

Conservation Advisory Council Meeting Notes

July 26, 2023

Attending from the council:

Jeff Bissonnette, NW Energy Coalition
Jonathon Belmont (for Margaret Lewis),
Bonneville Power Administration
Andy Cameron, Oregon Department of
Energy
Charity Fain, Community Energy Project
Kari Greer, Pacific Power

Tina Jayaweera, Northwest Power and
Conservation Council
Lisa McGarity, Avista
Emily Moore (for Becky Walker), NEEA
Noemi Ortiz, Cascade Natural Gas
Laney Ralph, NW Natural
Jake Wise, Portland General Electric

Attending from Energy Trust:

Caryn Appler
Kathleen Belkhatay
Michael Colgrove
Tara Crookshank
Hannah Cruz
Mia Deonate
Elizabeth Fox
Lidia Garcia
Fred Gordon
Megan Greenauer
Ansley Guzynski
Sue Fletcher
Jeni Hall
Mana Haeri
Michael Hoch
Tiffany Hatteberg
Alanna Hoyman-Browe
Isaiah Kamrar
Marshall Johnson

Scott Leonard
Debbie Menashe
Spencer Moersfelder
Themba Mutepfa
Andi Nix
Alex Novie
Natalia Ojeda
Kirstin Pinit
Elaine Prause
Helen Rabold
Lizzie Rubado
Laura Schaefer
Tracy Scott
Kenji Spielman
Janelle St. Pierre
Greg Stokes
Julianne Thacher
Kate Wellington

Others attending:

Dave Hammond, CLEAResult
Haixiao Huang, NW Natural
Chad Ihrig, Google Nest
Brooke Landon, CLEAResult
Will Mulhern, ODOE
Jenny Sorich, CLEAResult

Bendikt Springer, Community Action
Partnership of Oregon
Cindy Strecker, CLEAResult
Peter Therkelsen, Energy Trust board
Matt Tidwell, PGE

1. Welcome and Announcements

Hannah Cruz, senior stakeholder relations and policy manager, convened the meeting at 1:30 p.m. via Zoom. The agenda, notes and presentation materials are available www.energytrust.org/about/how-we-operate/public-meetings/conservation-advisory-council-meetings/.

2. Community agreements

Topic Summary

Hannah Cruz summarized the community agreements for council members, meetings and attendees. Agreements are to:

- Stay engaged
- Share the stage
- Listen to each other to learn and understand
- Assume best intent and attend to impact
- Address actions that marginalize or harm another person

Discussion

None

3. Proposed Revisions to Energy Trust's Fuel-switching Policy

Topic summary

Energy Trust operates under a board-approved Fuel-switching Policy. The board Nominating & Governance Committee has identified revisions to the policy to clarify the organization may receive and expend funding—outside core ratepayer funding—that may include fuel-specific requirements. With guidance from Oregon Public Utility Commission (OPUC) representatives, the committee has identified additional changes to align the policy with emerging state policy on decarbonization.

Debbie Menashe, general counsel, reviewed factors prompting the board committee's review of the policy, including upcoming funding opportunities and stakeholder feedback, and walked through the proposed policy revisions. Revisions are important so that board policies are not an obstacle to Energy Trust receiving federal and other funding that could help serve customers that have significant barriers to participation. The policy in no way indicates that Energy Trust will deprioritize gas energy savings. Council member feedback is sought and will be considered and shared with the board when it deliberates the policy change at its August 9 meeting.

Discussion

Council members expressed varied views on the proposed policy update, including support, caution and not objecting. They appreciated the opportunity for review and asked to see the policy again if it changes substantially.

Council members discussed areas of potential clarification in the policy language, including adding a definition of energy efficiency to the policy to be clear that conversion from gas to electric is excluded; some people see energy efficiency as including conversion from electric to gas (Tina Jayaweera). Energy Trust defines energy efficiency as "a reduction in gas or electricity consumption while maintaining or improving the level of service provided by an end use, system or piece of equipment." The Northwest Power and Conservation Council's definition of efficiency is "any reduction in electric power consumption as a result of increases in the efficiency of energy use, production, or distribution." The policy could also be clearer in its references to the grant agreement. Energy Trust's electric efficiency funds are not part of the grant agreement with the OPUC since House Bill 3141 (Kari Greer). Debbie Menashe explained that while House Bill 3141 moved electric efficiency funds into the standard ratemaking process, those funds are still overseen by the OPUC under its grant agreement with Energy Trust.

Council members asked why the board is changing the policy now and chose not to wait for guidance from the OPUC (Lisa McGarity). Staff responded that the timing of the policy change was driven by funding opportunities and concerns brought up by various stakeholders.

Council members asked how the policy fits with Energy Trust's grant agreement with the OPUC (Jake Wise). Staff responded that all board policies must be consistent with the grant

agreement. Both the current and restated policy are consistent with Energy Trust's grant agreement with the OPUC.

Council members expressed concerns about Energy Trust seeking additional funding given the organization's current workforce constraints and limited bandwidth (Noemi Ortiz). Staff responded that Energy Trust is adding staff to be ready to tackle larger energy efficiency goals, and external funding provides an additional resource to hire staff. Energy Trust's focus will remain steadily on ratepayer funding work with its five utility partners.

Council members voiced concern about implications this policy would have on Energy Trust's programs, specifically around cross-subsidization of ratepayer funds and program prioritization. Energy Trust is not expecting to meet gas efficiency goals for 2023, and meeting existing goals is a concern while also pursuing additional opportunities (Laney Ralph). Energy Trust should prioritize gas efficiency projects so that gas utilities can meet their Climate Protection Program compliance goals (Noemi Ortiz).

Council members expressed confidence in Energy Trust's policy development process (Jeff Bissonnette) and support for updating this policy (Charity Fain, Emily Moore, Jeff Bissonnette, Kari Greer). The policy update is long overdue. To support customer choice, choices should not be limited to existing fuel source. Energy Trust needs to have programs that enable customers to make the choice to switch fuels. The new policy will allow Energy Trust to be more responsive to customer needs and more creative about how funds are deployed. A council member expressed that hopefully this is an interim policy change and that there can be more development on this policy as we learn more about decarbonization goals(Charity Fain). In addition, council members shared that allowing additional funding for programs aimed at decarbonization feels like a needed steppingstone (Emily Moore) and that this is an area ripe for exploration and, in this new era of decarbonization, Energy Trust is heading in the right direction with this policy change (Jeff Bissonnette).

Council members noted no opposition to the policy change (Andy Cameron).

Next Steps

Council members are invited to email feedback to Debbie Menashe or Hannah Cruz by August 1. Staff will take feedback from the council to share with the board at its August 9 meeting for discussion. There is not another council engagement regarding this policy but there could be if there are substantial additional changes to this policy.

4. 2024 Action Planning—Deep Dive into Priority Topics

Topic Summary

Alanna Hoyman-Browe, project manager, reviewed the perspectives on customer priorities and needs for Energy Trust to consider as it plans for 2024 energy efficiency program services and incentives. During the first budget development session in April, staff gathered the council's thoughts on market trends, customer needs and emerging opportunities in energy efficiency. Staff reviewed a market intelligence memo prepared based on that input and input from the Renewable Energy Advisory Council, Diversity Advisory Council, Energy Trust board and utility partners. The council will then identify the top areas of opportunity to have deeper discussion on during today's meeting.

Tracy Scott, director of programs, recapped what council members shared with staff this spring about what is being seen in the market. Tracy also described the need for Energy Trust to accelerate energy savings by 2030, which requires the organization to make 2024 and 2025 investments in delivery infrastructure, work more with communities and community-based organizations, and redesign programs and offers.

Discussion

Council members voted on discussion topics from the market intelligence memo, selecting three for deeper discussion in facilitated breakout rooms. Discussions were then summarized for the full group.

Topic 1: Developing new delivery partners

Staff shared existing efforts to build out Energy Trust's Community Partner Funding offer, including creating structure and support for participants and plans to expand the network. In certain parts of the state there aren't community partners to work with or if there are, they don't have capacity or interest.

Council members discussed:

- Funding and funding mechanisms for partner organizations
- How to scale participation in a cost-effective manner
- Leveraging additional funding such as through the Inflation Reduction Act and Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund
- Community Energy Project's plans to develop and train a network of community-based organizations around the state and potential collaboration with Energy Trust
- The need for organizations to be supported with operating costs
- How to engage the next generation of staff
- The urgency of this work given influx of federal funds
- The complexity of delivering multi-measure programs and the steep learning curve for most organizations

Topic 2: Supporting workforce development

Staff summarized current work to cultivate skills, close diversity gaps and build business capacity. This includes mentoring, career exploration, training, curriculum development, fairs, pre-apprenticeships, and fellowship and research grants.

Council members discussed:

- How to help the industry determine what workforce development is needed
- Recommendations for training areas
- Recruitment and development of younger workers
- The acute need for skilled workers in rural areas
- Measuring success through long-term job growth in the sector
- The need for Energy Trust to identify and fill gaps and barriers impacting program delivery and its ability to meet goals
- The opportunity for Energy Trust to be a leader in the workforce development space

Topic 3: Prioritizing weatherization

Staff described Energy Trust's current weatherization offers, including ceiling, wall and floor insulation and windows.

Council members discussed:

- Critical home repairs as a barrier to participation (such as roof repairs, asbestos removal, etc.)
- The challenge of providing repairs within cost-effectiveness test requirements
- The need to look at the "whole home" as a system when engaging in weatherization
- How gap funding is needed to allow equitable access to Energy Trust offers and how additional funding could be leveraged

- Capacity of community-based organizations to do weatherization and repair work and braid funds
- Customer protection considerations and rate impact given non-cost-effective energy efficiency is still less expensive than other resources
- Delivery capacity barriers and costs to train partners across the state of Oregon

Next Steps

Notes from this discussion will be shared with Energy Trust staff developing 2024 budgets and actions plans. The September council meeting will include a topic on the key assumptions and themes influencing the overall organizational budget.

5. Member Announcements, Suggestions for Future Meetings and Public Comment

Emily Moore shared that NEEA has a next cycle strategic and business plan draft that is out for public comment and accepting comments through August 4.

There was no public comment.

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m. Meeting materials are available [online](#). The next meeting of the council will be September 20, 2023.