

**City of Arcata Energy Committee  
Annual Report to the City Council**

**July 2010**

The Energy Committee meets on the third Monday of each month and serves in an advisory capacity to the City Council, City Manager and City staff in Energy matters related to policies, management and projects.

Committee members include:

Ruthanne Cecil	Andrew Kulchin	Jim Zoellick, Chair
Peter Alstone	Steve Salzman	Sarah Schneider, Staff Liaison
Morgan King	Andy Sorter	Karen Diemer, Staff Liaison

**I. ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The Energy Committee has been involved in the following activities since the last Annual Report was submitted to the Council in August of 2009:

**Energy Specialist** – The Committee would like to stress the continued importance of the Energy Specialist position. We thank Council and staff for immediately hiring a replacement upon Ms. Beckie Menten's departure. Beckie was a pleasure to work with and made great contributions to the City's energy program. We wish her well in her future endeavors. We are also glad to welcome Ms. Sarah Schneider, whom we are confident will do an excellent job as well. We look forward to working with Sarah.

**Education and Outreach** – The Committee has worked with staff to conduct numerous education and outreach activities. These include: sponsoring a "Sea Level Rise Event" to bring attention to climate change and the effects it will have on our local environment, getting a solar electric interpretive display installed at City Hall, promoting events for Energy Awareness Month in October and co-sponsoring the Humboldt Solar Neighbors Tour and the Plan It Green Wheels of Change conference.

**Green Building Program** – A Humboldt Green Building Program, developed and prepared by Plan It Green with the assistance of Redwood Coast Energy Authority is a web-based resource that provides information on green building strategies, resources and contractors. The program will also include educational workshops and one-on-one and group consultation on projects. The Committee has monitored the progress of this program and is working to assess how the City of Arcata can best leverage the program. The City could choose to encourage or require newly constructed and retrofitted buildings in Arcata to meet certain green building criteria. The Committee will provide recommendations for future green building activities in Arcata.

**Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program** – The County of Humboldt has been in the process of developing a seven-county regional PACE program that will make available benefit assessment financing for energy efficiency and renewable energy retrofits on commercial and residential properties. Locally, this program will be implemented by the Redwood Coast Energy Authority. The City of Arcata hopes to participate in this program. Unfortunately, a recent ruling by the Federal Housing Finance Authority (FHFA), which

oversees Fanny Mae and Freddy Mac, has placed a serious cloud over the existence of PACE programs, and nationally all PACE programs--both operational and in development--are on hold. The Energy Committee is monitoring the development of this program and will provide recommendations as appropriate.

**Time-of-Sale Program** – The Redwood Coast Energy Authority is continuing development of a voluntary program to promote residential energy assessments at time-of-sale, which is believed to be a high-leverage opportunity to finance efficiency retrofits and renewable energy projects through their inclusion in a new home mortgage. A barrier to the roll-out of this program has been uncertainty regarding selection of an appropriate home energy assessment protocol. With the high likelihood that several upcoming residential retrofit programs (PACE, Home Star, PG&E Whole House Performance Program) will require home assessments, and thus provide a higher demand locally for home performance professionals, RCEA is waiting for clarity from these programs regarding their required assessment protocol. When the Time-of-Sale program is launched, RCEA hopes to work with the City of Arcata to promote it to Arcata homeowners.

**Green Business Program** – The Committee worked with the Design Review Commission to develop a green business design award as part of Design Review’s award program. However, the Design Review Commission has suspended their awards program, so the green business design award has been tabled.

**Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan** – The Committee reviewed and endorsed the updated Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.

**Input to Planning Commission on Solar Electric Projects** – Following public input to the Energy Committee regarding the Planning Commission’s disapproval of a local solar electric project, the Energy Committee submitted a letter to the Planning Commission regarding solar electric installations and the City’s sustainable energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals. There are plans for the Energy Committee Chair to meet with the Planning Commission to further discuss this topic.

**High Electricity Use Tax** – Electricity use by Arcata’s residences is growing at an alarming rate. Compared to the State of California as a whole, Arcata’s residential electricity use is growing over three times faster. This is attributable to a small number of residences that are using excessive amounts of electricity. This is having serious detrimental effects on Arcata’s efforts to meet sustainable energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals. In an effort to discourage high electricity use and to raise revenue to fund energy efficiency and renewable energy efforts, the Energy Committee has been exploring the possibility of implementing a high electricity use tax.

**Collaboration with Transportation Safety Committee** – The transportation sector is a big contributor to the City’s greenhouse gas emissions. To address this the Committee has been exploring ways to promote sustainable transportation, especially bicycle and pedestrian modes of travel. The Transportation Safety Committee, as part of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, is also trying to promote alternative modes of travel in an effort to achieve a goal of 50% non-motorized transport in Arcata by 2020. To advance these mutual goals (non-motorized

travel and greenhouse gas reductions), the Transportation Safety Committee and the Energy Committee have agreed to collaborate. We are beginning this effort with a joint meeting between our two committees in July 2010.

**Input to Pre-Application Process** – The Energy Committee continues to review and offer energy related recommendations for development projects that are going through the City's pre-application process. In 2009-2010 this included the Campbell Creek Apartment Development

**Energy Policy Positions** – The Energy Committee provided recommendations to staff and Council regarding positions to take regarding state and federal energy legislation, including federal climate change legislation and California's Proposition 16.

## **II. GOALS FOR COMING YEAR**

In the coming year the Energy Committee hopes to:

- Explore the development of a green building program for the City of Arcata in the context of the new county-wide program,
- Assist with the development of the City's PACE program and time-of-sale program,
- Continue to collaborate with RCEA and promote their services,
- Work with the Transportation Safety Committee to promote non-motorized modes of travel,
- Find ways to better engage the community in our GHG reduction efforts,
- Have the Committee Chair meet with the Planning Commission to discuss solar energy installations, and
- Help the City obtain more alternative fuel vehicles for the City fleet.