



Minutes – Friday, August 29, 2025
Video Conference
9 am to 11 am

Attending: Amy Panek, Brian Eden, Dan Lamb, Dave Bradley, David Kay, Don Haas, Gerri Wiley, Hailley Delisle, Inger Aaberg, Ingrid Zabel, Jennifer Tavares, Leon Porter, Marie McRae, Nancy Jacobson, Nick Goldsmith, Paul Mooore, Ray Burger, Scott Doyle, Tom Hirasuna, Irene Weiser, Guillermo Metz, Marguerite Wells, Dawn Montanye, Kimberly Anderson, Peter Bardaglio

The NY Energy Plan & the NYPA Renewables Plan – Marguerite Wells

Marguerite Wells, the executive director of Alliance for Clean Energy NY, talked with us about the NY Energy Plan and the NYPA Renewables Plan, and what steps we can take to strengthen both of them.

Overview

Marguerite Wells discussed the New York energy plan and the NIPA renewables plan, highlighting the divergence from the scoping plan. The scoping plan aimed for 70% renewables by 2030 and zero emission electricity by 2040, but the draft plan lacks ambition and specifics. The plan also fails to address the need for energy storage, peaker plant retirement, and building decarbonization.

Comparison of New York Energy Plans

- Marguerite explained the approach to comparing the Draft State Energy Plan and Scoping Plan
- Scoping Plan aimed to meet goals of CLCPA, targeting 70% renewables by 2030 and zero emission electricity by 2040
- The Draft State Energy Plan diverges from Scoping Plan in several key ways, including delays and lack of ambition
- Marguerite highlighted governor's soft stance on renewables and lack of specifics in draft plan

Challenges in Transitioning Off Gas

- Marguerite discussed challenges in decommissioning gas system, noting lack of generation and transmission infrastructure
- Draft Energy Plan lacks specific steps for transitioning off gas, unlike Scoping Plan
- Scoping Plan recommends economy-wide cap & invest and reinvestment in disadvantaged communities
- Draft Plan contains no recommendation for cap & invest or carbon pricing
- Marguerite mentioned inadequate energy storage targets in Draft Energy Plan, which is crucial for grid management

- Draft Plan does not address need for energy storage, which is essential for integrating renewables into grid

Impact of Peaker Plants and Building Decarbonization

- Marguerite pointed out lack of discussion on retiring peaker plants in New York City, which are running as base load power
- Scoping Plan took greenhouse gas limits seriously, but Draft Energy Plan does not set interim targets or enforce penalties
- Draft plan strips out language on disadvantaged communities and equity, reflecting a federal landscape where DEI seen as illegal
- Scoping Plan included timelines to phase out new fossil equipment sales as well as building decarbonization sequencing
- Draft Plan supports codes/standards but lacks phase-out timelines for existing building equipment
- Marguerite questioned degree of lobbying for Draft Energy Plan to align with CLCPA and Scoping Plan commitments

Discussion on Methane Emissions and Regulatory Challenges

- Peter raised concerns about methane emissions from landfills, noting Seneca Meadows as largest emitter in NY
- Marguerite discussed need for stronger regulation of methane emissions and challenges in CLCPA
- Lack of incentives for bio waste management prevents private sector investment in methane capture
- Marguerite suggested revisiting CLCPA or assigning value to methane capture to incentivize private actors

Lawsuit and Political Implications

- Dan Lamb inquired about lawsuit brought by environmental groups to implement Scoping Plan
- Marguerite expressed optimism about lawsuit but doubts its impact on state's actions
- Attorney General's defense of DEC seen as weak, but lawsuit could still have symbolic value
- Marguerite mentioned federal suit against Trump for blocking wind farm permits, highlighting challenges in legal advocacy
- Draft Plan reduces alignment with CLCPA in multiple areas – provides fewer binding commitments, targets, and timelines
- Key decision: Should stakeholders push for Draft Plan revisions to restore Scoping Plan commitments?

NYPA's Role in Renewable Energy Development

- NYPA released draft Updated Strategic Plan on July 29
- Focused on renewable generation and storage to improve reliability and resiliency
- Plan outlines 20 new renewable projects (17 solar and 3 wind) and 156 storage projects (~3.8 GW)
- Marguerite discussed NYPA's role in doubling target for renewable projects and its partnership with developers

- NYPA currently partnering with developers, not supplanting them – latter not possible due to limited capital and staff
- NYPA's approach of taking a 51% ownership stake in projects has been well-received by developers
- Partnership model allows private developers to pay local benefits, which is crucial for community acceptance
- Marguerite argued against utilities owning generation, citing risk of shifting ratepayer costs and reducing private investment

Climate Change Education at PRI-Museum of the Earth – Ingrid Zabel and Don Haas
Don Haas is the director of teacher programming at PRI-Museum of the Earth and Ingrid Zabel is the climate change education manager there. Their presentation focused on their work as climate science educators and on the newly established Center for Climate Change Education at PRI.

Overview

Ingrid Isabel and Don Haas emphasized importance of climate change education, citing studies showing reduced carbon emissions and energy use from educational programs. They also discussed the establishment of the Center for Climate Change Education at PRI. The American Museum of Natural History is collaborating with PRI on a "Museum in a Box" program for elementary schools. Financial challenges at PRI were highlighted, with a need to raise \$1 million to pay off the mortgage. The meeting also emphasized the importance of professional development for teachers and the role of museums in climate education.

Local Climate Change and Education

- Ingrid provided an overview of local climate change impacts, using personal anecdotes and data from various sources
- Spring temperatures have increased by almost half a degree Fahrenheit per decade, and plant life is changing
- Projections for summer extreme heat show an increase in days with temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit
- Heavy rainfall projections indicate more frequent extreme events, posing a significant risk for flooding

Education as a Climate Change Solution

- Ingrid presented research studies showing impact of climate change education on behavior and attitudes
- A study in San Jose State found that students reduced their carbon emissions by almost three tons per year
- A Japanese study showed a 3.7% reduction in household energy use and CO2 emissions through gentle nudges in school
- A North Carolina study found attitude change in students, which can lead to behavioral changes in their families

PRI's Center for Climate Change Education

- Don introduced Center for Climate Change Education at PRI, emphasizing urgent need for improved climate education

- PRI offers professional development, public programs, and educational materials to support climate change education
- The center collaborates with various organizations and advocates for better climate change education policy
- Don highlighted importance of understanding Earth history in contextualizing climate change and role of fossil fuels in Earth's history

New York's Educational Initiatives on Climate Change

- Don discussed difficulty of passing educational legislation, particularly on climate change education
- The Portrait of a Graduate in New York now includes expectations for climate literacy for all graduates starting in 2026-2027 school year
- The Seal of Civic Reading Readiness encourages students to engage in civic actions, including climate actions
- New science regents exams in Earth Science and Biology, which include substantial climate content, were debuted in June and will be implemented in all schools by 2025-2026 school year

Implementation of New Science Standards

- Don noted that New York City is opting in for both Earth Science and Biology standards in first year, with Physics and Chemistry standards to follow
- Earth Science regents exam has more climate change content than any state exam in US
- Teachers were caught off guard by the amount of new climate content on exam
- Don emphasized importance of teaching climate change across grade span and curriculum

Public Programming and Funding

- Don mentioned public programming "Science in the Pub" which begins in September and continues throughout academic year
- Work is funded by National Science Foundation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Park Foundation, and an endowment from an anonymous bequest
- Don discussed collaboration with American Museum of Natural History on "Museum in a Box" program, aimed at elementary schools, starting with a box on dinosaur fossils

Financial Challenges and Collaborations

- Peter highlighted financial difficulties faced by PRI, including a major donor pulling out of a significant commitment
- Institution is in crisis, with mortgage at risk – an equity investment company trying to extract as much money as possible in negotiations over mortgage
- Peter mentioned importance of donations to keep PRI afloat – as part of this effort, PRI will be turning over Cayuga Nature Center to state park system
- Smith Woods old-growth forest has also been gifted to Trumansburg village

Professional Development and Climate Education

- Don emphasized importance of professional development for teachers to reach a larger number of students
- Peter mentioned involvement of PRI in 2030 Districts Museum Network and other collaborative efforts with museums and educational institutions around country
- Don and Ingrid discussed collaborative nature of climate change education and various networks and organizations involved

Adult Education and Outreach

- Dawn Montanye asked about adult education and reach of PRI's programs
- Don explained that adult education takes place mostly through virtual pubs and online content, reaching national audience
- Ingrid mentioned a project with NYPA employees, where climate change education was mandatory

Closing Remarks and Future Plans

- Speaker 1 thanks Don and Ingrid for their work and the evolution of climate science education at PRI
- Don provided brief lesson on carbon content in gasoline and its impact on emissions
- Peter encouraged donations to help PRI pay off mortgage