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My Turn

An open letter to Kit Carson Electric

Sandy Schwartz

At this time on Planet Earth it is crucial that we reduce and eventually eliminate our dependence on foreign and in-country non-renewable resources both for reasons of national security and the need to halt human caused global climate change and all it's consequences.

Fundamental to achieving this transition are the concepts and enactment of conservation and resource management practices.

As I understand it, the funds needed by the co-op at this time are for infrastructure that is already in place. The infrastructure is necessary for providing reliable service to it's members.

While the need is understandable, the proposed new structure of raising the member and/or demand charge evenly across the board and lowering the kWh price in a flat block rate structure is backwards thinking. The plan will encourage consumption of non-renewable resources and discourage environmental stewardship and energy efficiency.

This structure will create hardship for some of its most vulnerable and conservation-conscious members while the biggest users of electricity will actually see a decrease in their bill as the lower kWh price is averaged in with their \$10.50 meter charge increase. "The more you use the less you pay"? Demand should be considered a separate charge or be coupled with kWh, not bundled with per meter charge.

The members who are demanding large amounts of electricity are the ones responsible for the need to buy expensive new transfer stations that are fueled almost exclusively by dirty coal, poisonous, unbelievably expensive radioactive nuclear power, and water contaminating natural gas.

KCEC should re-evaluate the proposed rate hike structure, how it will affect the community, encourages detrimental impacts to the Earth, and is the antithesis of the EPA's stance on energy conservation. KCEC, and the other co-ops too, should explore alternative structuring possibilities to provide incentives for conservation and disincentives for consumption.

As a first step, KCEC should look at implementing an inclining block rate immediately, instead of starting with the current flat block rate proposed. This could help to generate immediately-needed funds in a more equitable manner.

The meter/infrastructure charge could be adjusted so that members who conserve are not penalized. The increased service charge for them could be implemented incrementally and on a sliding scale.

Our ultimate goal should be rooted in distributed generation produced by renewable resources (local production for local use).

KCEC has shown some leadership in renewable generation to date, offering wind power blocks to members (they should not cost more than non-renewables however) and by funding a number of solar installations with plans for more.

We should continue on this path, and there are many possibilities that should be explored. CEO Lu's Reyes has looked at Feed-in tariff programs for small renewable generation, and these should be developed and implemented as well. Further, the coop should look at areas within the bureaucracy and operations of the co-op itself where savings could be realized through developing resource management practices. Many businesses schools, and municipalities of all sizes have realized financial benefits from utilizing resource management models.

We need to see a long-range plan for moving into the future that the board should currently be working on for presentation to its members.

KCEC, of which most of us are members, needs to take a closer look at how we can have a financially healthy co-op that is working toward a sustainable future before moving forward with a business-as-usual plan.

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