

CEAC minutes – Oct. 12, 2007

The Citizens Energy Advisory Council met Friday, Oct. 12, at the Asheville Chamber of Commerce. Members attending included Nathan Ramsey, Lee Galloway, Robin Cape, Margie Meares, Dave Hollister, Karl Kuchta, LaVoy Spooner, Patrick Fitzsimmons, Rick Lutovsky, Terry Albrecht, Michael Shore and Harry Harrison.

Robert Sipes, Progress Energy's Western Region vice president, opened the meeting by remembering Bob McGehee, the company's former chairman and CEO who died Oct. 9. McGehee had opened the first meeting of the CEAC in June. Sipes also introduced Martha Thompson as the new community relations manager for the region.

Sipes introduced the group's new facilitators, Steve Cochran and Christina Nelson of Sustainable Strategies and thanked Jo Anne Sanford, former chairwoman of the N.C. Utilities Commission, for her leadership in facilitating the group's first several meetings.

Sipes also reviewed the group's charter, which focuses on the group's role in advancing a balanced solution for meeting future energy needs. The balance includes an increased focus on energy efficiency, increased investments in alternative and renewable energy sources and state-of-the-art power plants.

The group discussed the challenges of growth, from a variety of perspectives, including the need for environmentally responsible energy that meets regulatory requirements for reliability. The initial focus is on increased energy efficiency, to determine whether large-scale participation in efficiency and demand-side management programs can help delay the need to build new power plants.

The group discussed opportunities for increasing energy efficiency in the region – ideas that ranged from raising the price of electricity to implementing tiered electricity rates (higher prices for electricity usage over a certain threshold), as well as other regulatory rate reform, to drive a reduction in usage. The group also has heard an overview of the numerous programs under way and planned for residential, commercial and industrial customers by Progress Energy.

The group discussed how to translate broad ideas into actionable initiatives that will provide real, dependable reductions in electricity usage and delay the need for new power plants. Discussion also focused on the implications for Progress Energy of losing revenue through energy efficiency.

Meanwhile, the ongoing focus of the group on community-based solutions and on expanding energy-efficiency education is critical.

Chris Edge of Progress Energy provided an update on programs and initiatives under way or planned, as well as the ongoing challenges of staffing a new efficiency and DSM organization to help design and implement compelling programs that fit with customers' lifestyles. The CEAC asked that Progress Energy provide an update at the November 9 meeting on the latest analysis of potential efficiency and DSM opportunities, and what can be achieved reliably.