

NRPC Energy and Climate Committee

May 18thth, 2022

6:30PM

Virtual Zoom Meeting

Attendance: Barclay Morris, Matthew LeFleur, Vincent Hickey, Dan Seeley, Kirk Waite, Molly Magnan, Anne Jobin-Picard

Staff: Catherine Dimitruk, Marlena Valenta

Guests: Jim Stiles, TJ Poor, Anne Margolis, Lou Cecere

Meeting is called to order at 6:30 PM

1. Adjustments to the agenda

No adjustments

2. Acceptance of April minutes

Minute acceptance has been pushed to next meeting.

3. Presentation on SHEI and Comprehensive Energy Plan: *Anne Margolis, TJ Poor, and Louis Cecere*

TJ. Poor notes that equity and grid evolution are key themes of the Comprehensive Energy Plan. Equity is incorporated throughout the plan, not just separated into its own section. Electrification is key to our future, so grid evolution will be crucial. Key pathways include reducing energy demand, increased low carbon tech and fuel choices, vehicle electrification, cleaner vehicles and fuels, system efficiency through land use settlement patterns, increasing transportation choices, and a comprehensive PUC review of renewable energy standard design and complimentary programs.

Along with the CEP update, Act 174 standards were updated. A.Margolis notes that the mapping resources available will soon have layers for generation and transmission constraints. She also notes that we want to optimize the grid we have before we build out more because building out is expensive for rate payers. Coordinating demand and load as well as storage will allow for more efficient grid use. Demand management, like automated charging times for EVs, will be part of this.

L. Cecere explains the Sheffield-Highgate Export Interface (SHEI), which is defined by the region's higher production than usage of power. Because of this and the lack of infrastructure to export power out of the region, the price paid to generators is subject to constraints and this can cost utilities, and rate payers, a great deal of money. There are a few projects underway that will help to increase the export ability in the region, and increased electrification will also increase usage and allow for more production.

L. Cecere explains that the transmission capacity map can be broken out by town and then put together at a regional level. We as a region produce more energy than we consume, and this creates issues for continued increase in production that would come with renewables. Because of the structure of the grid, ISO-NE limits the amount of energy being produced in our region and this also helps to prevent blackouts. Renewable energy like wind and solar cost significantly less to produce than traditional energy, and so the limiting of existing renewable generation costs utilities and their ratepayers a lot of money. There are new projects being considered to try and increase the grid limits. There is a generation scenario planning tool and this helps to compare our regional targets for renewable generation with the distribution limits in each town.

B. Morris asks if large scale storage is a viable option to help store and distribute produced power. L. Cecere agrees that this is an option, but the technology isn't really in a place for it to work really well. Lithium-ion batteries work best if they are only used for a maximum of 4 hours at a time, and this doesn't really work for the SHEI situation. B. Morris asks about gravity storage that seems to be gaining popularity in Europe, and L. Cecere agrees that this is a promising new technology.

K. Waite notes that grid expansion reminds him of the time period of growth for interstate highways, which cities now wish they had expanded more originally as now we have extreme congestion and expansion is significantly more expensive. He also expresses concern about equity in terms of renewables production in the SHEI region which is generally a low-income area. In response, A. Margolis notes that setting guidelines for size of these projects could really help, as one large project that could even be owned out of state could reduce the transmission headroom significantly instead of allowing many residents to benefit from net metering and other small projects.

C. Dimitruk notes that on our comments on the Comprehensive Energy Plan was that incentives to increase energy usage, such as placement of high-speed chargers, should be focused on areas of constraint to help relieve some of the production limits.

M. LeFluer asks about storage and solar trackers as an integrated part of substations, A. Margolis agrees that storage is becoming a bigger part of the discussion and in utilities' future plans, both at substations and in individuals' homes.

P. Zamore expresses concern that all of this information will be hard to assimilate in a way helps us rewrite our regional energy plan, and that with so many moving parts it is a complicated situation to plan for. A. Margolis agrees and notes that continued conversation and iterative process is what helps. Additionally, she suggests creating a few alternate scenarios in the plan, that way we have options and know what might be the best steps no matter what happens.

P. Zamore also notes that because there are so many differences across regions and there are nuanced issues, the state should really be taking the lead in making these decisions and guidelines.

K. Waite interjects that right now, the RPCs really don't have much say. T.J. Poor clarifies that when an RPC has an approved Enhanced Energy Plan, they are given substantial deference in Section 248 proceedings, so the state manages the decisions will input from regions.

M. Valenta asks if there is modeling to compare the production goals versus electrification goals, T.J. Poor says there is some, its being developed further. A. Jobin-Picard asks about how out of state

visitors fit into this equation, and TJ. Poor notes that projections are based on past trends of gas purchasing. L. Cecere also notes that aligning all the different goals and modeling produced at all levels is something they are working at and would love input.

4. Overview of Open Meeting Law and NRPC's charge: *Catherine Dimitruk*

C. Dimitruk suggests that because the discussion on SHEI and CEP was so much longer and more in depth than expected, we push this item until next meeting. Everyone agrees.

5. Looking ahead: Swanton Energy Committee's EV Ride or Drive event

M. Valenta talks about the EV Ride or Drive event that will be happening on June 1st at the Swanton Village Offices. She suggests members share this event with friends and others, and attend if its of interest. C. Dimitruk notes that the NRPC office will have a charging station installed very soon. Members are curious about M. Valenta's experience with her EV, so she answers questions regarding range and charging times. K. Waite notes the importance of the fast chargers, others agree.

6. Adjourn

Meeting is adjourned at 8:05 PM