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# Memo

**Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_/2025**

**To: Energy Transition Advisory Committee ETAC**

**From: Carla Vita, Director Energy Transition**

## RE: Minutes

### Background

Attachment A has the submitted minutes for the December 4, 2024, ETAC meeting for ETAC Board consideration.

### Recommendation

Approve minutes.

Roll call vote.

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE**

**Attachment A**

**ENERGY TRANSITION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**HYBRID OVER TEAMS AND PHYSICALLY AT THE**

**CITY OF BECKER CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2024**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The Energy Transition Advisory Committee met in Regular Session and ETAC Chair Tamara Lowney welcomed all in attendance and called the meeting to order at 1:00pm at the City of Becker City Council Chambers, Becker, MN. Roll call was taken.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Representing** | **Name** | **Status** |
| **Voting** |  |  |
| Senate Majority Appointment | **Grant Hauschild** | **Absent** |
| Senate Minority Appointment | **Karin Housley** | **Absent** |
| Speaker of the House Appointment | **Josiah Hill** | **Absent** |
| House Minority Appointment | **Shane Mekeland** | **Absent** |
| Prairie Island Member | **Michael Childs Jr** | **Present** |
| Impacted Communities - County Representative #1 | **Tamara Lowney** | **Present** |
| Impacted Communities - Municipal Representative #1 | **Marshall Hallock** | **Present** |
| Impacted Communities - County Representative #2 | **Gregg Felber** | **Present** |
| Impacted Communities - Municipal Representative #2 | **Mary McComber** | **Present** |
| Impacted Worker at Impacted Facility #1 | **Mike Hoppe** | **Present** |
| Impacted Worker at Impacted Facility #2 | **Kristin Renskers** | **Present** |
| Impacted Worker at Impacted Facility #3 | **Luke Lallemont** | **Present** |
| Impacted Worker Employed by Company under Contract | **Richard Sackett** | **Present** |
| Professional Economic Development or Workforce Retraining Experience Representative | **Abigail Wozniak** | **Present** |
| Utilities that Operate an impacted Facility #1 | **Trisha Duncan** | **Present** |
| Utilities that Operate an impacted Facility #2 | **Joshua Skelton** | **Present** |
| Nonprofit Organization with expertise and experience delivering energy efficiency and conservation programs | **Alyssa Eilers** | **Absent** |
| Coalition of Utility Cities Representative | **Shane Zahrt** | **Present** |
| **Non-Voting** |  |  |
| Commissioner - Department of Employment and Economic Development (or Designee) | **Matt Varilek** | **Present** |
| Commissioner - Department of Commerce (or Designee) | **Sydnie Lieb** | **Present** |
| Commissioner - Department of Labor and Industry (or Designee) | **Jeremy Parker** | **Absent** |
| Commissioner - Department of Revenue (or Designee) | **Holly Soderbeck** | **Present** |
| Executive Secretary of the Public Utilities Commission (or Designee) | **William Seuffert** | **Absent** |
| Commissioner - Pollution Control Agency (or Designee) | **Frank Kohlasch** | **Present** |
| Chancellor - Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (or Designee) | **Logan Schrader** | **Present** |
| Governor (or Designee) | **Nicauris Heredia Rosario** | **Absent** |

DEED Staff also present: Tammy Wickstrom, Catalina Valencia, Mike McCrownsey and Carla Vita.

1. Welcome & Transition Community Details by City of Becker

Becker Mayor, Tracy Bertram, thanked the Energy Transition Advisory Committee for all their work that has assisted Becker and beyond.

Becker City Administrator Greg Lerud provided information on the city – locations of housing, industrial development, highways, and other areas of interest. Lerud informed that in 2019 Becker received a bond to assist the community with infrastructure within its industrial park and last month the project was completed. The new industrial park will be the home of two data centers that have recently purchased land for development.

Lerud informed that Becker and among others are working on another Mississippi River bridge crossing. The bridge would assist in economic development and would expedite the flow of traffic in those local areas. They are anticipating a preliminary study in 2025. At this time no timeline exists for when the crossing project will be initiated.

Lerud educated that planning and design improvements for US 10 and MN 25 is underway. The project received a CET (Community Energy Transition) grant and US congressional funds to complete. They are working with MNDOT on scheduling the project.

Lerud stated that they are working on business diversification and many other projects including an expansion to City Hall and to city parks.

Wozniak questioned if the local business community has expressed concerns with SHERCO closing. Lerud stated that in the past it was a concern. However with the Coalition of Utility Cities being successful in passing transition aid, the concern has been lessened. Lerud stated that he is confident that Becker will not see significant tax impacts.

Sackett asked for information on electricity demand for data centers with a recent SHERCO unit closing. Lerud stated that he would recommend that Sackett ask Xcel.

1. Welcome to Logan Schrader, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Representative

Chair Lowney provided a welcome to Schrader. Schrader is replacing Patzer as the representative for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

1. Welcome to Dr. Jeremy Schmidt, Representative of a School District Facing Revenue Loss Due to Energy Transition

Chair Lowney welcomed Schmidt. Lowney stated that with the creation of the ETAC plan, it was clear that the perspective of the K-12 schools on ETAC was missing. She welcomed Schmidt as the first K-12 representative to ETAC.

1. Approve August 21, 2024 Minutes – Roll Call Vote

Motion by Felber, second by Hoppe to approve the August 21, 2024, minutes as presented. Roll Call vote passed unanimously.

1. Presentation by Jamie MacAlister, Minnesota Department of Commerce

MacAlister provided information on her background and experience at the MN Department of Commerce. She informed that the Division of Energy Resources at Commerce works on affordability, clean energy development, energy reliability and security, and regulatory affairs and analysis. This division represents Commerce before the Public Utilities Commission. She educated on resource planning, certificate of need, routing and siting and rate cases that her department provides their comments to the PUC.

MacAlister informed on different ways and times that people can provide opportunities to provide input on regulatory matters. She then informed on the IRP (integrated Resources Plans); what it is, who can comment, how often the IRPs are submitted, Modelling within an IRP and goals of the IRP. MacAlister provided the SHERCO solar project as an example in the work that they perform. Informing that when the SHERCO project is complete it will be the largest in MN.

Sackett inquired to the expected useful life of a solar field. MacAlister stated 20 to 25 years.

Felber informed that recently Sherburne County passed zoning changes to allow a maintenance building within the solar fields.

Lowney asked that she be educated on the future of IRPs in MN. Does it include working with DEED and others on business attraction and future business electric needs. MacAlister informed that the MN Department of Commerce asks utilities to have future business electric needs as a part of their IRPs. They ask for a variety of load scenarios. She educated that is one reason IRPs are reviewed every 4 years is to address the changes occurring and to re-evaluate those changes.

Lowney requested education on efforts Commerce does to work with local communities. MacAlister stated that IRPs are one of many tasks of Commerce. She educated that outreach is typically with the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners. She informed that Commerce is trying to improve. She added that Commerce also works with counties and regional development commissions. Lowney stated that the local voice is important. MacAlister stated that routing and facility planning is also a time in which the local communities are asked to participate in the IRP process.

1. Presentation by Catherine Kemp, Great Plains Institute (GPI)

Kemp informed on GPI; they are a nation non-profit. She stated that the Federal Department of Energy has an upcoming grant that all impacted communities might have interest. She stated that TCTACs (Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers), EPA Region 5, is based out of the U of MN. The grant she is referring to is regarding energy improvements in rural and remote areas. The grant has 2 parts. The first part is due February 2025. If asked, the applicant can then apply for the second part.

Kemp informed on the activities allowed within the grant. Only rural locations with a population of 10,000 or less are eligible to apply. She stated maps are online to assist, educated on the cost sharing – businesses and communities have different contribution requirements towards the grant. She stated that communities with power plant closures have special opportunities within the grant. She stated that communities can submit more than one concept paper. Kemp also informed that communities can come together to submit an aggregated project. Kemp covered funding priorities and stated the importance that the application team be diverse.

Lowney asked if a community submitted more than one paper if all papers would receive the same opportunity for review. Kemp stated that she is unsure on the prioritizing of the grants. Lowney asked if communities submit separate or alone which would increase funding chances. Kemp stated that interested communities can call DOE with specific questions.

1. Presentation by Tammy Wickstrom, Director of Child Care Community Partnerships (DEED)

At the August ETAC meeting Vita stated the importance of childcare for economic diversification and sustainability. However a federal speaker stated that this was a first that they had heard of this need, which was surprising to ETAC and others attending the meeting. DEED and the State have a department working on childcare and addressing the needs, so she invited Wickstrom in to speak on the state’s efforts to address the childcare needs.

Wickstrom started the presentation with her past work in childcare and the resources of childcare in MN. She noted that the issues are different throughout MN and what works in the metro does not work in rural MN. Wickstrom provided many innovative ways communities are addressing childcare. Warren MN recently passed a sales tax to assist childcare needs. She said it is known that economic development includes childcare. As this is important, she works with many state agencies that have work in the childcare space. Her office is a place for people to start. She has information innovative childcare approaches in MN and beyond.

Wickstrom educated that a childcare report is going out soon. The report will inform on the shortage of childcare slots. The shortage is especially bad in rural MN.

Wickstrom stated that her office has grants to assist in addressing the childcare shortage. She informed that 85% of the grant requests come from greater MN. She discussed the grant rounds and when she anticipated the next round to start. She stated that some funding is thru GO (General Obligation) bonds that only rural MN qualifies for, and only 6 cities and 4 counties have applied for funds.

Wozniak asked if her office has investigated any childcare need differences in power plant closure communities verses non-power plant communities. Wickstrom stated that she is always willing to talk to any communities about their needs and stated that she has been talking to Itasca County on their childcare needs.

Eric Olson, Monticello Public Schools, requested more information on Warren’s sales tax and how it occurred. Wickstrom stated that it passed, but not by much. She stated that young parents were vocal that if they did not have childcare that they would need to move to locations with childcare for them to have the ability to work. She stated that where people live impact the community.

Becker Mayor Bertram stated that she is working with MN 1st Finance (organization that assists with childcare businesses and communities). Training is needed for the childcare sites. She asked about ideas to promote childcare as a profession. Wickstrom stated that childcare workers are poorly paid. Many childcare centers struggle to find people to staff. Pay is a major issue. Wickstrom informed that the Great State Compensation Program has funding to assist the childcare workforce. Regarding the cost of childcare, funds to assist parents are currently only available for low-income workers. As for training, the Initiative Foundation has low-cost and free training, and to please contact them for opportunities.

Wickstrom stated that operating costs for childcare centers is important. She stated that in Onamia, Mille Lacs Health Care Systems provides food for the local childcare facility at no cost which assists in the operating revenue. She stated that local business and industry might have their own innovative ways to support childcare centers. She stated that in Bemidji a local senior nursing home has a wing dedicated to childcare providers to help reduce the overhead costs.

Olson informed that his school district has K-12 training to help students learn and to transition into childcare jobs. Wickstrom stated that in Hutchinson their Tiger Path does something similar.

Wickstrom stated that she would like to see a school district create its own daycare for their teachers.

Schmidt stated that the cost of childcare is brought up as a top concern. How does a community balance paying childcare workers sustainable wages and keep childcare costs low for families? He then inquired to the number of applicants for the childcare grants. Wickstrom stated that approximately 60 people applied for both round one and round two. Wickstrom stated that childcare is expensive and the Governor’s goals is that childcare is not more than 7% of a family’s budget. She stated that assistance is available, but only to low-income families.

Childs stated that he is having his team at Prairie Island contact her.

1. Presentation by Tamara Lowney, Itasca Just Transition Work and Next Steps

Lowney educated on the funding and planning up ~~to current on~~ the transition work in the Itasca County area. Their goal is to use the plans to leverage additional state and federal funding. Lowney has a steering committee assisting the work, and has held many community meetings and townhalls. She stated that economic diversification is the top item that is talked about in the meetings.

Lowney stated that her area of Minnesota has two plans occurring simultaneously. The Itasca Just Transition and MN Power’s IRP. The work of Itasca Just Transition should produce a report in December 2024. In the report six action areas will be addressed with each action area having sub-components.

Lowney informed that on February 5th - 6th a summit surrounding the planning and subsequent implementation of the planning will occur. She will invite all MN’s impacted cities and counties. She has invited speakers from Colorado and Appalachia as well as speakers from other areas of government, ~~industrial a~~nd non-profits have also been invited to present. Areas being addressed are downtown planning, cultural awareness and working on larger grant opportunities. She believes in working together to pursue grants and projects.

1. IRP updates
   1. MN Power

Skelton submitted a memo for review. Adding to the memo he informed that MN Power has a 2021 IRP plan and is working on the 2025 IRP plan.

* 1. Xcel Energy

Duncan stated that settlement comments are due today. She also informed that the Form Battery Presentation that is also being held at this time will be recorded for people to watch. She provided a link to the recording in the chat. Duncan stated that at the King and SHERCO quarterly meetings that are upcoming their workforce plans for both plants will be discussed.

The settlement is combining the IRP and 800 firm dispatch plan, battery storage, two power purchase agreements (Mankato and Cannon Falls), and 3 new agreements (2 solar/battery storage and one wind/battery storage). The 32 MW of wind will be routed thru the SHERCO site infrastructure. The proposed IRP has a 2050 extension for the Monticello plant and 2053 & 2054 extensions for the two units of the Xcel Energy’ Prairie Island nuclear power plants. They are working on a 5-year action plan for gas generation.

Hoppe inquired if the 32 MW wind and solar would be dedicated for a data center. Duncan stated that they are projecting increased electrical sales. This is due to data centers, electric cars and electrification.

Childs inquired if the 32 MW is a nameplate. Duncan stated that she would check and get back to him.

Duncan stated that they are happy with the settlement.

1. Updates
   1. ETAC Plan 2024

Lowney provided the history of the ETAC plan from 2022 up to today. The document in front of the ETAC is the final copy for their use and is on the ETO Webpage.

* 1. Just Transition Fund Convening – Tamara Lowney

Lowney informed on the convening. She stated that MN had 5 people attending and she encouraged all to attend in the future. She stated that they had information on how to write successful grants. She said the networking of various locations throughout the US also going thru energy transition was invaluable. Vita also provided information on the storytelling segment that is important to educate on all the good work that ETAC, impacted communities and others are doing.

* 1. Emerging Issues Sub-Committee

Zahrt informed that this sub-committee was created to stay current on changing topics impacting the communities. Some ideas that have been discussed and reviewed:

1. Department of ~~Revenue IDEA. The~~ group is watching the progress and attending the meetings. 68% of the tax base of Becker is from SHERCO, so any modifications to the tax base is significant. DOR had a second round of public meetings to educate and receive input. They informed in the meetings that the DOR is not looking for legislative changes this year.
2. Nuclear. The sub-committee is aware of how important nuclear is to the community. Xcel keeping their nuclear plants is important. New nuclear technologies as replacement fuel sources and supporting the electric load is being discussed in many parts of the US and in the IRP conversations people are also asking about nuclear options. At the last ETAC meeting ETAC member Sackett requested that the sub-committee discuss nuclear. The State of MN has a moratorium on nuclear. Currently ETAC member Childs has presented and the sub-committee has upcoming presentations from the NRC (Nuclear Regulatory Commission and DPS (Department of Public Safety).

Vita added that the sub-committee has also been researching and investigating woody biomass as an alternative and is exploring tours of power plants to further investigate.

* 1. Grants Update by Mike McCrownsey, ETO Grants Coordinator

McCrownsey provided an update to the grants awarded and approximate amount of funds remaining to be awarded.

Lowney inquired if the grants are automatically funded or need reappropriation from the legislature. McCrownsey informed that the legislature will need to reauthorize funds.

Duncan inquired to the criteria of the grants. McCrownsey educated that State Statute defines what communities and criteria. He informed that the application is on the ETO webpage. Grants are accepted on a rolling basis which applicants must complete, and that additional information may be requested at any time. A panel reviews the grants, with a representative from ETAC sits on the panel. The panel provides a recommendation to DEED’s Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner, with the Commissioner making the final decision.

* 1. EQB

Memo was provided.

* 1. MN State Colleges and Universities

Memo was provided.

* 1. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Kohlasch provided a memo. He also added that additional grants were just announced and can be found on the MPCA webpage.

* 1. Department of Revenue

Memo was provided.

* 1. Department of Labor and Industry

Memo was provided.

* 1. Department of Commerce

They presented earlier in the meeting.

* 1. Public Utility Commission

Memo was provided.

* 1. Other ETO updates (Newsletter, Strategic Plan, REE (Resilient Energy Economies) mtg, IWG (Intergovernmental Working Group) mtg, RMI (Rocky Mountain Institute)

Vita presented on updates. She informed on the community check-ins that have been great in assisting communities, counties, township, PIIC (Prairie Island Indian Community). The meetings include brainstorming, collaboration, and assistance to each.

Vita educated on the RMI event, it was no cost to all in attending. All impacted communities, counties and tribal nations were invited along with CDFIs (Community Development Financial Institutions fund). 130 people in attendance. Information on Federal and State funding was presented. Lowney educated that McKnight provided substantial funding, DEED provided logistical/administrative support and hosted the event. Lowney stated that the information was fantastic and the networking was great.

Vita informed that Lowney already has met with all people that attended the RMI event to troubleshoot on how to pursue funds and work together. Vita has not held a meeting of all the impacted cities and counties on how to utilize and brainstorm on the funding as she has received numerous requests to delay until the new year.

* 1. Next Meeting

Consensus to wait to find a date for meeting in Oak Park Heights until the legislative break is known. Vita will send a poll to the ETAC members to determine a preferred date.

1. Adjourn – Roll Call Vote

Motion by Hoppe, second by Felber to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.