Minutes of WNYEA Energy and Climate Change Group Meeting

April 3, 2014

Introductions

In attendance were Robert Knoer, David Stout, Derek Bateman, Douglas Funke, David Bradley, Andy Luth, Fred Harrington.

2014 Action Agenda planks.

The Citizens’ Regional Transit Corporation (CRTC) plank encourages carbon reduced transportation requirements within the Niagara River Greenway. Doug Funke delivered a report on the plank and advised that he had compiled a letter to the editor in response to a previous newspaper article about the need for tourism attractions in the region. The letter expresses a need for good public transportation options within the greenway in order to maximize the economic potential of this eco attraction.

Doug discussed that the Greenway Commission may create a transportation committee. There was a suggestion that if Doug is going to sit on the transportation committee he may be able to wear the WNYEA hat since this is plank was adopted by the whole alliance. Doug will provide more information so that the idea can be submitted to the board and approval sought.

No one was present from the League of Women Voters to discuss the plank in support of the Citizen Campaign for Climate Smart Communities by encouraging members to help initiate or get involved in campaigns within their own municipalities.

No one was in attendance from Sierra to discuss the plank to foster the development of clean, renewable energy and green jobs in Western New York through the adoption of Feed-in-Tariffs (FITs) and or other long-term stable finance mechanisms. There was general discussion that the FIT as originally proposed had been stalled somewhat and that Sierra was focusing its attention on the Governor’s proposed Energy Plan.

Potential 2015 planks.

The Citizens’ Regional Transit Corporation is planning on carrying forward its existing plank with regard to the greenway, perhaps tweaked.

WAG is considering several planks including one action item to attract more wind energy to the WNY region, a plank to propose use of liquid fuels such as biodiesel, ethyl, and green diesel, and a plank to have the National Energy Policy Act amended to allow for more possibilities of feed in tariffs on a statewide basis.

Member Reports and General Discussion

We discussed the proposed Quasar project. Dave Bradley gave an explanation of the process and there was a discussion around the significant use of biodigesters to create energy in Germany. The FIT in Germany is
about 10 cents per kilowatt hour for biodigesters. There are approximately six thousand farms using biodigesters in an area roughly the size of NY/PA.

The feed stock includes not only manure but also any cellulose based materials including apple cores and the like. The generator sets that produce the energy itself from the methane gas have a wide tolerance for swings in the methane to carbon ratios. There was an acknowledgement that the process still involves burning carbon, but the burning of the methane is better than releasing the methane into the atmosphere.

There was a report from the CRTC Council about the Transportation Equity Alliance conference and their “Dump the Pump” national day. A suggestion was made that CRTC write up a GROW blog for the “Dump the Pump” effort as well as potentially make it a GROW716 text project where people can explain what they did to “Dump the Pump” on that specific day.

There was discussion about the need for NFTA to push better light rail, and particularly with regard to transportation to the airport.

Andy Luth advised that Kid Wind is going to a national event with 20 states attending in Washington DC and that they would also be part of the AWEA. He also reported that the K Solar program from Solar Liberty and NYSERDA may allow for some solar installations in the local schools.

REK reported a discussion he had with a German resident during a conference in which he advised that the priority of environmental concerns in energy issues is being replaced with security concerns based on the Russian geopolitical outlook.

Dave Stout reported that he is trying to make efforts to have small wind included as part of the Rocky Mountain Institute programs.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30

The Next WNYEA Energy and Climate Change Working Group meeting will be held April 22 at 5:00 as part of the WNYEA Green Drinks Earth Day event at the Filing Station at Larkinville.