



SPRING ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

June 17, 2021

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Members Present

Alice Massara, Chair, Tacoma Power
Alan Hardcastle, WSU Energy Program
Brian Young, WA Department of Commerce
Bob Guenther, RETC
Court Stanley, Centralia College
Dan Kay, Grays Harbor PUD
Jeremy Gall, Avista
Jim Lowery, Centralia College
Micah Goo, City of Centralia
Nicole Schwall, Lewis County PUD
Todd Currier, WSU Energy Program
Sara Bowles, Tacoma Power

Ex Officio

Jake Fay, Centralia College
Monica Brummer, PNCECE Director
Piper Johnson, Centralia College
Rulon Crawford, Centralia College
Terry Cox, PNCECE Interim Director

Guests

Elodie Marlet, Ph.D, Seattle Jobs Initiative
Kathleen Carson, Ph.D., Seattle Jobs Initiative

Members Absent

ML Norton, City of Centralia
PJ LeCompte Jr., BPA
Jay Pickett, Corps of Engineers
Brian Odell, Chelan PUD
Sean Bagsby, IBEW Local 77
Ben Feliz, Clark PUD

10:00 Introductions

10:15 Overview of meeting agenda

10:18 Overview of February 18, 2021 Action: Approved

10:20 Presentation: *Clean Energy in the Bonneville Power Administration Area*, Seattle Jobs Initiative, Kathleen Carson, Ph.D. & Elodie Marlet, Ph.D.

Clean Energy Policies – Washington State (Kathleen)

Federal Clean Energy Policies (Elodie)

Statistics: Focus - utility workforce sectors in WA, OR, ID

Overview of Efforts: Battery and pump storage. Other Efforts: Solar installation and grid modernization.

COVID-19 Impact: Limited-to-no impact on Clean Energy Projects. Original lockdown put several things on pause, but this allowed focus on other small projects.

-Recruitment moved online. Interviewees reported challenges with trust of websites, but cost was reduced. Training and responsibilities had to adapt and expand to address COVID-19 procedures and the IT infrastructure.

-Public Policies: Minimal project impact was reported. Equity concerns were mentioned regarding investment in battery storage/grid modernization and necessary added capacity. Impact on low-income communities via bill cost.

-Workforce: Hard skills in technology and data analytics will be required of employees. Innovative and flexible skills will be necessary.

a. Interview barriers: Strict experience and training required. Lack of long-term planning. Less responsive and more proactive - Update of strategies. Lack of diversity and shortage of hydro-operators. Female representation has improved. Issues with retention – older population of workers, COVID hastened some worker's retirement plans, planning could help manage a transition to a younger workforce and less of an impact on generational divide. Diversity not expected to quickly change due to labor pool, but upcoming retirement could open the opportunity to diversify the workforce. Additional college level advertising of the workforce can expand interest in the younger generation.

b. Recruitment/Retention: Adaptation in cyber security, adaptation to developing technology, and openness to new tasks. Need to have experience in multiple communication protocols to enable product integration.

c. Skill shortage: Skills to invest in include cybersecurity and soft skills such as communication and digital literacy. Cybersecurity teams working with k-12 and women only groups to help increase diversity. State apprenticeship program – working with L&I and utilities in WA, OR, ID on the designing a program to create expertise on cybersecurity.

d. Future clean energy jobs: Concerns include long wait times in training. Electricians required to complete an apprenticeship. Automation demand may change in specific jobs only in relation to how jobs are completed, not the general job demand.

Conclusion:

- Concerns about technical feasibility, decrease of financial cost to low-income communities, how to create good paying jobs for fossil fuel workers who are transitioning.
- Clean energy projects.
- Workforce training with k-12 and college level to increase diversity and training.

Questions:

-Bob Guenther-Pump storage should be included as energy storage. References Goldendale pump storage facility.

Alan Hardcastle–Appreciation of update demographics and time spent in interviews. Feels this is useful information. Asked if Energy Efficiency topic came up. Dept of Commerce focuses on energy efficiency to meet national and state goals. **Answer:** Did not come up through stakeholders – only was brought up via Alan and Dept of Commerce. Did come up with regard to labor: not particularly good jobs – not unionized, not great pay, not great benefits. Many jobs were displaced due to COVID.

Bob mentioned prevailing wage in Washington is county specific.

Brian Young/Todd Currier – Utilities are not responsible for energy efficiency jobs due to policies. Private sector showing these responsibilities.

Terry - Center collaboration between our CoE and Construction to build energy efficiency.

Kathleen – Apprenticeship programs to add to career skill set.

Sara Bowles – Doesn't see energy efficiency dying out, just turning into something new. Especially in commercial sector.

--10 minute break from 11:22-11:32 AM--

11:35 Presentation: 2021-22 CoE Strategic Plan Goals, presented by Terry Cox, PNCECE Interim Director

- Thank you to subcommittee and background information.
- Vision and Mission for the PNCECE
- Expectations for each Center
- Background: Used reports (clean energy strategy, etc.), December board survey conducted by previous CoE director, and SJI study
- Organizing the Pieces: Goals >Strategies>Tactics
- Operation items vs. Strategic items
- Strategic Plan Goals July 2021-June 2022

Comments:

Bob – Add “labor” between “industry and organizations” to goal 1 (universal throughout the document).

Alan – Referring to Strategy 1 – S1 Add “sectors”

Todd – Grant opportunities will have a short window of opportunity. (Be aware) Money is coming.

Jeremy – Industry and adjacent industry. Would like updates either through meetings or reaching out to board members individually to understand workforce needs going forward.

Brian –Washington State Department of Commerce is launching a statewide Innovation Cluster Accelerator Program (ICAP) grant to support the development of high-impact, high-value clusters built around Washington’s industries of the future. Details forthcoming.

12:28 Action Item: Vote to Approve 2021-22 Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies:

Motion to accept the strategic plan goals – Bob Guenther.

Motion seconded – Alan Hardcastle. Motion passed. Strategic plan approved.

12:30 Industry Updates:

- Daniel Kay – Substation engineer opening in Grays Harbor PUD.
- Jeremy Gall – Avista is working with local agencies and labor to create a new program that targets rural high school students (targeting rural areas that don’t have the same opportunities that the bigger cities may have). They are exploring four 9-month part-time paid student craft worker positions that would be accredited with high schools. Hoping to promote in spring to have students start in Fall 2022. Activities would give exposure to students with a goal of moving them through a pipeline and into pre-apprentice programs. Looking at jobs in hydro, distribution, electric meter, etc. COVID – Roughly half of employees returning voluntarily starting July (Sept likely will be required to come back in person).
- Bob Guenther – Centralia is the hub of clean energy for WA state. State-wide significance potential. We’re on it and have a real shot at making this a national model.
- Todd Currier – Thanked Terry for her direction.
- Alice Massara – Tacoma Power is reviewing its apprenticeship program and hiring processes. Staff are diving into the process to make some strong changes to how they recruit, conduct outreach, and make decisions. Like many utilities, TPU’s primary workforce has been predominantly white male. Need to create a pre-apprenticeship program to make a more step-by-step process. Will update of future progress.
- Bob Guenther – SWIFT Center at Centralia College update. \$1.3 million project funded by TransAlta includes a 53-foot portable lab with virtual reality stations that will serve 15 students at a time.

12:58 Meeting Adjourned