

**City of Arcata Energy Committee  
2023 Annual Report to the City Council  
For Presentation to the City Council on August 7, 2024**

The Energy Committee meets on the third Monday of odd-numbered months and serves in an advisory capacity to the City Council, City Manager and City staff in energy matters related to policies, management, and projects. The Committee held four regular meetings and two special meetings during 2023.

**2023 Committee Members:**

George Williamson, Chair until March 20, 2023

Michael Winkler, Chair starting on March 21, 2023

Andrea Alstone, Vice-Chair

Patrick Buckwalter (Started September 2023)

Carisse Geronimo (Until May 2023)

Mike Kowalski (Until September 2023)

Gwelen Paliaga

Jim Zoellick

**Committee Staff Liaisons:**

Emily Benvie, Deputy Director - Community Services, Environmental Services Department

Morguine Sefcik, Environmental Programs Manager, Environmental Services Department

**I. ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The Energy Committee was involved in the following activities in 2023:

George Williamson & Michael Winkler both served as Chair and Andrea Alstone served as Vice-Chair in 2023. The Committee confirmed their meeting schedule, in which they hold regular meetings on odd-numbered months. The committee meetings were held in-person in 2023.

**Arcata All Electric Initiative**

The Committee continued work on the All-Electric Initiative. This initiative includes decarbonization and electrification of City and privately-owned buildings using a range of options, including enacting a municipal ordinance gas ban, decarbonizing City facilities, and investigating options to increase equity and affordability of electrification.

- The Energy Committee and the Electrification Subcommittee continued to support the electrification ordinance in the early part of 2023. The Committee reviewed and discussed a draft of the electrification ordinance at the March meeting. At the May meeting, the Committee discussed the ruling by the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco that the City of Berkeley's ban on the installation of natural gas piping in newly constructed buildings violates federal law. At the July meeting, the Committee received an update from City Staff that the City Attorney determined that the Berkeley ruling had preempted a moratorium on the City's draft electrification ordinance and discussed the pros and cons of alternatives to the ordinance, including energy efficiency reach codes, incentivization of all-electric development, and existing building retrofits.
- The Committee received regular updates and provided input on decarbonization of City facilities. Specific examples included:
  - Supporting an application for an Energy Conservation Assistance Act (ECAA) loan to provide energy efficiency upgrades and install rooftop solar at the Arcata Community Center which was approved to be increased in April 2023.
  - Supporting Electric Vehicle Charging Station planning efforts for future Carlson Park development in coordination with Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA).
  - Supporting water heater replacement from gas to electric heat pumps at selected City facilities by partnering with Willdan & RCEA with funding through PG&E.
  - Providing input on potential uses for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) climate change allocations

- The Committee received a presentation from City Engineer, Netra Khatri, on City efforts to decarbonize transportation at their July meeting.

### **Collaboration**

The Committee continues to consult and work collaboratively with RCEA, 350 Humboldt, Redwood Coalition for Climate and Environmental Responsibility (RCCER), and Redwood Energy on energy and climate-related issues. At the July meeting, the Committee received a presentation from RCEA staff, Juliette Bohn, about their e-bike voucher program. Following this presentation, the City decided to partner with RCEA and provide \$20,000 of ARPA funding for e-bike vouchers for City of Arcata residents. The Committee received a presentation from Finance Director, Tabatha Miller, at their special meeting in October on potential new sources of tax revenue to fund climate change adaptation projects. At the December meeting, the Committee formed a ballot measure subcommittee to provide input on potential new sources of tax revenue to fund climate change adaptation projects.

### **Regional Climate Action Plan**

The Committee received updates throughout 2023 on the status of the Regional Climate Action Plan.

### **Biomass**

The Committee received two presentations at their September meeting on biomass energy production and local contracts. The first presentation was from Dr. Wendy Ring who requested the Committee support a resolution calling on RCEA to end biomass contracts. The second presentation was from Richard Engel from RCEA who provided historical context on RCEA's biomass procurement and the role it plays in RCEA's portfolio. Three members of the public spoke in support of the resolution to end biomass contracts. The Committee did not recommend the resolution, as it was written, be approved by City Council.

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

The Committee developed the following goals for FY 2024/2025. Furthermore, the Energy Committee committed to furthering energy-related Environmental Justice and Social Equity.

- 1) Climate Action Plan – Continue to work with the County to adopt and implement a regional Climate Action Plan.
- 2) Transportation Mode Shift - Consistent with the Climate Action Plan – continue to support staff with work related to shifting transportation toward walking, biking, public transportation, and low and zero emission modes of transport for privately and City-owned vehicles.
- 3) Arcata All Electric Initiative – Consistent with the Climate Action Plan, continue work to decarbonize and electrify new and existing construction and end-of-life equipment replacement for City and privately-owned buildings using a range of options, and investigate options to increase equity and affordability of electrification.
- 4) Support Staff to explore low carbon options for community resiliency, including the benefit of solar with battery backup options, microgrids, and grid-interactive efficient buildings.
- 5) Work on improving energy code compliance and enforcement through research into local third-party verifiers, education, and building official education.
- 6) Support the City's leadership in greenhouse gas emissions reduction through decarbonization of City-owned fleet and facilities.