

Monday, April 25, 2022

4-23-22 GrassRoots Institute - Climate Crisis Workgroup (GRI-CCW) Meeting Notes

Attending: Carrie Durkee, Peter McNamee, George Reinhardt, Jim Schoonover, Sandy Turner, Judy Tarbell, Marcy Snyder, Baile Oaks, Jim Tarbell and Crispin Hollinshead

- Carrie started the meeting by introducing Crispin Hollinshead and asked him to speak to the CCW about his work to promote clean energy production/use in Mendocino County. Crispin was also asked to share his insights as a member of the Sonoma Clean Power Citizens Advisory Committee.
- Crispin provided a brief overview of his prior work focusing on climate change and in particular encouraging the development of clean renewable energy production initiatives. As a resident of Ukiah for many years, he is keenly aware and concerned about the need to transition from a fossil fuel driven economy to a clean renewable energy driven one. He became more involved locally when PG&E instituted what it called “Public Safety Power Shutdowns” (PSPS) in response to numerous wild fires caused due to the failure of PG&E power lines in storm conditions.
- Previously, while living in Jefferson County in the State of Washington, Crispin was involved in setting up a municipal electric utility district. More recently, he was part of a private sector effort to build a solar array project in Ukiah.
- His current efforts include working with Sonoma Clean Power (SCP). He believes that SCP is one of the best options for building the kind of clean energy generation needed to shift from fossil fuel dependence; to net zero carbon emission energy. He’s particularly impressed by SCP’s strategic plan as a workable strategy for meeting the challenges of producing clean energy.
- Crispin believes the best hope for substantially reducing carbon emissions is to replace fossil fuel energy with electric energy. Locally, the two biggest users of fossil fuels are in the transportation sector and in powering our communities. Both can be transitioned to clean electricity as an alternative to being powered by fossil fuel. Right now, he estimates that about 1/5 of the energy use in Mendocino is powered by electricity and most of that electricity is clean non-fossil fuel generated electricity.

He believes the county needs to reduce or supplant 5% of its fossil fuel generated power each year for the next twenty years.

- Crispin noted that the transportation sector is the single biggest source of carbon emissions in the region and efforts need to focus on transitioning from fossil fuel powered vehicles to electric vehicles (EV). While auto manufacturers are gearing up production of EV to meet transportation needs, the county is far behind in meeting the anticipated need for EV chargers. And he noted that similarly, the electricity grid is under built to supply the electricity needed to power an all electric transportation system. That means that substantial changes are needed to adapt to the new demands of an EV system, particularly the need for local electricity generation feeding power to local grids linked into network grids that can manage power transfers to supply power where its needed to meet peak needs.
- Crispin also focused comments on the unique aspects of financing the changes that are needed. In particular, solar/wind/geothermal electricity production require heavy upfront capitol investments in generation systems, storage, grid expansion & distribution management, etc. However, once in place the cost of generation and distribution is relatively low, so electricity as a power source is very affordable over a 30 to 100 year period. The challenge is to develop financing infrastructure that can capture large up front investments that can be repaid over several decades going forward. According to Crispin, the financing model developed by SCP as a community energy aggregator makes a lot of sense. He believes local government is broke and unfit to take on the task of long term borrowing needed to finance conversion to an electric power supply system.
- Crispin did note that a number of municipal utility districts have used long term bond sales as a way to develop their own power and grid systems and/or purchase them from Investor Owned Utilities using government eminent domain powers. He referenced his own experience in the State of Washington and noted that he was recently contacted by a group of residents in Caspar, Mendocino County, about developing a micro grid electric utility district.
- Crispin acknowledged that another challenge that must be faced is inequities of forcing low income communities to bear a disproportionate burden of the adverse impacts of climate change costs, because they lack the wealth to invest in clean alternative energy systems.
- Crispin responded to numerous questions about financing electric generation, SCP, micro grids, community power utilities, storage, etc.

- The meeting ended with a brief discussion about how to proceed going forward. The CCW has become involved in several climate mitigation activities - implementation of the Mendocino County Net Zero Carbon Emission Resolution, development of a Rural Regional Energy Network by MCOG, rallying opposition to Investor Owned Utility efforts to raise barriers to roof top solar, helping Climate Action Mendocino propose a climate mitigation program for the City of Ukiah, and continuing efforts to get similar action by the City of Fort Bragg. Carrie Durkee recommended that now would be a good time to do an assessment of what efforts have the highest priority by CCW participants and where they want to put there energies. CCW participants are urged to consider their interests and focus their time and resources as they deem appropriate. No action of the full group was taken, but further discussion is planned at the next meeting.