \$1.6 million in grant funding for the RECA to expand its activism. Ultimately, the five year plan envisions using an estimated \$96 million in grant funds for:

- Expanding the installation of EV chargers.
- Outreach to rural energy users to provide access to affordable high energy efficiency electric appliances and utilities.
- Zero Interest loans for infrastructure and equipment upgrades with energy cost savings being used to pay back the loans.
- Green Industry workforce development training programs at community colleges
- Expanded use of EV for mass transit for public agencies - I.e schools, etc.

Eileen also commented that more information was available on the MCOG website. While REA intended to be able to “Start” providing some of these service in Mendocino county by January 2023, full roll out of services would be over a five year period (2027). A suggestion was made to ask for a presentation by REA to one of the up-coming CCW meetings to discuss how GRI could help REA speed up the extension of full service activity in the county.

- **Corporate EV Charger Networks** - George Reinhardt, Jim Schoonover and Eileen Mitro reported on their activities since the last CCW meeting to contact auto manufacturers and Electric Vehicle (EV) charger companies about their plans to expand access to EV chargers in Mendocino. George contacted VW and Ford. He was told that there are very limited efforts at this time to expand the number and increase accessibility to EV chargers in the north coast region. He was told not to expect any major effort. Ford has decided to focus on building a robust maintenance & service network to support the operation of EV chargers - many EV chargers are not being adequately supported. Repaired breakdowns of EV chargers is adding to customer frustration and limiting access to chargers.
- Jim Schoonover contacted both Ford and General Motors (GM) about what efforts they were taking. He was told that GM was planning to make EV chargers available through its dealership network, He was also told that both Ford and GM intended to provide subsidized EV chargers to underserved communities such as Mendocino, but no time frame was provided on how accessible these subsidies would be. Jim

provided Supervisor Gjerde with information about state subsidies available to rural counties. He said Supervisor Gjerde has referred the grant request information to Marie Jones and the county General Services Agency - the grant application is due in the first week in March.

- Eileen Mitro contacted Charge Point a major company operating a national EV charging station network. She was given information about costs for installing EV chargers and on going maintenance costs. Charge Point recognizes that maintenance of existing chargers has not been adequate and considerable improvement is needed, but to date this problem continues to plague the EV industry.
- **Net Metering Rate & Fee Changes (NEM3)** - Jim Schoonover reported that due to massive public opposition to the Investor Owned Utilities (PG&E, SoCal Edison, San Diego Gas & Electric, etc) proposal to discourage residential solar by raising fees and decreasing the rates paid to residential solar generators, the Cal Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has decided to reopen its review of rates & fees and consider alternatives that would have less negative impact on residential and small business solar generators. Continued monitoring of the PUC's review needs to occur and the public will need to continue demanding that solar subsidies be expanded in order to keep pace with the expanding need for solar electricity as fossil fuel generation plants are eliminated.
- **Next CCW Zoom Meeting Saturday March 5th at 10 AM**