

Citizens for Clean Energy, Inc. (CCE)

www.ccemontana.org

Minutes for January 10, 2023 Meeting

Location: Great Falls Zoom meeting and in-person meeting at the Black Bear Diner, 1400 Market Place Drive, Great Falls, MT 59404 (no-host dinner at 6 p.m. in restaurant meeting room).

Welcome: Rich Liebert, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. Six current CCE members and two visitors attended the in-person meeting; a CCE member and a visitor attended the meeting via Zoom. A quorum was present. Thank you, David Saslav and Melissa Smith, for setting up and paying the room fee for the in-person meeting at the Diner and making the meeting available to those who wished to use the Zoom option.

Rich welcomed visitors, Bill Woodhouse, Jean Stone, and Donna Williams (who arrived later). Everyone introduced themselves. Bill said he's an ex-farmer on the Fairfield Bench and has installed wind and solar systems to produce power to recharge his electric Tesla. Jean is a retired RN and is interested in learning about CCE. Rich asked Bill and Jean to leave contact information with Kathy if they wished to receive CCE information.

Secretary: Kathy Gessaman briefly reviewed the November 15, 2022 CCE meeting minutes. **Shannon Wilson moved to accept the November 15, 2022 CCE, Inc. electronically distributed minutes; David Saslav seconded.** There was no discussion. **The minutes were approved.**

Treasurer: Shannon Wilson said CCE, Inc. received a \$500 donation from Sole, LLC to help CCE promote conversion from fossil fuels to sustainable energy sources like wind, hydro, and solar per the letter enclosed with the generous check. Kathy deposited the check into CCE's bank account on December 9th.

David Saslav donated the Black Bear Diner's meeting room fee of \$25 for the CCE meeting. Shannon reimbursed Kathy for the \$50 Golden Triangle Resource Council membership fee; check #1041 for \$50.00 per the motion at the November 15th CCE meeting.

CCE Website/Communications: Please visit the active CCE, Inc. website for the latest updates on CCE activities at <https://www.ccemontana.org/>. The original CCE website address continues to be used as a historical archive along with current LENR info at <http://www.cce-mt.org/>. Send articles of general interest and notices about CCE activity to Kathy G. at cce.secretary@gmail.com. Please check out the new website to view links to current events.

CCE Facebook: Shannon Wilson is the administrator of CCE's Facebook site, and David is a co-administrator. Visit the site at <https://www.facebook.com/Great-Falls-Citizens-for-Clean-Energy-CCE-110217491438621/>. If you get a chance, please send photos of energy efficient appliances, solar installations, wind turbines, or other energy conservation or alternative energy ideas/projects you may see around the city or state to David or Shannon to post on the CCE Facebook page. Shannon spent \$15 to boost the Jan. 10th CCE meeting on the CCE Facebook page and it attracted attention.

Unfinished Business:

GTRC (Golden Triangle Resource Council): Rich asked David to report on the December 8, 2022 GTRC meeting at Cassiopeia Bookstore. GTRC includes Cascade, Chouteau, Pondera, and Teton Counties. David said Rich, Ken & Karen Thornton, and Ken Palisin attended the meeting – CCE was well represented. Some of GTRC current activities include promoting C-PACE, lobbying in Helena for Soil Week in Montana, staying aware of various bills going through legislative committees that effect the environment, climate, health, etc. Mike Enk said MEIC has an excellent bill tracker that is very easy to use and suggested people use it to stay involved in what is happening in Helena. David suggested CCE create some press/buzz about important bills under discussion by posting information on CCE's Facebook Page. Rich said it is important to keep a close watch over bills affecting the Montana Constitution. David suggested CCE coordinate the different organizations' positions (CCE, MEIC, Earthjustice, NPRC, GTRC, etc.) on the CCE Facebook Page to make it easier for people to get involved in what is going on in the

Legislature. Kathy cautioned that since CCE is a 501(c)(3) organization it must be careful about spending any money promoting political positions and noted CCE members can work with other organizations to promote political activities. [The third IRS link below says 501(c)(3) groups could only spend up to 20% of the group's yearly expenditures on efforts to influence legislation. Educational meetings, distributing educational materials, or otherwise considering public policy issues in an educational non-partisan manner won't jeopardize the tax-exempt status.

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/the-restriction-of-political-campaign-intervention-by-section-501c3-tax-exempt-organizations>

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/frequently-asked-questions-about-the-ban-on-political-campaign-intervention-by-501c3-organizations-website-postings-and-links>

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/lobbying>

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/measuring-lobbying-activity-expenditure-test>

Organizations electing to use the expenditure test must file Form 5768, *Election/Revocation of Election by an Eligible IRC Section 501(c)(3) Organization to Make Expenditures to Influence Legislation*, at any time during the tax year for which it is to be effective. The election remains in effect for succeeding years unless it is revoked by the organization. Revocation of the election is effective beginning with the year following the year in which the revocation is filed.

Under the expenditure test, an organization that engages in excessive lobbying activity over a four-year period may lose its tax-exempt status, making all of its income for that period subject to tax. Should the organization exceed its lobbying expenditure dollar limit in a particular year, it must pay an excise tax equal to 25 percent of the excess.]

David said he has a friend, Sharon Patton-Griffin, who is writing position papers about proposed legislation that could be posted on CCE's Facebook Page. Rich said to ask her for an example of what she was planning to write. David reported GTRC is sending out a Request for Proposals for residential solar installers; currently there are no installers in Cascade County. Ken T. said he had lots of obstacles to the solar installation on the roof of First United Methodist Church and hoped the city's planning board has learned more about solar than they knew about 8 years ago. David said he had an installer from Helena install his solar system and it took 18 months. Bill said he was able to install his own solar system and the REA (Rural Electrification Administration) checked it over.

April 2022 Climate and Healthcare Workshop Report: Shannon discussed the workshop she attended in April 2022 in Bozeman. She said academic, government, and private citizen groups all made presentations related to climate change, drought, etc. Shannon said she has a new office in the Columbus Center so she is getting all her paperwork organized and she'll post the links to the presentations given at the workshop on the CCE Facebook Page. Shannon said the take away was we still have problems and are still looking at drought conditions in Montana.

Conservation Outreach and Resolution 10333: David said he and Ken Palisin met with City Commissioner Dr. Susan Wolff about what the City of Great Falls is doing about energy use in the city. David reported Commissioner Wolff said this is the first budget cycle that the city doesn't have to pay off the debt due to the HGS coal plant involvement. David said Commissioner Wolff didn't know the City's contract with Energy Keepers, Inc. for electricity from the Kerr Dam was expiring this year. David said they also pointed out that the city's growth plan was not updated three years ago when the 5-year renewal cycle ended. David said they'll take Susan's guidance about how to approach the City Commission about doing either an energy audit sweep of all the departments or a resolution regarding resilience, sustainability, energy efficiency, clean energy sources, etc. They also talked about education being a key component to sustainability. Rich hoped the city will come out with a coordinated energy efficiency plan. David said Susan suggested the committee meet with the Neighborhood Councils. David said they will reach out to the other City Commissioners next; Ken P. will make the decision.

C-PACE: Rich said C-PACE provides funding for renewable energy, conservation, and efficiency improvements for commercial businesses and the improvements are paid for by taxes. Mike Enk said C-PACE makes it easy to use the savings from energy efficiency improvements to pay for the improvements via taxes paid to the County.

New Business:

2023 Science Fair/SIP: Mike Enk, Chair of the Science Fair/SIP Committee, said he won't be able to attend the 2023 Science Fair and listed three options for the group to decide: first option, CCE could take a break and not participate in the Science Fair; second option, make a donation to the Science Fair and CCE would be listed as a sponsor; and the third option, would be to offer 4 (\$40) Merit Awards to Middle School students and 3 (\$80) Merit Awards to High School students and use the Science Fair judges to score the projects and nominate projects that meet the CCE Merit Award criteria - clean renewable energy, resource conservation, environmental protection, or ecosystem restoration. Mike said the CCE Merit Awards would be awarded to the highest scoring projects that meet the CCE criteria. Mike said it would be easy for one person to coordinate the awards at the Thursday, March 9, 2023 Science Fair. Shannon volunteered to pass out the award money for the Science Fair. Kathy volunteered to print the awards and apply to the Dr. David W. Baker Memorial Student-Science Foundation for the award money.

Mike Enk moved to participate in the 2023 Great Falls Region II Science Fair by putting together seven awards: 4 (\$40) Merit Awards for Middle School students and 3 (\$80) Merit Awards for High School students totaling \$400. Ken Thornton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Economic Outlook Seminar: David requested CCE's financial support to attend the Economic Outlook Seminar on Jan. 24th; the seminar includes topics on the future of Montana, tourism, agriculture, forests, housing and the local economy, and an update by the CEO of NorthWestern Energy. **Ken Thornton moved to reimburse David Saslav for the Economic Outlook Seminar fee of \$90. Shannon Wilson seconded the motion. The motion passed 6 for and 1 against.**

Reports:

CCE History: David said he found Sandee DiMauro's four scrapbooks filed in the Great Falls History Museum's collection. David said many of the *Tribune* articles in the scrapbooks were written by Rich Ecke and the last articles added to the scrapbooks were dated 2008. David hoped to create a historical timeline for CCE.

To avoid a Valentine's Day conflict, the next CCE, Inc. meeting was tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 21, 2023 at 7 p.m. The meeting will be held in-person at the Black Bear Diner with a Zoom connection for remote attendees (no-host dinner at 6 p.m. in restaurant meeting room).

Watch your email for Zoom meeting instructions. Please email agenda items to Rich L. at wwranch@3rivers.net.

David Saslav moved to adjourn, and Kathy Gessaman seconded; the meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

UPCOMING EVENTS: Please check your email, CCE website, and/or Facebook Page for additions or updates.

- City and County Commission Meetings at: greatfallsmt.net; cascadecountymt.gov
- Jan 20 – Climate Advocacy Day, Montana State Capitol from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Feb 21 – CCE in-person and Zoom meeting at 7 p.m. No-host dinner at Black Bear Diner at 6 p.m.

“Do what you can, with what you have and from where you are.” TR