

RTF PAC Meeting Minutes

June 5, 2020

10:00am – 12:00pm Pacific

Attendees:

Patrick Oshie, RTF PAC Co-Chair, Council
Cory Scott, RTF PAC Co-Chair, PacifiCorp
Tom Lienhard, Avista
Danielle Walker, Bonneville Power
Kary Burin, Cascade Natural Gas
Jim White, Chelan County PUD
Debbie DePetris, Clark PUD
Sarah Castor, Energy Trust of Oregon
Fred Gordon, Energy Trust of Oregon
Juan Serpa Munoz, EWEB
Quentin Nesbitt, Idaho Power
Robin Arnold, Montana PSC
Mark Rehley, NEEA

Ralph Cavanagh, NRDC
Deb Young, NorthWestern
Rick Hodges, NW Natural
Garrett Harris, Portland General Electric
Bob Stolarski, Puget Sound Energy
Ray Johnson, Tacoma Power
Steve Johnson, Washington UTC
Brian Dekiep, MT Council Staff
Elizabeth Osborne, WA Council Staff
Andrea Goodwin, Council Staff
Charlie Grist, Council Staff
Jennifer Light, RTF Manger/Chair
Annika Roberts, RTF Assistant

Key Outcomes

The RTF PAC made a final decision on how to allocate unspent funds collected in the early years (pre-2008) of the RTF that were never spent or credited back to funders. Based on feedback from committee members and additional staff consideration, staff proposed keeping the funds in the RTF to support RTF electric-work in future years in this funding cycle. Staff would identify the specific work through the annual work plan development and approval process. The PAC members supported the staff proposal.

The PAC also discussed the status of 2020 work plan activities and initiation of the 2021 Work Plan development process.

Discussion

RTF PAC Co-Chair Council Member Patrick Oshie opened the meeting at 10:00 am. After greeting the committee, he called for a round of introductions from the rest of the PAC

Allocation of Unspent Funds

Cavanagh voiced his support for the staff recommendation explaining that the workplan approach was thoughtful and that he had faith in staff to make these decisions then encouraged all to support it as well.

Gordon stated that while he was an early proponent for giving the money to the RBSA, explaining it was because he didn't know if the RTF had a plan to spend the money, after hearing that some people are not comfortable giving money purposed for RTF to a different group he was backing off this initial reaction and also supported the staff proposal.

Stolarski, Nesbitt, and Lienhard also voiced their support of the staff proposal

Light asked for Bonneville's opinion on the proposal.

Walker responded that they were good.

Light offered a final opportunity to voice any concerns explaining that she had heard earlier concerns about the RTF's bandwidth to handle more work and tried to address that in the proposal.

Lienhard pointed out that on the agenda it said that there would be a vote and asked if it would be beneficial for the group to provide a consensus. Light explained that that was the original intent, but with the shift in staff proposal did not think it was needed. Goodwin agreed that a vote would be necessary if there weren't any objections to the staff proposal.

Work Plan Updates

Slide 8

Burin asked for an explanation of the SIW. Light explained that it was the RTF Standard Information Workbook, which had assumptions that were used across workbooks and measures elaborating that there was a little in there about gas only cost considerations.

Lienhard asked Jennifer to remind the group of the top three gas measures the RTF was going to pull in when they could.

Light said the prioritization was based on feedback from the Gas Subcommittee, which flagged fryers as a measure to move up and commercial boiler systems and water heaters as important measures.

Lienhard responded that he was interested high efficiency gas furnaces explaining they would be easy to do based on the SEEM runs the RTF already has and would provide his utility with the biggest return on investment for working with the RTF.

Light stated that high efficiency gas furnaces wasn't one in the queue and it hadn't come up in that subcommittee call, but said she could look into a path for that measure.

Burin added that she had assumed furnaces would be a dual fuel measure and therefore was already in the mix.

Light replied that the RTF doesn't have an electric furnace measure, which is why gas furnaces did not come up as a dual fuel. She reiterated she would look into it more.

Slide 10

Lienhard pointed out that many utilities had travel restrictions in place because their income has dropped so much adding that Avista likely won't be traveling for the rest of the year.

Cavanagh asked if the deliberative process suffered as a result of being all remote.

Light said the RTF is still having good discussion but not having the body language, the head nods, or the ability to read the room is something she's missing a little bit. She added that the meetings are getting a little more dominated by those who would speak more anyways, and it's proving harder to pull people in when we can't see them. She concluded that while the RTF is still getting stuff done, it's not quite the same.

Grist agreed and added that people are stepping up their game in how they participate and that it's working, but it's a learning experience for everybody.

Gordon stated that for RTF to function it needs deliberation and a decision process, explaining his concern about new members trying to socialize long distance and being able to turn discussion into motions into decision, underlining the importance of not only the discussion but turning the corner into a decision.

Light agreed that that's part of the challenge of not being in the room with folks which definitely makes things harder. She stated that in their second year of membership people are learning. She added that at the end of last year the RTF started making more motions, which really helped focus the discussion and pushed people to be more deliberative. She is also working on having materials up sooner to try and address people's questions early.

Grist added that on question of socialization, one of the things he does is call other members to thank them for their contribution or encourage them to speak up more, which is work that is done offline and isn't much different in COVID. He commended Jennifer for letting the membership know about the schedule for the meeting and guiding the discussion.

Harris brought up that different organizations have different policies looking out for the health of their employees, in addition to no travel, and different takes on what they want with their employees out in the world.

Light agreed adding that she thinks the RTF might be doing remote meetings until the end of the year. Underlining that her priority putting safety first while still getting work done and moving forward.

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Lienhard mentioned that Avista is getting indication from Washington staff that they're interested in non-energy impacts. Explaining that they have always used RTF work but that it has been hard to explain the rigor that the RTF goes into. He then asked Jennifer for any thoughts she had about how the RTF will be looking at non-energy impacts for the next year.

Light explained that a lot of work has been done on the Council side concerning what's in-scope for non-energy impacts and what's included in our Guidelines. This work was done consistent with the resource value framework. She noted that what is in the Council, and therefore RTF purview, is going to be more limited than what might be seen in other jurisdictions. With respect to the rigor of analysis, the non-energy impact estimates reflect the best available data, but it's not always at the same level as savings.

Slide 15

Burin asked about the standardization of technical analysis, noticing that there will be a smaller proportion of the budget spent than before. She brings up that their commission and management is interested in more consistency.

Light confirmed that it is a decrease and outlines the three reasons for that. This category is largely the time the contract analyst team spends reviewing and discussing each other's work for consistency. This category also includes work on the RTF Guidelines, which is the decision making framework for RTF analysis, and the standard information workbook. Both the Guidelines and SIW are not updated annually. She added that a reduction in this category does not mean the RTF analysts are not putting just as much time into ensuring consistency in analysis.

White brought up that one of the issues that's becoming increasingly impactful is capacity value and demand. He voices interest in hearing how much of the tool development described in the work plan is in demand response and asks Jennifer to speak generally to what's being done in regards to capacity and DR.

Light agreed with Jim's assessment of the importance of capacity value and explains that the RTFs work in that regard will become more defined as she pulls together the details of this work plan. But at a high level, she explained that the work that was anticipated in demand response this year and next was around making sure the RTF has strong analytical tools that will allow for that technical analysis. She added that there is work set aside to really understand the timing of the efficiency savings, which is different from the DR work and more about when energy is being saved and that savings shape development. She explained that there's quite a bit of budget over the next few years to leverage end use load data to improve the RTF's understanding of the timing of energy savings which they will be able pull into measures and have a suit of savings shapes available.

White asked for the timing on the development of savings shapes.

Light responded that it will take place over a couple years, starting in 2021, but will mostly occur in 2022 and 2023 adding that that could shift that around, if there was a specific need.

White expressed specific interest in programable/connected thermostats.

Light added that she knows Energy Trust is doing some work on that specific technology which the RTF is communicating with them on.

Grist added that the RTF did do some work on that last year identifying where saving shapes were weakest and prioritizing which should be focused on. He offered to share that work with Jim and anyone else who's interested to get their take on that prioritization, agreeing that it is really important work.

Light agreed to share that out adding that the RTF mostly used their building models to update those shapes making it not as robust as actual data, but still valuable.

PAC Co-Chairs Cory Scott and Patrick Oshie thank the group for their participation and engagement and adjourned the meeting at 12:00 pm.