



MEETING MINUTES
Climate Action Plan Standing Committee
January 18, 2023

A. Call to Order: Meeting commenced at 3:30pm. Attending: Ben Davis, Nathan Dugan, Lydia Fahrenkrug, Melissa Hartman, Karin Hilding, Michelle Howke, Robin Paone, Liz Records, Alan Tiefenbach, Dakota Whitman, Melissa Hartman

B. Minutes of December 21, 2022 Meeting were approved.

C. Communications/Outreach/Education –

Presentation by Carolyn Jones and Seth Lutter of Montana Facility Finance Authority about the C-PACE program. Program details may be found here: <https://lastbestpace.com/>

- C-PACE financing (Commercial Property Assessed Capital Enhancement) is making energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy investments more attainable to commercial building owners.
- To implement the program, a city or county establishes a C_PACE tax district.
- Building owners with projects for reducing energy costs secure financing
- The local government adds the loan payment as an assessment to the tax rolls
- The building owner pays the assessment and recognizes savings from the improvements
- MFFA receives the funds as a lump sum and administers the distribution to lenders
- Neither the government nor the citizens are on the hook for the loans.

Benefits:

- Commercial property owners are able to invest in energy efficiency projects and solar or renewable energy upgrades with no upfront costs
- Utility savings exceed payment obligations, making investments cash positive for commercial property owners and tenants
- Payments are rolled into a special tax assessment made payable twice per year as part of the building owner's property taxes
- The program is tax neutral with no financial exposure to cities or counties
- Energy improving investments promote local jobs

Questions:

- Is collecting loan payments through taxes a burden on the county, adding costs? It is estimated it takes ~2 hours to input the data for C-PACE. The local government can take a fee if they find it a burden. This is not any different than the ~30 other taxes being collected on tax bills.
- What happens when a business fails and tax payments are not being made? The same process as a regular tax default. The lender will pick up the defaulted payments. The property is used as collateral so the lender covers payments and fees. This is standard loan agreement language.

Final comments: Flathead County Commissioners would like to hear from businesses on why C-PACE should be adopted. If you are business owner, please contact them.

D. Nomination of a new committee chair to replace Kate McMahon.

Robin Paone stepped up to be Chair, Melissa Hartman volunteered to be Vice Chair and Karin Hilding offered to be Secretary. The committee unanimously approved these nominations.

E. Project Updates

- Existing Projects
 - Community Solar Project (Karin) – The project is moving forward after the work session.
 - Transit Mobility Platform – Jan. 17th council work session demo. The Whitefish Chamber also expressed interest. The next step is to build support from potential partners.
 - Landscaping Standards – Planning Department update (Alan) The internal staff review is complete. The standard has been provided to fifteen landscape architects for review. Comments are due soon.
 - EPA Climate Resilience Evaluation and Awareness Tool (CREAT) Risk Assessment Application for Water Utilities – presentation at future meeting. A February presentation is possible. Also, the Whitefish study will be highlighted in an upcoming conference in Butte.
 - FY 24 city budget process related to CAP committee – Karin will draft department questionnaires regarding budget items related to the climate action plan.

- Proposed Projects
 - Pamphlet for Zero Waste events at Depot Park (Liz) – no change this month.
 - Proposed Electrification Strategy (Robin) – The draft strategy was sent to the committee. Robin and Lydia will meet with Karin to refine.

F. Other Committee Status Updates – no updates

G. Public Comment - none

H. The meeting adjourned at 5:05pm