

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Climate Action Working Group: August 21, 2015

Tamalpais Conference Room, 175 N. Redwood Blvd., San Rafael

Present: Co-chairs Pam Reaves and Doug Wilson; Susan Robinson, Judy Teichman, Tamra Peters, Bill Carney, Susan Stompe, Belle Cole, Roger Roberts, Pat Nelson, Heather Furmidge, Mary Morgan, Bob Bundy, Tom Flynn, Kate Powers. Also present, Damon Connolly, Marin County Supervisor; Cory Bytof, City of San Rafael Sustainability Coordinator; Chris Callaway, Sup. Connolly's aide.

Doug opened the meeting at 9:05.

Approval of the Agenda: Agenda was approved by consensus as amended. Roger noted that Jared Huffman will be speaking at the MCL breakfast on August 28th and suggested that we consider what climate-related questions we would like to ask. Doug added that topic as item 4b of the agenda. Bill requested that the Sustainable city organizations not be denominated as "The Sustainables" and Doug agreed that they would be described as "the sustainable organizations" in the future.

Approval of Minutes:

April minutes: M/S/P. M/Doug; 2nd/Pam.

July minutes: M/S/P. M/Roger; 2nd/Doug.

Minutes for both months approved as is.

9:10 Discussion: Moving Climate Planning Forward in Marin

Our overall goal is to bring the discussion down to tangible issues.

Specific items selected to pursue:

1. Further comment on climate action plans. Also, work climate concerns into the fiber of our thinking about all planning issues.
2. Support MCE and further the change to all-electric.
3. "Sponsor" events and get the word out.

We want to encourage people to ask about background issues.

Q. What would a model climate plan look like—necessary components, priorities, thresholds, etc.? This is a fundamental basis for any discussion.

A(s). At the local and state level, it is hard to tie actions to GHG emissions. There is a different priority list every year. (Cory)

The San Rafael model is at the top of the agenda. Also, look to compliance with legislative/regulatory targets for emissions reductions.

Comment: Everyone should have the same measuring stick.

Bob Brown's efforts were cited for GHG reduction strategy and tracking. Tie to specific actions. He hired Christina O'Rourke. Use San Rafael tracking system for all cities. That establishes a baseline. Every five years, an inventory. Additional efforts in interim years.

Q. How should we translate a vision to a decision-making process for specific actions/projects?
(Kate)

A. Embed climate into the general plan. How can we do that?

Move keystone guiding documents into operational departments. This helps in flagging key issues. (Bill)

Coordinating Planning & Process Moving Forward

Presence of a councilperson at meetings is helpful.
Including County and all jurisdictions is a major step forward.
Have quarterly claim action meetings, where the community reports and raises their concerns.

Q. Why is it so hard to take the steps that Debbie Raphael identified?

A(s). 1. Inadequate staffing;
2. It's a cultural issue—the way that the City Manager interfaces with other players.
3. It's time-consuming.
4. Politics: pressure from constituents on competing priorities.
5. It's problematic to bring one more plan online when people don't refer to the General Plan.

Comment: CEQA and tiering makes for greater efficiency.

Damon: The County Plan is available for review online. It goes to the Supervisors in November. Issues: infrastructure for a more formalized process, Board subcommittees, community working group, dedicated staff, benchmarks, priorities and meeting.

Damon: Sea Level Rise. A vulnerability assessment is under way. Concern: How would County work dovetail with cities' work? The goal is effective implementation.

Comments: The Sanitation District has the same staff as and management as the city. Are they part of the Climate Action Plan (are they under it)? Are they accountable to the public? People have been told to leave them alone? Water District—none of cities has base rates on flow rates.

Belle: Relate the County Plan to the State Plan with its reduction goals.

A. This is already addressed in the front end of the Plan. Goals: 80% below 1990 GHG levels by 2050 and a new interim goal to reduce GHGs to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030. The current effort takes us to 2020, gives us time to consider the next goal and how to achieve it.

Is there a concern re unrealistic goals? We depend on state action in areas such as Renewable Portfolio Standards, etc., and for implementation.

Tamra: Resilient Neighborhoods received funding for a staff person to help with its efforts. Resilient Neighborhoods has a database that integrates into the County Plan. It promotes goals of action plans as an interface with communities. This is the kind of outreach that has an effect. Resilient Neighborhoods recently obtained feedback through follow-up on pledged actions. It found that 100% followed through on their pledges and many took additional actions.

Roger: Roger cited the example of state/local building standards. San Rafael takes a lead. The city adopted BERST, its local model for energy efficiency in building, which people felt that they did not have to follow. Then the state acted on performance standards and cities had to follow them. Cities don't have lobbyists, but the county does. If the County took a lobbying position at the state level, resulting in state law mandates, then all of the cities would have to follow. Standards are bumped up by the state, almost to the maximum. The next step is to initiate a similar process for renewable energy.

Action for change works best with specific goals, prioritized.

Examples of counter-productive government interactions

Towns are approving PACE, a template that requires review/approval. PACE would be defeated by flattened rates at the CPUC. Paradox: The governor is saying "Reduce emissions," BUT in middle-range buildings, incentives for solar are taken away. Also consider the elimination of net metering as a loss of incentive. December 2016 is the date for these changes. Climate Action Plans won't be successful if these incentives are rolled back.

Tom Steyer effort to implement solarized schools. Money was spent on consultants. The pipeline was longer than expected.

ACTION SUMMARY: OUR FOCUS AS A GROUP

1. Bringing agencies into the conversation.
2. Talk to the legislative person at MCE.
3. Talk to the County lobbyist.
4. Talk to Christine O'Rourke.

Where we stand on Statewide issues

SB 350 is in committee, and is under attack by the fossil fuel industry. SB 350 would increase the RPS to 50% by 2030, reduce building energy use by 50%, reduce fossil fuel rate by 50%. Fossil fuel lobbyists are busy trying to water down the bill in the Assembly. Sustainable San Rafael is in a conference call regarding climate bills. If pending bills don't pass, that will be a blow to the state's climate efforts on the international level. 350.org is in meetings with Marc Levine.

There is a coal divestment bill pending, SB 185.

Also in the balance is SB 32, which carries out Brown's inaugural speech, setting a goal of an 80% reduction in GHG emissions by 2050.

Action Item: Get letters out. Put pressure on Marc Levine.

Bill Carney and Belle Cole volunteered to work on the letter. Roger Roberts and Doug Wilson also agreed to work on the letter. They will run the letter by Damon Connelly's office. Roger reminded us to be careful to stay within the rules regarding lobbying as the maximum percentage of a nonprofit's activities that may be devoted to lobbying. State an argument re leadership in California, the U.S., and the U.N.

We need to promote turnout for the Amping Up Climate Leadership event at Dominican in November, sponsored by Sustainable San Rafael and Organizing for Action. We have Jared Huffman this year and we are on the brink of the U.N. Climate Conference in Paris, where California will be promoting its climate model; the California delegation will include Ken Alex, who is accompanying Gov. Brown. In addition to Jared Huffman, speakers at the Dominican event will include Josh Friday, COO of the Next Gen climate PAC, a major grassroots speaker, and will also address the Pope's recent activity on climate change. Mary Marcy of Dominican will moderate. The scheduled date is November 5. The Amping Up Climate Leadership event will build ties to the grassroots groups and promote excitement. Each group will commit to take one action. The goal is to reach out to more than the choir and to get 840 people to the Forum.

MCL Business Breakfast with Jared Huffman on August 28

Brainstorming re questions to ask:

1. Tom: A good focus is to ask for an update on energy efficiency in public buildings and on the general economy and the effect of budget reductions. What can be done to expand initiatives for energy efficiency in public buildings to private buildings and the private sector via pilot projects? This is a bipartisan issue.
2. The national infrastructure and how to pay for it.

Comments. Bill: In Sacramento, there is a movement to use higher registration fees for electric vehicles to pay for infrastructure. This is the wrong option because it creates a disincentive to purchase electric vehicles.

Tamra: TAM is funding a hydrogen fuel station that uses fossil fuel. Why are we now pushing this when we've been successfully focused on pushing electric vehicles. (Toyota is spending money on developing hydrogen vehicles.)

3. What are Jared's thoughts on a gas tax, putting a tax on carbon vs. a mileage tax?
4. Judy: Re the Ranch Management Plan in the Pastoral Zone, is Congress promoting carbon sequestration? There is a huge potential in our parks and open space.
5. Belle: Will there be a Congressional representative at the U.N. meeting in Paris? Who is going?

Reports

Resilient Neighborhoods – Tamra

Resilient Neighborhoods has achieved 2.6 mil. lbs of carbon reduction via 500 people. They have new teams in Santa Venetia and upper Bret Harte Heights. They now have a funded staff person, Polina Osipova, who is trained. Resilient Neighborhoods met with San Rafael emergency preparedness personnel. This is linked with their adaptation feature. Resilient Neighborhoods is building a resilient local business component. They are showing action by the actions that residents have taken.

Roger: Comment re statistics. If Resilient Neighborhoods' sample size reaches a significant level, it can be used as a database for impact analysis. This is important.

How to get people to come to meetings: This is based on relationships. Resilient Neighborhoods is working on outreach to Novato and also plans to speak to store owners and restaurant managers.

Main Street Moms – Mary

The MCE training for community advocates will take place on September 22. Participants will talk about renewable energy and then go back to their organizations and work on organizing initiatives. There is a planning session for Fairfax and San Anselmo reps. The training will give people confidence to talk to their neighbors. They have invited Resilient Neighborhoods. The training will be videotaped. They are expecting approximately 40 people. Allison Hang is organizing.

Comments: Switching to Deep Green is huge. MCE has made changes in its website so that it is more user-friendly.

Sustainable Organizations – Bill and Belle

Sustainable San Rafael celebrated its 10th birthday with 90 -100 people in attendance.

Re the November Amping Up Climate Leadership event, they will produce a write-up for a save-the-date. There is a \$3000 - \$4000 cost to put on the event. There will be a suggested donation to cover Dominican fees.

There will be an Organizing for Action event on September 17 at the Tamalpais Methodist Church in Mill Valley, re positions taken in the Pope's recent Encyclical. Policy precludes us from announcing other people's events in our e-newsletter, but we can post it on the website.

Community Marin – Susan S.

Community Marin interviewed each Supervisor in July re sea level rise.

Next Meeting

The date of the next CAWG meeting is September 25, with the following meeting on October 16.

Possible topics:

1. Invite Dana Armanino to speak on County Climate Action Plan (must be before November to be timely).
2. Invite Christine O'Rourke to speak on where the cities are in their climate planning.
3. Discuss legislative and statewide issues with either the legislative point person for MCE or the County lobbyist.
4. Invite Kate Sears/Leslie Alden to talk about sea level rise (especially in East Marin).
5. Parks—Discuss carbon sequestration (time-sensitive).

Decision: Discuss the Climate Action Plan. This is time-sensitive because the Board of Supervisors will approve the plan in November. Issues: What we need to do to add "meat"; what to do to implement the plan; quarterly meetings. We need to understand the final draft of the plan and what implementation would involve.

Further general issues: Kate wants to discuss the process regarding MCL letters, what to bring to the Board.

Announcements

Chris Callaway has been working with project proponents [Alex Kahl, Aurora Mahassine, Dan Monte] on a Civic Center Lagoon water restoration floating island biofilter.

There will be an event at Vintage Oaks on Sept. 19, 9:00 – 4:00 as part of Drive Electric Week.

Soil Not Oil event on September 4-5 in Richmond, re carbon sequestration.

Meeting adjourned 11:09 a.m.

Notes: PN