

School Energy NewsWire

A Newsletter for Efficient & Climate Friendly Schools

SCHOOL ENERGY COALITION TO HOLD MEMBERSHIP MEETING IN FEBRUARY

GROUP TO MEET IN SACRAMENTO DURING C.A.S.H. CONFERENCE

The School Energy Coalition (SEC) will hold its annual membership meeting on Tuesday, February 21, 2012 at the Sacramento Convention Center in rooms 317/318 during the Coalition for Adequate School Housing (C.A.S.H.) Annual Conference.

Members will hear how SEC is addressing advocacy efforts at the State Capitol and at state agencies such as the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the Air Resources Board (ARB), and the California Energy Commission (CEC). Non-members are welcome to attend to

hear more about the organization and our plans for 2012.

SEC will be discussing legislative bills of interest, such as Senate Bill 843 (Wolk) – regarding community-based off-site renewable energy and potential legislation on net metering.

In 2012, SEC’s advocacy agenda will include moving legislation on net-metering, community renewable projects, and participating in the San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) rate case proceeding.

Despite the recent activity, it appears the SDG&E ratemaking will continue to move forward through the CPUC process without a Network Use Charge (NUC). The utility will re-submit the ratemaking proposal later this month, and if approved, could mean much higher rates overall for those who have made investments in solar projects, including schools. SEC will be actively advocating in opposition to this ratemaking and its impact on current and future school projects.

(See article on Page 2 for more details.)

Special guests will be joining SEC members at our February 21 meeting to discuss the SDG&E rate case proceeding, the net-metering legislative efforts to raise the current cap, and advocacy at the CPUC on energy programs available for schools.

Mark your calendars and plan to attend this important meeting to learn more about school energy projects and opportunities for funding, as well as discussion of our 2012 goals

Starting Solar Projects the Right Way – Benchmarking & Solar Master Plans Webinar

Why do some school districts brag about the satisfying results they have received from renewable generation with solar projects and others will tell you to stay as far away as possible? You want the big savings for your District’s general fund, but are concerned about the risk if those promised savings don’t occur. How do the successful schools do it?

Please join us for an SEC webinar on Developing Solar Master Plans using Free Benchmarking Tools and other low-or no-cost technical

assistance on March 13, 2012 at 1:00 p.m.

The SEC webinar will feature Mark Jewell, an expert on the low or no-cost benchmarking tools and KyotoUSA’s Tom Kelly who will discuss the elements of the Solar Master Plans he and his team developed and plans for helping more districts develop their own Solar Master Plans.

More information on how to register is forthcoming.

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SDG&E GENERAL RATE CASE COULD IMPACT SCHOOL PROJECTS

In October 2011, San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E) Utility submitted a Notice of Intent to File a General Rate Case Application requesting that the CPUC authorize a combined \$1.851 billion in rates over four years.

The general rate case filing is composed of some 25,000 pages in which SDG&E justifies how it spends the money it collects from customers in order to run and maintain its towers, pipes, wires, substations, offices and power plants.

The School Energy Coalition (SEC) will be actively following this case and commenting in opposition to rates that would have a negative impact on recent and future school projects in San Diego and potentially throughout the state.

Imbedded in the November proposed filing were much higher fees for solar power and a proposed "Network Use Charge" (NUC) for those customers with solar generators.

Last month, CPUC Commissioner Ferron, rejected the NUC as part of SDG&E's proposed rule making, saying it was inconsistent with current law. SDG&E has been ordered to re-file their rate design proposal by February 17, 2012, without the NUC.

Once re-submitted this month, the rate case proceeding is expected to take the better part of this year for CPUC review.

Although schools have been exempted by SDG&E from the NUC charge in the past, our involvement in this case is still needed as the utility's broader rate case application remains problematic for school projects.

SDG&E's proposed rates in the proceeding would still hurt the 109 San Diego County schools that have already invested in solar projects, and the proposed rates could raise the total annual energy costs at those facilities by an additional \$1 million to \$3 million, according to the Cen-

ter for Sustainable Energy based in San Diego.

Estimates by consumer groups and others, have said the proposed rates, if approved, would result in about a 10% increase (3% on electric rates and 7% on gas rates, on average). The utility claims that typical residential customers would see monthly bills go up about 5 percent, by \$6.50 or so, to \$129 from \$122.50.

SEC will be participating in this process individually and as a member of a coalition of concerned customers and public and private entities that have already invested in solar or are considering such projects.

This is also one of the SEC priorities we will be discussing at our upcoming membership meeting in Sacramento on February 21 at 3:30 p.m. at the Sacramento Convention Center. See front page article for more details.

WELCOME NEW SEC MEMBERS!

**Davis Joint Unified
School District
&
Solar City**



CPUC OPENS NEW PROCEEDING TO CONSIDER PUBLIC GOODS CHARGE FUNDING

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has begun a new proceeding as to whether and how to continue funding for renewables and research programs funded by the Public Goods Charge (PGC) – a surcharge on investor-owned utility customers – that expired on Jan. 1, 2012.

This proceeding, which will be closely followed by SEC, is a direct result of a request made by Governor Brown in late September asking that the Commission take action to continue the PGC.

CPUC President Michael Peevey committed to ensuring that the programs funded by the PGC continue without pause, and we are hopeful that the proceedings will result in

a strong program going forward.

The charge was created as a result of the deregulation of the state's electricity market - and each typical residential ratepayer's bill amounts to about one or two dollars.

State legislation that would have extended the program until 2020 died in the Senate in the final hours of the legislative session last September. Legislators may still believe they can get a bill passed early in the legislative session, which began this month, to reinstate the program.

The School Energy Coalition (SEC) has submitted a letter in support of continuing this very important program and to include schools wherever possible

in programs funded by the PGC.

The current CPUC proceeding will have two phases. Phase 1 will be focused on ensuring continuity in funding and collections, or a transition to a new funding level.

The second phase of the proceeding will address more detailed program design, oversight, and administrative questions related to how the funding will be allocated and by whom. This is where more of the SEC input will be focused.

We will keep our members apprised of the developments on this proceeding as they occur and will actively work to pinpoint more opportunities for efficiency and renewable project funding for schools.

REDLANDS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT SAVES \$900,000 THROUGH ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Practicing simple energy efficient methods can add up to huge savings, as the Redlands Unified School District (RUSD) has shown during the past 26 months by saving more than \$900,000 in energy costs.

"Everyone is an energy consumer and, therefore, everyone can be an energy saver," said RUSD energy education specialist James Fotia. "As an example, saving just 15 minutes of lighting per day can save a lot of money. A little bit of awareness from everybody adds up."

"We're very proud that the Environmental Protection Agency

(EPA) has recognized our strides in energy efficiency and has awarded the district with an Energy Star Leader Top-Performer designation," he said. "That means that the our school sites, K-12, are in the top 15 percent nationally in energy efficiency as calculated by the EPA."

In an effort to conserve energy as well as save money during rough economic times, RUSD contracted with Energy Education, Inc., a national consulting firm that helps clients aggressively save money through energy efficiency.

In 2009, RUSD hired Fotia, who was previously a teacher and has

a Master's Degree in educational administration, to be trained as the district's energy education specialist. Energy Education Inc. was responsible for Fotia's training.

Instead of requiring capital investment for new equipment or retrofitting current equipment, the program is geared primarily toward changing organizational behavior.

Fotia's main job is to lead staff and faculty in examining every energy use point in the district, ensuring that energy is used as necessary and making sure it is never being wasted.

He also gives presentations about

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Redlands USD (cont'd from Page 3)

the benefits of energy efficiency at student assemblies and in classrooms.

“You can see that it’s on their minds in elementary school, middle school, and in the high schools,” Fotia said. “They care about energy efficiency and sustainability.”

Oscar Stephenson, an eighth-grader at Moore Middle School, writes articles in the school newspaper regarding various issues of the day, including an article about the importance of energy conservation.

“It’s important so we can preserve our planet,” he said.

As part of his job, Fotia collaborates with RUSD maintenance and operations director Joe Aceto to oversee RUSD heating, cooling and ventilation (HCVS) systems, making sure that all the systems are running as programmed.

“Joe Aceto is vital in the operation of the main equipment,” Fotia said.

Moore Middle School Principal Julie Swan, whose school has one of the district’s oldest and most outdated HCVS systems, is proud that the school, along with the others in the district, has managed to contribute to the district’s large savings.

“Despite an outdated system, we have all worked hard to save energy,” she said. “We teach our kids to do whatever is necessary to cut our carbon footprint.”

In addition to coordinating ways to reduce utility costs district wide, Fotia is tasked with pursuing the numerous refund, rebates and credit opportunities through the utility companies.

However, according to Fotia, the majority of energy savings is due to the awareness of teachers, administrators and students of the importance of participating in simple energy saving practices, such as turning off the lights in a classroom when it is not being used. Another big energy savings, Fotia said, is when the students turn off computers not in use.

“When everyone is aware of the cost savings, it is motivation to improve and stay diligent,” he said. “There is no way I could do this by myself. I feel like part of my job is to be the cheerleader.”

Fotia also oversees the scheduling of energy shutdowns during the time the schools and other districts sites are closed. These “down times” include three weeks during winter break, one week for Thanksgiving, two weeks for spring break and eight weeks throughout the summer.

“When we’re not using the facilities, we turn off everything, big and small, including the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems, lights, and even unplugging refrigerators and appliances,” Fotia said.

Among Fotia’s other duties is inspecting the mechanical equipment at each site regularly, auditing sites day and night to make sure everything is working according to schedule, and making sure anything that needs to be repaired - even as small as a water sprinkler head - is fixed immediately.

Another important task is to verify that utility bills are correct. For example, in one instance, Fotia noticed that the water district mistakenly charged sewer fees to an irrigation account, and the result was that the district was credited thousands of dollars.

Meanwhile, one of the selling points for hiring Energy Education, Inc. is that the firm guarantees that the savings will cover the cost of the energy program as well as the cost for the energy education specialist position. Otherwise, the firm will refund the difference.

“We have exceeded our savings projections in both Year 1 and 2,” Fotia said. “At a certain point, the role of Energy Education Inc. gradually diminishes, and we will be on our own.”

Energy Education Inc., a firm in Dallas, is also contracted with Riverside County School District, which have collectively saved more than \$33 million by changing the cultures in the districts regarding how and when energy is used.

This article was reprinted from The Oakland Tribune article printed on January 26, 2012.

SCHOOL ENERGY COALITION

Membership Application

Yes! I wish to become a member of the School Energy Coalition (SEC). Please enter my yearly membership at the following fee:

FEES:

- Local Education Agencies (includes Districts, COEs, Community Colleges) \$250 per year
- Small School Districts (Less than 2,500 ADA & Charter Schools \$100 per year
- Businesses/Associates \$750 per year

Contact Name _____ Date _____

Title _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

E-mail _____

Payment Method:

Check # _____ P.O. # _____

Please mail or fax to:
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