

CABQ Climate Change Task Force
Meeting Notes
December 1, 2020

Resources shared in the chat:

https://www.dws.state.nm.us/Portals/0/DM/LMI/NM_Clean_Energy_Workforce_Report.pdf
<https://www.sanjoseinside.com/news/san-jose-to-consider-expanding-natural-gas-ban-to-new-commercial-construction/#:~:text=San%20Jose%20officials%20are%20looking,1%2C%202020.>
<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/20%20Regular/bills/house/HB0233.pdf>

Break Out Groups:

Group 1

Collaboration

(Solana) I appreciated the collaboration between the tribes and PNM, government organizations. It increases accessibility for tribal members. (Tony) Collaborations like this are a necessity for those who can't do it on their own. They may not even know about it. We need to be reaching out, proactive.

Access can be an issue

(Sharon and Mayene) Community solar is really important for multi-family housing. Not everyone has roof space for solar panels, not enough sun due to tree cover, people who rent cannot change their property, many residents can't afford it or may be moving in a couple of years.

(Sharon) Community Solar can be put on top of other buildings, e.g., businesses who can use the energy for their activities and also for the neighborhood. This could be a revenue generator for the business.

(Tara) We need to start thinking about where there is open space to put solar arrays- where in ABQ is there available space?

Ownership:

Who owns the energy?

- Utility company
- Neighborhood members
- Third Party
- Partnerships

Legislation/Policy

(Mayane) 20 states and the District of Columbia have legislation that creates a statewide mandate standardizing access to all energy customers. There is a need for creating consistent rates statewide.

(Kelsey) CABQ currently gets 15% of its energy from solar arrays. Next year (perhaps summer), the percentage will be 88%, via PNM's Solar Direct program. It's looking for areas to place more arrays, e.g., Sunport, Double Eagle airport. CABQ was #3 among large cities in the US based on solar installed/capita. In terms of public private partnerships between the city and private building owners, they have to be careful not to violate the Anti- donation clause making it look as if the city favors one private entity over another.

City passed CPACE program, but Bernalillo County's legislation covers the city. No need to pass a competing program.

Tribal Program

Picuris Pueblo was the first project on a sovereign nation and is a model for the state and nation. Can every tribal government do the same thing?

Answer: yes. Their sovereignty status makes it easier to create a solar program. The issue is standardizing arrangements among all the tribes, assuring the same process and oversight.

Grid Modernization

(Sharon) How does grid modernization relate to ABQ's climate goals?

(Mayane) Transmission may not be a factor for Albuquerque, but it does affect where new solar facilities can be built.

(Kelsey) A large influx of solar may affect transmission, even in Albuquerque. Utilities are required to put out certain voltage at certain times. It's a challenge to manage this, in rural and urban areas.

Some areas in the city are more vulnerable, challenging than others: old infrastructure, concentration of building. Changes are coming that will increase the demand, e.g., fast-change stations.

(Cassandra) Who's responsible for updating the grid?

How can we incorporate grid modernization into the plan?

Answer: (Mayane) The grid is owned by PNM whose responsibility it is, ultimately, to upgrade.

However, the state needs to be involved: approval by PRC, in some cases legislation, and financial support. The Dept. of Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources is overseeing a grid modernization task force.

CABQ as a large PNM customer can influence policy outcomes but has no role in regulating PNM.

Energy Efficiency

Community solar makes sense in the absence of a concomitant and concerted push toward energy efficiency.

We need all of it.

Erika's Small Group

Tara Trafton

Cassandra Miller

Amy Carpenter

Kevin Bean

Mayane Barudin

Tony Sparks

Chas Robles

Sharon Hausam

Solana Granados

Kelsey Rader

Daniel Beaman

Presentations were wonderful. Tribal leadership is setting the example for NM and other communities.

Community solar increases accessibility: to renters, students and others.

Can we combine existing pilot projects: gardening and composting with solar? Use the land in various ways. Public land, lots, apartments, congregate living facilities.

Look at PNM projects, Energy Transition Act, new ownership of PNM (see: <https://nmpoliticalreport.com/2020/10/21/connecticut-based-utility-company-agrees-to-buy-pnm-resources/#:~:text=The%20company%20that%20owns%20New,announced%20the%20deal%20early%20Wednesday.>)

Legislation isn't the only way to get there. Florida doesn't have a state policy, but communities have implemented community solar.

Public ownership versus monopoly ownership. How could the city implement a program to allow for public ownership?

Strategic questions: Who are stakeholders? How does the community benefit other than a lower bill? What are the roadblocks for passage in the next legislative session? Can we expand on existing programs that are working, e.g., Sky Blue, Solar Direct? Can we collaborate with UNM to implement solar on campus?

Importance of electrification – so renewable energy sources have somewhere to go. We need to increase the electrical load efficiently.

Solar + Electrification + Grid Modernization = a holistic approach

Small Group 2

LIV: We are just asking participants to hold your comments for the end so we can prioritize Task Force members. Genesis, I don't mean to put you on the spot, but do you have any contributions you would like to share?

Genesis: I think we need to move forward with community solar and make that a priority in Albuquerque, especially low-income communities. I really liked the timeline that PNM showed in their presentation, but I think we can make that more aggressive with public participation. The more that the community is invested, the more people will be inclined to participate – including opportunities for low income communities.

Lilly: Thank you, Genesis. Is there another Task Force member that would like to chime in?

Theresa: I have a few questions that haven't been answered. My understanding is that the community solar bill has been presented to legislature but didn't pass because of something to do with PNM and them not supporting it. But I believe Tom Solomon may know more. My questions are: What is being done now to work through some of these traps? And how can this group support the new policy? We also need to be aware that community solar is not a one size fits all approach – because there are some transitional issues. Community solar could be very helpful with frontline communities and apartment complexes – but I am not clear on how community solar will benefit the renters and not the owners.

Tom Solomon (350NM): I don't have the specific answers to Theresa's questions, but there is an ongoing working group that will be presenting the updated community solar bill in the 2020 session. When you get into community solar there is a lot of devils in the details, but there are many great people working on this so I am hopeful it will get done.

Sherrick: Thank you for bringing that up, Tom. PNM has been participating in this working group with a variety of other organizations. Our hope is that the bill that goes through will benefit everyone, including those who cannot afford solar on their own. Another aspect to be aware of is that for PNM, any product or any action that goes forward needs to be in compliance with the energy transition act – which includes some very robust guidelines.

Theresa: I have one follow up question – it seems like the policy approach has been an umbrella over the state – is there an opportunity for ABQ to have their own policy? We know what is going on at the community level here and the city is very astute with quantifying the needs of the community.

Lilly: Is there anyone who has seen a community to community approach?

Alex: Community solar enabling legislation has to be passed at the state level. However, our efforts need to focus how this group and the Climate Action Plan can support this legislation and enable it once it is in place. For example, when a new developer comes in, the city can mandate that new structures put in place a community solar.

Sherrick: Thank you for that Alex, lots has to be done to-date but more conversations need to happen on the state and national level and those are the conversations that are taking place now. PNM already has a few programs that are more in alignment with what you are talking about – specifically the Sky Blue Program and Solar Direct. PNM is in the process of developing new programs to meet customers' needs – which Alaric can speak more directly to.

Alaric: Thank you, Sherrick. I want to bring up first, that legislation is not necessarily the only way to have shared solar. There is something like 20 states that have enacted legislation, but it is not necessarily a precursor to a successful market. For example, Florida has one of the largest solar programs in the country, through Power and Light, and the state has no state-level legislation. There are so many ways to do community solar that there is a paralysis around it. Currently, we are reaching out to customers to see what it is they want in a solar program. There are lots of things that need to be considered. First and foremost, PNM needs to reliably deliver energy 24 hrs/day – any community solar project cannot compromise that baseline requirement. Second, we cannot do a subsidization because that would create the situation where some rate payers are paying for a service they don't receive. The project needs to be self-contained – like the Solar Direct project. Additionally, there are several technical issues such as where the site will be, etc..

Lilly: Thank you for the clarification, Alaric. It looks like Erica has written some comments in the chat:

Erica: The time of use changes that PNM implemented a few years ago has made it harder for projects to include solar. PNM has made it less financially attractive for users to implement it. For example Santa Fe Public Schools built a great solar project at Santa Fe High School and unfortunately had to downsize it do to the change of use time implemented by PNM. How do we work with PNM to make it easier and financially viable to build more solar projects?

Lilly: Is this something either of you, Sherrick or Alaric, can respond to?

Alaric: I think I need more information to answer these questions. The time of use is currently set to 8am – 8 pm, which correlate nicely to solar use.

Lilly: Thank you, Alaric. Are there any other task force members that have any thoughts, questions?

Josue: I have a question/concern. It has to do with ownership of energy and how things are structured now. Does the community solar legislation specify who gets to own the energy, or is it just called community solar? Is there a path that allows for the energy to be publicly owned for that community, or will the private company own the energy and the customers only see a price cut?

Sherrick: The most important thing for PNM is that this community solar legislation benefits the whole community. This is echoed in energy transition act – stating that the transition to renewable energy should benefit NM, the community, and create jobs.

Josue: My question is more about solar farms across New Mexico. When PNM buys solar credits to show they are fulfilling their renewable energy requirements in their portfolio, will this be the same in community solar?

Alaric: There are a three specific things that are happening when a REC is made: – energy is generated, the certificate is made, and the asset on the ground. When PNM purchases a bundled rec – it includes the certificate as well as the resource for distribution to its customers.

Josue: My concern is more around that when the community solar goes through, it won't be equitable. The assets will still be held by the shareholders of the company and the transition line is owned by PNM, and there is no power given to the community itself.

Alaric: Those are some really good questions, and there is not necessarily a good answer. We currently have these recs, but PNM does not own the asset itself. But there are lots of ways to set these up – for example, Solar Direct.

Sherrick: Thank you, Alaric. I just wanted to add that PNM's Solar Direct program started out much like this conversation. We did not know all of the answers but through this process we were able to come up with solutions with our partners, like you, to create the programs that you need and want.

Lilly: Thank you everyone for your contributions. Are there Task Force members who has not spoken yet who would like to?

Emily: I think that what is most important to me and the youth/students I represent, is the importance of education. People my age need to know more about solar and why we need it now. Further, it would be great to see community organizations like UNM taking leadership on solar and implement it on campus and Divestment from fossil fuels. In tandem with this plan we need to A) educate youth, B) get them on board, and C) make something happen.

Molly: I echo a lot of what Josue said. I think of energy like water and am interested in breaking down the energy monopoly we have. It may be scary – but I have lots of hope that this is a Segway to a diverse power landscape. My questions include: How do power purchase agreements work now? Can communities purchase solar electricity if they do not have solar panels? And what is Avangrid bringing to the table in working with the community in these way?

Sherrick: Thank you for bringing that up. Avangrid is a Spanish owned company that has lots of success with renewable energy. Their philosophy falls in line with community partnership so we look forward to their additional expertise in moving things along in NM. There is lots we can do but there are also lots of challenges.

Alaric: To address your earlier questions PNM does have PPA's, private purchasing agreements, with private facilities that produce electricity. Basically, they generate it, and PNM purchases the energy for its customers. Having customer involvement would be interesting, but the customer still remains connected to the entire system – so when PNM buys energy, we buy it for everyone.

Alex: If we continue this conversation, we need to tie that into the need for electrification. If we are indeed going through this transition in our energy mix we need to remove natural gas heating and fully electrify our needs and create policy around this.

Sherrick: Tying back to what Alaric was talking about, PNM solar direct program is a PPA model. The Hickory nation owns the solar field and PNM purchases the electricity.

Lilly: Thank you everyone. We have just a few minutes here before everyone comes back together. Is there someone who would like to present back to the group? Thank you Theresa for volunteering and Genesis for agreeing to help out.

Back to Big Group – Action Ideas, Policy Recommendations

Funding is always crucial. Finances will be terrible in the 2021 session. Is this a good time to suggest tapping the state's permanent fund?

Lilly refocused the discussion on city-level policies and actions

Put together a team who understands the new community solar policy, which will hopefully pass this year, then put together ideas for specific community policies, addressing community needs. This isn't a one-size-fits-all approach.

A number of communities in the US are passing local ordinances to transition away from natural gas in homes, businesses, new construction and encouraging electrification, e.g., San Jose and Berkeley California. CABQ should investigate these. This is hard to do in the short-term, and Albuquerque isn't as affluent as some of these cities.

The City can help target neighborhoods and land within neighborhood. Conduct a survey to identify opportunities.

City can help with promotion, marketing with owners, businesses, neighborhoods. Use Kelsey's newsletter.

The City might copy their successful water conservation program outreach and awareness campaign.

Does CABQ have the power to become a municipal utility that can then be converted to a coop? Kelsey is not the legal expert for the City on this, but there is enabling legislation at the state level that allows cities to be municipal utilities. This requires a formidable legal process as well as practical

considerations. There may be a reason that we haven't done this yet. The benefits may not outweigh the cost of the effort

Energy Disclosure Act. Owners must show renters the cost of various energy alternatives. This may create an incentive for property owners and renters to buy into community solar. A great "now" action!

A good first step is to look into land use and zoning issues that might be a barrier. The City recently revamped its zoning laws, so they may be more solar friendly.

Connect to education, jobs and community growth. Set up "fix it" clinics. "Renewable" has to do with concrete physical goods as well as energy. Bring in people who know how things work, e.g., skilled trades. Bring in the younger generation via education.

A lot of the resistance to the shift to renewables comes from a fear of job loss. "No, we're going to set in place many more jobs."

Forge an alliance with APS and CNM re: education, training and jobs.

(Molly) CNM's large system solar array requires their contractor to train and hire CNM students. The solar Farm includes a training lab.

We need data to understand equity. Kelsey says the City has a draft map of some of the suggested metrics: energy burden, access to transportation, eviction rates, and health indicators. The map isn't quite done, but Kelsey will share this when it is.

Thanks to presenters for sending the group materials to review in advance.

Homework link will be sent out with meeting notes.

Circulate opportunity for a community conversation about the environment impact of Kirtland AFB.

Public Comment

Blair Brown (?) found the session very enlightening. Let's keep in mind that what we want is passage of the consumer solar bill in the next session. We need to work with legislators who might have an impact. Identify possible roadblocks and find ways to work through them.

Screen Shot at the End

Lilly Irvin-Vitela, NMF (She/Her)	New Mexico First	Molly Blumhoefer-TF	Theresa Cardenas	Genesis Arizmendi TF
Iosue De Luna Navarro	Tom Solomon 350NM	Erica Velarde TF	Tony Sparks	Erika Roberts
Tara Trafton TF	Cassandra Miller (she/hers)	Amy Carpenter	Alaric J Babej	Kevin Bean
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