

## MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Climate Action Working Group: November 20, 2015

Muir Woods Conference Room, 175 N. Redwood Blvd., San Rafael

Present: Co-chairs Pam Reaves and Doug Wilson, Ed Mainland, Kiki La Porta, Pat Nelson, Heather Furmidge, Mary Morgan, Chris Callaway, Bill Carney, Tamra Peters, Sandy Wallenstein, Rick Frites, Roger Roberts, Nona Dennis, Judy Teichman, Belle Cole, Tom Flynn, Bob Bundy.

Doug called the meeting to order at 9:04.

**Approval of Minutes:** M/S/P. Ed/Heather/Approved as submitted.

**Approval of the Agenda:** Agenda was approved. M/S/P. Pam/Judy/Approved.

### **Discussion Topic: CAWG Priorities**

Doug introduced the topic by noting the various organizations working together at the recent Lead On Climate event. He also noted that other organizations have failed, due to the inability to collaborate and get things done. One objective of today's discussion is to identify what we have and what we're lacking.

He identified MCL's particular strength as its ability to track decision points and influence decisionmakers. One thing we are lacking is the presence of minorities and poor people. Everyone is affected by climate change, and if particular groups are not at the table, they are not part of the decision.

Comments: Sandy stated that she was glad this topic was broached. When working in the Marin City or Canal neighborhoods, the challenge is to build a large group of engaged residents. This is difficult to accomplish when survival is the most pressing priority for residents. There are issues of resources and geography, also translation and infrastructure issues.

Additional comments addressed the difficulty in getting residents to use a disaster trailer in Marin City, and the small percentage of minorities and low-income residents in Marin, which is related to the shortage of affordable housing. People on fixed incomes are vulnerable too. Roger remarked that the charter of MCL does not deal with social equity. If we intend to deal with these issues, we should address the issue of adding them to our mission statement.

Other comments focused on the role of youth. Climate change impacts their future. Attracting youth might entail the use of celebrities, events with headlines they identify with. Young people attended the Dominican Lead On Climate event. They can be found around universities. Young people often can't afford to live in Marin.

Ed noted the regulatory conundrum. The successful Dominican event indicated public buy-in on the need for renewables, but renewables are dying a regulatory death.

**Group summary of issues/action going forward:** What is the follow-up on the Dominican event? How do we translate enthusiasm to action where it counts? MCL has been successful in targeted action in the past. For example, we played a role in beating back AB 2145. We should pick our battles strategically and parsimoniously, and weigh in with decision-makers. The desired outcome is actions that have impact up to the state level, as well as local. MCL is well positioned to provide voices and a channel. It has a think tank function and also an important emphasis on action. There is a linkage between reaching those who are hard to reach and also reaching the legislature. RE political influence, MCL is uniquely positioned because venerable politicians take us seriously. We should weigh in on energy efficiency and support energy efficiency in multi-family rental housing. There is win-win potential there, for both landlord and tenant, and also a way to connect with people. Put pressure on the County re affordable housing (more than half of county employees do not live in Marin) and work with schools re housing for teachers.

This is a matter of focus. Kiki agreed re putting pressure on MCE and PG&E re programs that can be accessed. The “Sustainable” groups focus on social equity if MCL wants to address that issue. Population and development are major issues. Tamra raised the issue of how we engage people who do not attend meetings: Identify an issue and find people who care—perhaps ask them to write a letter. Mary suggested that it is a good idea to add a social equity component, which is not necessarily separate from the environment as a topic. MCL has a unique place in the landscape, from which we could acknowledge, support, and link with other organizations that are already working successfully in related areas—for example, there are a lot of successful youth organizations.

Nona commented that MCL has been deeply engaged in transportation issues for decades, conjoining them with land use issues. She cited Don Wilhelm as an example. The direction of MCL depends in part on “people resources.” There is a limit to our ability to embrace everything. During the last two years, there has been a shift back to West Marin. Climate issues have been a slow sell. We have allowed others to address housing. In addition to our concern with balance, there is a need to focus. Traditionally, our audience has been decision-makers and an older demographic. That has worked well for us. Nona noted further that our original mission statement referenced protecting assets “for all people,” but that language was dropped because it was too anthropocentric.

MCL can serve as a resource to other groups, provide up-to-date information. Our influence is also important at meetings—most meetings are not even required to consider environmental effects. Rick: We might consider a youth appointment to the Board, or scholarships based on writing an essay.

Other commenters emphasized energy efficiency because it has a great indirect benefit to all of the groups we have been discussing. Monthly expenses are important to everyone, and that issue garners allies in the community. Further, energy efficiency is important in project redevelopment. Bob noted that there is a “Marin against development” counterforce that doesn’t want anything to change or expand. To move energy efficiency forward, we need to support retrofit projects. Example: Corte Madera.

**Doug: How do we translate our discussion into priorities?**

**Recap:** We're following the County Climate Action Plan and city plans. Sixty percent of the emission reductions in the County Plan come from MCE. MCL's priority has been to defend CCAs, to remove roadblocks set up by the Investor-Owned Utilities and negative CPUC actions. CCAs have needed defense in an unfriendly political and economic environment. We've also been following carbon sequestration in West Marin. Our past year has been educational: We've had a series of speakers from the County and MCE. There has been a learning curve.

We have been concerned with identifying the roadblocks to our constructive actions as individuals—for example, eliminating silos. There is also an alienation of the general population from government, a lack of connection and a lack of a feeling that what we do makes a difference. Could we build something similar to Move On in Marin? Our goals include taking responsibility for our own cities and helping council members get elected.

Part of the problem is institutional. DPW implements climate measures and tends to lack the sensitivity to the public that is exhibited by planning departments. However, Rick met with Chris Choo, watershed planner from DPW, and concluded that things look good re sea level rise; they are coordinating and have structures. Chris may speak to us in January. DPW is an important part of the picture, and some commenters noted the need for more public forums, including SMART forums. When there are roadblocks, letter-writing is helpful—letters from MCL or from Ed. We can share our letters with others, who might want to tie in. This will generate additional voices and connections, and a sharing of our routines. Mary noted further the importance of information-sharing and cross-fertilization re arguments to make to decision-makers, perhaps new mechanisms such as Google groups. East Marin and West Marin can learn from each other. People are concerned about their houses. We could have speakers from Bay Wave and Sea Smart on the issues. We can use our access to the ears of public officials, who can then work with DPW.

Re outreach to public officials, Ken Jones [of 350 Marin] picked up our net metering letter. 350 Marin does direct outreach to the CPUC. Ken is a potential speaker to our group. Re the importance of lobbying, should we embrace that? We have power and are not beholden to anyone. We need to be mindful of protecting our nonprofit status when advocating. Belle pointed out that advocacy is different from lobbying. We should look at the distinction carefully when going forward, and consider aligning with other groups of similar interests who do lobbying. We are satisfied with our approach/style. There are examples of lobbying to examine, if we want to do more of it.

Nona suggested that we build our connections to others, for example, Cyane Dandridge of the Environmental Leadership school at Terra Linda. Cyane is a possible speaker to our group. Also Paul de Silva at College of Marin.

Pam suggested that a significant roadblock to our effort is lack of time. We need to leverage our time. We should attend City Council meetings and monitor County agendas as well. Have someone screen the agendas. Then we should shoot information out. Doug: We receive reports from various groups. Should we have more in-depth reports on how they work, 10-15 minutes? Pam: Dropbox is useful, maintain our information in one place.

## **The Regulatory Environment**

Pam and Heather had a discussion re mapping the regulatory environment, and produced a compilation of organizations for future reference. We have varying levels of familiarity with these organizations. For example, does the source of funding have an impact on efficient action? Getting things done is a function of our awareness of such matters. Sandy pointed out that the County has two people designated to track funding—perhaps they are potential speakers. Doug suggested that we ask future guest speakers to outline their funding sources. Roger commented that the power of the purse is everything. We should attend budgetary hearings. Pam: Kate has monitored these hearings.

Chris is in a position to tell us about funding issues we should weigh in on. Funding awareness is an “early warning system” for a need for letter-writing.

RE the Climate Action Plan, we can dial down on the issues. They have knowledgeable staff and quarterly committee meetings. Public meetings are based on participation. Do they want more people?

## **Letter re PCIA**

The PG&E exit fee, charged to customers switching to MCE, has doubled, affecting the competitiveness of MCE. This is also unfair from a social equity standpoint. Most fees are collected from direct access people (for example, Walmart). PG&E will “retire” their billion dollar fund, which means it will disappear from the books. Brown has a “hands off” approach to the CPUC.

**Action item: Should we write a letter to the commissioners, based on Shalini Swaroop’s template and her September presentation to us? What is the timing for the letter? Roger moved to write and send the letter. Rick Seconded. Passed unanimously.**

Ed commented that as beneficial as public outcry is, commissioners listen mostly to legislators, because that is the source of their funding.

Where does Marc Levine stand on this issue? We should cc Levine and Mike McGuire, and the chair of the committee on energy oversight. Ed: There is planned outreach to Levine—focus on anti-CCA measures in the next legislative session.

We will write to the legislators and ask them to take action (via cover letter). If we cc legislators, we should follow up with their staff.

## **Reports and Updates**

**Update: Lead On Climate – Belle**

The event was an overwhelming success. There was enthusiasm, a filled hall, a convergence of talent and purpose. There was a great combination of speakers, with complementary approaches, styles, and information. Fryday was revealing—a politically powerful message that was science-backed.

Belle noted that the event started out with a conversation in Huffman's office. A convergence of climate circumstances inspired people to come. The question is how to build on the community inspiration and the success of this event. Due to the terrorist attack, there will now be no demonstration in Paris. A coalition put this event together and expanded the conversation. There will be a follow-up.

### **Climate Action Plan – Chris**

The County plan has been adopted. They are currently figuring out how to use grant-funded staff time, defining the scope of work. How to structure effort and mechanics, make it as valuable as possible.

Pam: Are quarterly meetings enough? Answer: A commission would absorb staff time. Priorities were set by the Board of Supervisors at the outset—Pam: How were they set? Answer: Dedicated workshop: not monthly meetings. There is a role for an advisory committee re recommended priorities, possibly an unofficial public session. Bill: Will an advisory group include representatives from other jurisdictions, not just the unincorporated areas? Answer: This has not been decided, but probably, yes.

### **Resilient Neighborhoods – Tamra**

Tamra reported a reduction of 60% in carbon produced by residents. There are two new groups: the Gallinas Carbon Catchers and the Bret Harte CO2 Minimizers. Resilient Neighborhoods has reduced 2.67 million pounds of carbon. They have garnered great quotes from constituents re affecting people's lives and creating leaders. Seven households have gone Deep Green.

There is a new section on shopping with a life-cycle focus, shifting buying habits. This is based on an MCEP grant, meetings. They are working with MCE.

### **“Sustainable” Organizations – Bill**

The demonstrations in Paris have been cancelled. Local demonstrations are particularly important. There is a demonstration tomorrow in Oakland. There is another demonstration a week from Sunday, Nov. 29, at the Hub in San Anselmo. Information is available at 350 Marin. Pam: Write a concise announcement and forward to MCL.

### **Community Marin – Rick**

Rick met with Chris Choo and will report on this meeting in January.

### **Main Street Moms – Mary**

The Moms are following up on Lead On Climate and looking into the feasibility of an article to appear at the front page of other organizations' websites.

They are urging people to sign up for MCE Deep Green. Kiki commented that there is a grant to facilitate action on the upcharge to sign up for Deep Green.

### **Meeting of Subcommittee on Letters**

Get letters out. Turn on a dime to respond quickly.

### **Announcements and Questions**

Should we meet in December? Yes, on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Judy suggested that we look into the teleconferencing capacity of our meeting rooms. [Editorial note: The December meeting was subsequently cancelled.]

In January, the plan is to have an update on Bay Wave, with Chris Choo as the presenter. Jack Liebster is a possible speaker as well.

**Meeting Adjourned: 11:02.**