

Conservation Advisory Council Meeting Notes

April 12, 2022

Attending from the council:

Jeff Bissonnette, NW Energy Coalition
Jake Wise, Portland General Electric
Kari Greer, Pacific Power
Monica Cowlshaw, Cascade Natural Gas
Andy Cameron, Oregon Department of Energy
Lisa McGarity, Avista
Anna Kim, Oregon Public Utility Commission
Becky Walker, Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance
Laney Ralph, NW Natural
David Murphy, Bonneville Power Administration (for Margaret Lewis)

Attending from Energy Trust:

Hannah Cruz	Adam Bartini
Elizabeth Fox	Sue Fletcher
Elaine Dado	Michael Colgrove
Alex Novie	Bayoan Ware
Jay Ward	Jackie Goss
Steve Lacey	Amber Cole
Tom Beverly	Ryan Crews
Fred Gordon	Sarah Castor
Tracy Scott	Debbie Menashe
Amanda Potter	Cameron Starr
Cameron Matthews	Quinn Cherf
Greg Stokes	Emily Estrada
Kirstin Pinit	Shelly Carlton
Marshall Johnson	Renee Garrels
Melanie Bissonnette	
Julianne Thacher	
Thad Roth	
Wendy Gibson	

Others attending:

John Molnar, Rogers Machinery	Roger Kainu, Oregon Department of Energy
Peter Therkelsen, Energy Trust Board of Directors	Benedikt Springer, Community Action Partnership of Oregon
Charity Fain, Community Energy Project	Brooke Landon, CLEAResult
Haley Ellett, City of Hood River	

1. Welcome and announcements

Hannah Cruz, senior stakeholder relations and policy manager, convened the meeting at 1:00 p.m. via Zoom. The agenda, notes and presentation materials are available at www.energytrust.org/about/public-meetings/conservation-advisory-council-meetings.

Hannah opened with a summary of the agenda and led a round of introductions among the Conservation Advisory Council and board members present. Hannah introduced Renee Garrels as facilitator for the strategic direction conversation.

Hannah provided an update on the board of directors committees. Previously, the board had multiple committees. Over the last few months, it has reviewed the structure and purviews of the committees and decided to consolidate and restructure into three committees. In addition to these three standing board committees, an Evaluation Advisory Group will be created to replace the previous board Evaluation Committee. The Evaluation Advisory Group will have approximately eight members including staff. There will also be staff-led public webinars to go over the specifics of each evaluation. The first webinar will be this summer. Council members will be invited, and the webinars will be recorded.

2. Strategic considerations and market insights

Topic summary

Hannah Cruz stated that the process to gather Conservation Advisory Council input to annual planning and budgeting is slightly different this year, in part due to feedback from council members last summer. The change in process is intended to engage the council earlier in the planning process in ways that are relevant to council members' expertise.

There will be a three-part process, starting with this meeting, to gather council input and feedback on 2023 priorities and plans. The second engagement point will happen at the June 29 Conservation Advisory Council meeting. The third engagement point will occur in October.

Renee Garrels facilitated the discussion by asking for council input on a series of questions, listed below.

Discussion

Industry Trends: How are things changing from where Energy Trust, the industry or Oregon were two years ago?

- There are a lot of newcomers in the energy efficiency space who are in learning mode. It's providing more opportunities to think of new ways of doing things, especially in residential. (Lisa McGarity)
- Residential is important. Bonneville Power Administration is focused on reducing energy consumption during the peak morning and evening periods. For measures, as of April 2020 Bonneville Power Administration no longer has retail lighting and heat pump water heater units have seen \$400 – \$500 price increases, which has hindered their potential. (Dave Murphy)
- There's an increased focus on localized and demand side management. (Jake Wise)
- There are a lot of supply chain issues and costs increasing. The learning curve for new technology especially in underserved communities is slow and Community Energy Project spends a lot of time deploying new technology and making sure staff understand it so they can explain it to customers. Conferences are starting to roll back out bringing a larger focus on equity than in the past. Utilities and others co-creating with community-based organizations is an exciting shift. (Charity Fain)
- There is a focus on disaster recovery, with an emphasis on wildfires and proactive hardening of structures. (Andy Cameron)

- Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance is finding that manufacturer conversations show an emphasis on making new technologies more foolproof and understandable. There's also a shift away from natural gas in new construction in Washington State. That's unique to the Washington code environment. Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance also sees a focus on residential. (Becky Walker)
- There is more interest by city staff in local planning efforts to gain environmental justice and energy efficiency for residents. Some need support on how to put outreach efforts together to get what they want for residents. (Roger Kainu)
- For commercial there will be an increased focus on building performance based on local policies and companies having sustainability goals. There's also a focus on integrated approaches. (Becky Walker)
- How to redefine energy efficiency to support decarbonization is another trend. The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy is doing a lot of impressive work in this area with climate-forward efficiency. (Jake Wise)
- Energy Trust and all of us cannot afford to leave whole segments of customers behind anymore. (Charity Fain)
- It's important to think about supply chain disruptions that are happening for budgeting and forecasting. (Becky Walker)
- The housing unit must be in good enough repair to install energy efficiency technology, meaning there is prework. (Dave Murphy)
- There are prework needs in wildfire recovery, especially in the manufactured home space. Some people were buying used models and those units certainly required prework before energy efficiency measures could be pursued. (Andy Cameron)
- Cost-effectiveness testing primarily establishes a "go/no-go" criterion for energy efficiency programs or portfolios. This is distinct from the crucial task of establishing the objectives (equity, carbon) around which Portland General Electric seeks to optimize its portfolios. (Jake Wise)
- Finding more opportunities for co-funding. Also, there is a shortage of trades to do the work. (Lisa McGarity)

What are customer and community needs?

- Making information more accessible and relevant, meaning avoiding jargon and industry terms in talking to the public. (Monica Cowlshaw)
- Real time translation and interpretation in public meetings. (Andy Cameron)
- Community Energy Project has invested heavily in training staff in the technical information around distribution system planning and revamping workshops and materials. It's very labor intensive to translate things into languages that everyone can understand – moving away from engineering language. Bad language translations are an issue as well. People do care and start to get excited when they learn and start to understand new technology. Also, customers increasingly need cooling. It's a bigger and bigger issue. (Charity Fain)

- Agree with the need to develop cultural competency to hear all voices. Translating utility speak is one thing, but then making it relevant is the next step. That can also be challenging and a lot of work. (Jake Wise)
- There is a sense of confusion on behalf of customers to understand their choices, what they can do and what's best. There's an interest and willingness to do more, but they need help navigating to the right thing for them. (Jeff Bissonnette)
- Some customers must choose between energy efficiency or going to work, plus there are other barriers to completing energy efficiency. (Lisa McGarity)
- It cannot be assumed that people are connected or have access to Wi-Fi. Also, some people don't trust it and don't want it. Many smart thermostats installed aren't connected for both reasons. (Charity Fain)

What are some barriers in the market?

- Funding low-income multifamily developments. (Dave Murphy)
- Lack of money for upfront investments, and buildings with too much deferred maintenance. (Charity Fain)
- Inflation—this is a challenge across the board. When equipment costs double and triple, it effects all sectors. People can't afford to do efficiency to save money on their bills. (Lisa McGarity)
- Drought is a barrier in the market. Farmers aren't planting due to drought or are selling their farms or livestock. That has effects on commercial and residential consumption, but we don't know how much yet. (Dave Murphy)
- In the Klamath Basin drought is a very real-time issue with water predictions/availability and farmer anger/angst. Renters face barriers. They'd like to see changes to their home, but they don't have authority to make them. Property owners are reluctant and slow to move. (Kari Greer)
- Renters also have issues because rent costs often rise after energy-efficient upgrades are made. (Charity Fain)
- An opportunity exists to collectively show up as implementation stewards to municipalities. They go through the work of creating action plans but have little technical assistance to prioritize and put them into practice. Energy Trust does a good job of this but working together can help to support it. (Jake Wise)
- Consumers are looking at rental property options and asking for energy performance information on rental spaces. Cities are asking for rental property energy scoring programs to help their residents choose efficient rental spaces. Beyond energy scoring properties, both residents and cities are asking for incentives to help with upgrades (efficiency and cooling) to rental units. (Roger Kainu)
- About 50% of Pacific Power's service area are rentals. Some areas have higher rental density than others. (Kari Greer)

What programs or offers are out there to meet needs?

- Comfort Ready Homes. Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance and Ryan Crews, from Energy Trust, helped with this. Installers are paid to come to people's homes and give performance spiffs to people who emphasize and install higher efficiency units. Twenty or so Bonneville Power Administration member utilities are signed up and there is a lot of money on the table to get the attention of customers. (Dave Murphy)
 - Energy Trust staff clarified this refers to a midstream program to help make market participation simpler and heat pump water heaters easier to sell.
- Midstream and working with the actors in that area is the right focus across the region. It's about overcoming the barriers discussed. Distributors and retailers may be better at speaking the customer's language. (Becky Walker)
- On-bill financing for rental properties would help, but program implementers like Energy Trust would need to be careful what that looks like. Energy savings won't necessarily offset the loan amounts. However, could incentives be set to encourage projects among property owners if they agree to cover a larger part of the project cost, and the renter could pay the remainder over time? (Kari Greer)
- Community Energy Project is smaller than a midstream program, but it completed about 20 deep retrofits in 2021 and is trying to double that each year. It is still doing a heat pump water heater replacement program and would like to expand more outside of Portland. It is involved in the SALMON Project with Energy Trust and Portland General Electric. It needs deeper energy efficiency work in homes. The needs in homes are way more than expected. (Charity Fain)
- There are a lot of opportunities around bill alerts and helping customers manage their energy use. Behavioral pilots are now more accurate about defining the loads that customers are using. Information is already available, but people don't sign up. Overcoming those barriers is important. (Lisa McGarity)

How are council members' organizations talking about serving their own customers?

- Portland General Electric recognizes that it has blind spots about how and when it seeks to engage with environmental justice communities. It needs to take advantage of opportunities to ensure it has nontraditional and nontechnical stakeholders in the discussion. It is increasingly recognizing that feedback needs to happen early and often. (Jake Wise)
- Pacific Power is listening to environmental justice communities, but the House Bill 2021 definition is very broad. It touches nearly the entire service. (Kari Greer)
- Urgency. There is a need for everything to move faster because the need is greater. I have less patience with structure and systems that are getting in the way. Things that were in place 20 years ago are getting in the way now. Part of the conversation is that there isn't enough being done. People need to be served face-to-face without losing hope. The political hills are hard but there is a need to keep pushing. (Charity Fain)

What are the biggest market opportunities on the horizon?

- Some opportunities come from things done in the past but that kind of went away. Examples are gas heat pumps, solar water heating with gas backups and even pool heaters—there are lots of natural gas pool heaters in Southern Oregon. There's a lead-time in reintroducing new or old technology into the market. (Lisa McGarity)

- Split system heat pump water heaters for multifamily buildings. This is still formulative. Bonneville Power Administration is part of a national group that just formed to help with this. It's not quite ready to go to market yet. (Dave Murphy)
- There are opportunities from stacking incentives and dual-fuel gas and electric space heating. (Becky Walker)
- Hybrid solutions and gas backups are resiliency items. There are opportunities with distribution system connected technologies, storage and others. There should be reconsideration of what's eligible when you discuss co-funding. (Jake Wise)
- Oregon Department of Energy continues to discuss opportunities to engage in rural and agriculture spaces, including small town Main Street revitalization efforts. Heat pumps/cooling are additional opportunities. There should also be some thinking about new ways to define and expand upon the definitions of energy efficiency, including quantification of non-energy benefits in cost-effectiveness models. (Andy Cameron)
- Communities want to do green tariffs and each community has a different idea of how that looks. There is increasing chatter about fuel switching to electric end-uses. Some of Pacific Power's more vocal communities are strong proponents of electrification (electric vehicles, home heating, etc.). (Kari Greer)
- Cost-effectiveness shouldn't be used anymore. How will this look when units will last a long time and costs are going up? If cost-effectiveness can't be removed, there should be low-income carve outs. What's the point of doing this work if the building envelope is really bad? Some of these repair costs need to be included. (Charity Fain)

What opportunities for collaborative partnerships with other organizations should Energy Trust pursue?

- United States Department of Agriculture or other federal mechanisms providing grants, incentives or loans. (Kari Greer)
- Establish relationships with Oregon Housing and Community Services Department and community action agencies. There's a unique opportunity in light of Senate Bill 1536 to expand the conversation and bring Oregon Housing and Community Services Department, Energy Trust, utilities and Oregon Department of Energy together to streamline weatherization and bill assistance. (Jake Wise)
- Look into how people enter the solar trade. It's not easy to move into that trade. The opportunities I found for BIPOC was in Portland. There are many training requirements to complete. The program for diverse communities includes a stipend, but it does not seem to be enough to support someone making that leap. (Lisa McGarity)
- There is a need for workforce development across a variety of sectors in many areas of the state, especially rural. (Andy Cameron)

What should Energy Trust's strategic priorities be?

- Reference the Climate-Forward Efficiency Roadmap (American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, February 2022). Redefine energy efficiency to support decarbonization and treat it as an intentional driver of greenhouse gas reduction. (Jake Wise)

- Collaboration driving innovation in rural, underserved and rental markets. (Andy Cameron)

Next steps

There will be an additional deeper dive into these topics at a Conservation Advisory Council meeting in June or July, followed by staff drafting program and support group action plans and budgets starting in late summer.

3. Public comment

There was no additional public comment.

4. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m. Meeting materials (agendas, presentations and notes) are available [online](#). The next meeting is on Wednesday, May 11, 1:30 p.m. – 4 p.m.