

Residential Ratepayers' Advisory Board
February 13, 2023, Meeting Minutes

<i>Present for the Board</i>	<i>Present for the OCA</i>
Thomas Moses, Chair	Donald Kreis
Dana Nute, Vice Chair	Lesley LaPerle
Neal Kurk	Michael Crouse
Kenneth Mailloux	Benjamin Silver
James Garrity	
Ryan Clouthier	
Matt Kfoury	

Guest Speaker: John Gage, New Hampshire state coordinator or citizens Climate Lobby

Mr. Moses called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. No members of the public present.

1. Minutes of October 24th Meeting

Mr. Mailloux moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Clouthier seconded the motion. Board members agreed unanimously.

2. Presentation from John Gage, New Hampshire state coordinator or Citizens Climate Lobby about Carbon Fee and Dividend

Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy climate change organization focused on national policies to address climate change. Mr. Gage presented information and analysis on carbon pricing, and carbon fees and dividends. Carbon emissions are currently a negative externality (cost not included in price) in the United States. Mr. Gage presented a plan for the incorporation of this externality. The plan consists of implementing a price per ton of CO₂ of \$135 in 2030 with \$10 added each subsequent year. This plan is designed to achieve the goal of limiting average global temperature rise of 1.5 degrees centigrade. Mr. Kurk was concerned the plan is an effective tax on energy and the fossil fuel industry in general. Mr. Gage responded by stating that the plan is designed to incentivize the reduction of emissions and is applied to all sectors, thereby incentivizing investment in carbon saving or reducing technologies. The plan also includes a carbon fee and dividend program. This program operates by charging a fee on carbon at the source (i.e. the point at which it enters the economy) then returning 100 percent of net revenue to households as dividends. Mr. Kurk raised the concern that the fee and dividend program, on its face, looks like wealth redistribution tax. Mr. Gage responded that the benefit from the dividends, while equal on their face, will be lower for people in higher tax brackets as the dividends are taxable income. Mr. Kurk then inquired into the necessity of a fee and redistributed income, instead of government investment of the net revenue from the program. Mr. Gage responded by highlighting this method as the best for low-income household with respect to their ability to transition away from carbon intensive practices, also noting a dividend system would be most efficient for administration of the program.

Mr. Gage provided each member of the Board and OCA staff with a business card containing his contact information for further discussion.

3. Consumer Advocate Reappointment Work

The Consumer Advocate (Donald Kreis) is seeking reappointment to the position. A committee (lead by Dana Nute, and including Ryan Clouthier, James Garrity, and Kenneth Mailloux) has

been established to evaluate Mr. Kreis's performance. The objective of the committee is to make a recommendation on whether reappoint Mr. Kreis.. Once Mr. Moses noted that once the Board has adopted a recommendation he will communicate the determination to the Governor pursuant to RSA 363:28-a, V(c).

4. Case Update

OCA expects at least three upcoming rate cases in the next 12 months. Mr. Kreis raised concerns that the Least Cost Integrated Resource Planning statute (RSA 378:37 through :40) may be repealed. OCA is concerned over the repeal of the IRP as it is foundational in residential rates and ratepaying mechanisms.

5. Legislative Update: OCA Priorities and Concerns for 2023

The Board discussed the Office's support of House Bill 609, which would transfer energy facility siting authority from the Site Evaluation Committee to the Public Utilities Commission. Discussion focused on whether the bill directly implicates residential ratepayers. Mr. Kreis explained that bills concerning the development of energy facilities potentially benefit consumers as increased energy supply may result in reduced rates. Mr. Kreis also stated that it is not the sole role of the OCA to keep rates as low as possible but instead to intervene in the interests of the consumer. Mr. Kreis also mentioned, again, that the OCA is opposing efforts to repeal the least-cost planning statute.

6. Any other topics or issues the board wishes to discuss

The Board also discussed the propriety of using ratepayer money collected via the System Benefits Charge and its corresponding charge on natural gas bills (as opposed to tax revenue) to provide discounts to low-income customers. Mr. Kreis explained expressed the view that such programs actually benefit all customers by, among other things, reducing uncollectables that become a utility operating expense.

The next meeting of the Board will be April 24th at 2:00 p.m.

7. Public Comments

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Moses moved to adjourn. Mr. Garrity seconded the motion, which was adopted unanimously by the Board. The meeting was adjourned at 4:23 p.m.