

Austin Energy Utility Oversight Committee Meeting

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[1:32:23 PM]

>> Pool: Thank you for being here. We'll start soon. We do have a number of councilmembers who are out of town. Garza, Madison and Ellis are out of town, but we should have a quorum and folks will be down pretty soon. So thanks for being here and we'll get started as soon as we have numbers. Which could happen any second. [♪Music♪]

[1:33:44 PM]

>> Pool: If I was a professor I would let all the students go after 15 minutes. [Laughter]. I have not attained that high of a stature, though. [♪Music♪]

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>> Pool: Okay. We just need one more person and that person is on the way. So I'm going to go ahead and start with our citizens communication. We have two people signed up, Paul Robbins and Al Drandara. Both of you gentlemen are welcome to come to the table. Paul is first and Al is second. Thanks both of you gentlemen for being here today. Okay. So Al Dandre? Am I saying your name properly, sir? And then Paul will be after you.

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Mr. Did Deandre. >> [Indiscernible]. >> Now that we have the quorum, I will formally call the Austin energy oversight committee to order. It is October 23, 2019. It is -- what time is it? What time does the clock say? 1:37. And we do have a quorum. I announced earlier that a number of our colleagues are out of town and that is Madison, Garza and Ellis. And I think everybody else will be here today. Thank you. And Mr. Deandre. You have three minutes. >> >> Good afternoon. My name is Al Deandre, I'm the owner of Mccollough meet heating and air conditioning. We're an energy contractor here in the city of Austin, been here for a long time.

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We've been long time contractors in Austin energy's multi-family energy efficiency program and I'm here to speak to that. It's an important program and it does some very valuable and important work for multi-family residents here in the city. I want to say that I support Austin energy's initiative to the year. Having to go the city causes a serious delay in the projects. We go to properties, many of them are low income properties. That's kind of the focus of the program right now. And I don't know if you can imagine

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a lot of people think when you go to a multi-family property and you talk about a program that the city is going to pay for that it would be very easy to get that off the ground and that's not true. The issue is people always think that there's a catch. And the industry has changed over last decade so that when we go to a property now typically the property manager is, for lack of a better word, a warm body and these properties are managed as portfolios of properties. And the real decision making is often outside of Austin, be is Houston or Chicago or New York. And so when we go to the property and we talk about these programs in a provide valuable services to their residents, the property owner is often open to it and excited about it, but when they mention it to somebody in Houston, that person says what's the catch?

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When you -- so they take a long time. For every property we actually do work on, we probably have to visit 10 to 20. And even that's when the city is paying for it. So properties need the work, but it really is a struggle to get properties to move forward. When you introduce that a lot of these properties the projects has to be approved by city council, often times you're adding two, three, four months of delay

into the cycle which can mean the difference of whether the project gets done or not. And honestly, when they hear that the city is going to be involved, there's always a lot of anxiety. What are they going to look at? What are they going to require us to do. [Buzzer sounds] So I think it would be a good move to do. >> Thank you so much. >> Pool: Mr. Robbins, you're next and you will also have three minutes. >> Welcome.

[1:41:59 PM]

>> Welcome, council. The cost of natural gas is quite volatile. This is a chart of wellhead prices adjusted for inflation between 1972 and 2012. I expect that within 10 years of percentage of nuclear power in the ERCOT grid will fall because the population will increase without any new nuclear capacity coming online. Coal use will fall to zero or very low percentages. Solar and wind power will increase, but only to the limits that they are not producing power that cannot be used. Such a situation will be at least noticeable at 30% saturation. As of now we're at

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about 20%. And what this means is we'll be dependent for the rest of our power on natural gas. Gas could account for as much as 60% of electric supply. History will remind you -- was anybody here besides me in 1972? Pío? Anyone else? You remember the lava prices when our supposed long-term contract was aggregated and gas prices soared? If you want to eliminate coal and for that matter fossil fuel from the grid, you need to invest in dispatchable renewable energy. I again guide you in the direction of the southern star, concentrating solar power is a dispatchable

[1:44:00 PM]

solar technology. It stores the high heat of solar next to the generators to allow power production at night. I think Austin should create a partnership of utilities in Texas or in the southwestern United States to further this technology and to ultimately build the first such power plant. Theoretically some of this should be concern of the federal government, but since the federal government is not doing most of its job protecting the public from environmental dangers of global warming and air pollution, Austin could help fill this vacuum. Also consider that the utility probably has excess revenue from this hot summer which ironically was partially caused by global warming. I think it would be justice to take this revenue and spend some of it either on

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concentrating solar power or on de-feeing the debt of the fayette coal plant. >> Pool: Thank you. Let's see, we're going to change the order of our agenda here just a little bit today so that staff can -- who are here to make a report are able to leave a little bit quicker. And so we're going to flip items 3 and 4. We'll do item 4 and then item 3. So going back to approval of the minutes, September 25, 2019, the oversight committee meeting. Anybody? Councilmember Casar makes a motion. Councilmember kitchen seconds. Any changes or questions? All those in favor of approving the minutes? Looks like it's unanimous. Thanks. And Ms. Sargent, our general manager's report. Techniques like you've got upcoming recommendations for council action, some

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information on software licenses, maintenance support and subscription services, energy efficiency rebate authority and some updates on recent awards and events. Welcome. >> Thank you so much, vice-chair pool and councilmembers. I'm Jackie Sargent, the general manager of Austin energy and I'm glad to be here with you today. In addition to my report, pat Sweeney is going to come up and talk about the decker workforce update. He's the vice-president of power production. And then Erica, vice-president of energy market operations and resource planning, will give a presentation along with cane carpenter from aviation regarding a very exciting community solar project that we're working on at our airport. I would also like to acknowledge aviation executive director Jackie yak, who is present today. Thank you for being here, as we discuss this collaborative project. So it's great to be working together. And then Erica is also going to provide you with an update on the ERCOT market

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summer performance. On October 31st, we will ask you to approve a change to how we obtain council authorization for multi-family and commercial energy efficiency rebates that exceed the city manager's spending authority. Rather than coming to city council each time we have a rebate request that is above the city manager's authority, we are asking that you provide us with spending authorization for the full budgeted amount of \$4.45 million for multi-family and commercial property energy efficiency rebates. This item has been presented to and recommended for approval by both the electric utility commission and the resource management commission. This will be an annual request for rebate approval and it reflects Austin energy's continued commitment to being responsive to our customers' needs. Customers and contractors participating in the rebate programs have asked for reduced wait times and for getting rebate approval.

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Currents each project under the city manager's authority first must go to the eac, the rmc. We often talk about them at the uoc meetings and then they come to the full council for approval. This can add, as you heard previously from the speaker, two to three months or more to the project timeline, depending on the rebate timing and the agenda scheduling. The . Added wait times makes it difficult for hard to reach markets and can lead to projects missing the opportunity to realize energy savings during the summer months when it's the most helpful. This blanket approach is the same method that we use for aggregate annual approval for the city dir contracts. So this is not a new approach, and actually I believe that it supports one of our sd 23 goals of government that works. The other item that I want to mention that is scheduled for your November 14th meeting and it's a four-year, 43-million-dollar contract with Cyrus computer solutions for the purchase of IBM software licenses,

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maintenance support and subscription services. The contract will provide continuity of services for Austin energy's ongoing IBM software portfolio projects which include customer websites, data integration, data governance and enterprise work and asset management system. This item was also recommended by the electric utility commission at its October meeting. Now I'd like to recognize a couple of recent awards that were earned by the utility. Just last week Austin energy won a silver quill award in the category of government communications from the international association of business communicators for the electric vehicle, how will you say good-bye, marketing campaign. In addition, Stevie, the ev loving dinosaur, won best of division award, chomping the best of the competition for the top spot. The second recognition that I want to highlight comes from the national renewable energy lab which compiles data on utility green pricing programs and releases annual top 10 lists

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to recognize outstanding programs. Through our green choice program, Austin energy was the top 10 for all categories, including total sales, total number of customers and participation rate. And I want to thank you for your ongoing support for these programs and it's really nice to see this recognition for your work and for the work that our staff does. I'll wrap up by highlighting the ninth annual community connections resource fair that was held this past Saturday at Juan Navarro high school in district 4. Approximately 140 exhibitors from the city of Austin, the county, and various state agencies and non-profit organizations were on hand to provide information about social services available in our community. Ted ease were able to access on-site health screenings and see how to lower their utility bills through the city of Austin customer assistance program. Employers and job placement services also participated, accepting resumes and job

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applications from event participants. I want to thank all of the Austin energy employees who helped coordinate this fantastic event as well as our community partners who came together to share information about the services they provide. With that, I'll pause if you have any questions. >> Pool: Any questions for the general manager? Yes, councilmember alter. >> Alter: Thank you. I just wanted to understand with the change in process for the energy rebates, are you proposing it wouldn't go through any of these processes or it wouldn't come to council or like would it just be a staff decision or would it still go to euc? >> So the expectation would be that we would not be going to them for getting recommendation for approval and then getting them on council agendas. So we would be eliminating that and we would have the blanket authorization and then we would go through the process, which would expedite. The process includes a lot

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of vetting and review, and there's criteria that has to be met, so it's not just a given that these rebates are offered, but they have to comply with the prescriptive requirements of the program for participation. >> Alter: So since I've been on council the only time I remember having issue with a rebate was when we had a property that was a repeat offender that was being offered a rebate and then that was removed. So in this process what is the check for that kind of situation? >> I'm going to defer to my staff who is here. >> Debbie Kimberly, vice-president customer solutions and corporate communications.

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Yes, that was a miss, I will confess that we missed that because we do have a check that we go through as Jackie mentioned, we go through a whole series of criteria if a property is on the repeat offender's list. They are not eligible, that's communicated in all of our materials. We will be publishing to the monthly and quarterly reports that we maintain on our website. All of the detailed fact sheets that were provided in the past, and that includes the rent for each of the different apartment sizes and those properties that are weatherized. So you'll still have access to that information. In the seven years that I've been here there's never been an rca that wasn't approved, but you are absolutely correct, councilmember alter, that there was one time where one slipped past. And we've made it abundantly clear that that is not acceptable. >> Alter: Okay, thank you. >> Pool: Thanks. Any other questions? Thanks, Ms. Kimberly and

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thanks general manager. >> I wanted to add that we spent quite a bit of time on this at the last electric utility commission meeting. And what hasn't been mentioned so far is that we have moved the reporting from, you know, bring us a report before on the things that we're planning to authorize to bring us a report after they have been authorized so that we can review them. And so that's something that the electric utility commission at a minimum has committed to as we'll be getting quarterly -- it's either quarterly or monthly reports on projects that have been authorized with the same information that -- to review that we had when we were doing it as prior authorization. And then we will be reviewing those to make sure they fit with all of the requirements. So I think we came to the conclusion that we can do this pretty much just as well after the fact as we could before the fact,

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granting that if you make a mistake it gets a little harder to reverse it. >> Pool: Great. Okay. Anything else? Ms. Sargent, before you go, I wanted to ask really quick, when will you bring us the dates for our meetings for next year, the recommended dates for our agenda? >> At the next meeting. >> Pool: Great. November? Thank you. So item number 4 is next. That's the decker creek power station workforce planning. Welcome. >> Good afternoon. I'm pat Sweeney, vice-president for power production. I'm going to give a quick update on the decker workforce plans associated with our pending retirements of two steam units there. We've been doing career assessments for the team there since March. We have no change since the

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last meeting here at the council in terms of numbers. We're at 44 individuals. It's about 70% of the affected positions. We're going to continue to offer those through year end in the hope that we can get as close to 100% as possible. We do have some additional items that we've done in the meantime. We have completed two employee retirement workshops in cooperation with the city of Austin retirement system. They came out at our request and provided a specific workshop for those who are eligible to retire and those who are not because there's different content that they cover for the audiences. Both were very well attended and appreciated, I believe. And they are planning a follow-up in the spring based on Q and A that they received, so we'll have them back out in the springtime with that information. I mentioned that we are also doing career coaching workshops. We've completed several of

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those. There's three of those that we do on a rotating basis, applying for city jobs, interviewing skills and interview practice. So since the last meeting we've completed two more of those and we have an

additional two scheduled throughout the year, the remainder of this year. And those are offered on rotating schedules so they can have multiple opportunities to take part. Coming up, we have been communicating on a recurring basis, on a quarterly basis with our team. We have a communication meeting set for November. We'll be doing that. And we're going to continue as I mentioned the assessments through the balance of the year as well as the workshops. And then in 2020 we'll begin moving into the career coaching and training that will be based on the assessment data. So that is my update if you have any questions. >> Thanks. Any questions for Mr. Sweeney? All right. Thank you so much. And we'll go back to item number 3, community soiler project at austin-bergstrom international airport

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welcome. Tell us who you are. >> Yes. Good afternoon, city councilmembers. My name is Erica beersbach. I'm vice-president of energy operations at energy. I'm here delighted to be here with the aviation department for us to provide you a high level of review of an exciting project that we have coming down the pike. >> Hi, cane carpenter, environmental manager with the Austin airport. >> So we're going to co-present these slides to you today. I'm going to kick it off with just a project overview. The project is a rooftop installation at one of the airport's parking garages. Austin energy will contract for the solar energy with a private developer and abia will take a little over 15% of the capacity and the rest of it -- of the energy will be sold through our community solar program. >> Yes. The project started approximately in 2017. We have a large parking

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garage project that's wrapping up now. Could you go to the next slide there? There's a picture of it. It's called the blue garage. And we saw an opportunity for us to start talking about solar and to support our project, and it ultimately grew into a partnership with Austin energy to do community solar solar. Some of the significant aspects about this, there's a picture for scale purposes, about six football fields. Approximately eight acres. One of the great things about it in the synergies that we worked through was that we didn't have to purchase steel to provide the shade for our customers and your customers here at the Austin airport. So that saved the airport about \$1.5 million and also saved those resources and so it was a great opportunity to put solar in place of that.

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Do you want me to jump ahead a little bit? This is just a good shot. We are working heavily. You met our new executive director. I'm glad to have her here, but this is just a quick shot to show this partnership with our city departments and contractors and even solar providers. It is going to continue to be an

important aspect of meeting this next plan, which is the abia 2040 plan. So the garage is on the right side of this drawing and it will be covered with solar. So we'd like to thank the partnership, including fa, city of Austin public works, Austin energy, of course, the city of Austin's legal department, our contractor, and the rest of the project team really worked together hard to collaborate and come

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up with this project. So I have a couple of things I jumped ahead there. >> No, no. >> It seemed appropriate. >> No, no, perfect. I'll just finish off with a little bit of the update on the project. Austin energy actually released a request for proposals back in April of this year. We evaluated rank and short listed all the offers and Austin energy will actually be negotiating and executing the purchase power agreement with the developer. The airport will actually negotiate and execute the lease, which will be a license agreement with the developer. So that's how the contractual arrangements will be working. Finally some of the project details, kind of what to expect coming down the pike that you guys have been seeing is request for council action. We'll come to you in December, we'll hit the commissions in November. That's what we're projecting. And then some details, construction and commercial operation dates will occur in the second half of 2020.

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We have provisions in the contracted to purchase as well as provisions that include decommissioning and recycling of the solar panels as well. Are there any questions for us? >> Any questions about the solar project? Yes, councilmember alter. >> Alter: So this will be quick. First of all, I think this is a really cool project. I think it's very exciting to see the synergies. For way of kind of understanding the magnitude when it says 2.3 ahdc megawatts, what portion of our solar goals is that and mow does this compare to the other utility scale project that we're doing that involves the community solar program? >> So we are going to have a portion of that 2.3. The airport will take, like I said, about 15%. So about 375 kilowatts of that total. So the rest of that comes through the community solar

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project. I think you're asking with regards to -- are you talking about our utility scale blacklands, east blacklands project? >> Alter: Whichever is the project that you're using to provide the community solar. I don't know what the name of the project is. >> So I think you are referring to east blacklands, but I'm going to ask Debbie Kimberly to come up and talk about the community solar and answer your questions. >> Alter: I'm just trying to understand the magnitude of this project relative to what we've done and relative to our goals? >> Sure. Right now we have both la Loma and the palmer events facility that constitutes our solar offering. At some point the larger utility scale offering will be included. La

Loma is a little over two megawatts. So I think our share will be 2.8 megawatts for Austin energy community solar, so it will be a little bit smaller than la Loma, certainly being mounted on the roof is helpful and it's our intent once again to

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allocate 50% of that to low income customers and then the remainder to residential customers. >> Alter: Okay. Have you thought at all about sort of modeling this for some of our commercial customers for them to do the same thing on their parking structures if you have a model and a contractor and opportunities there? >> We are always in discussions with our customers to see if there's some synergies that we can offer them or any solutions we can offer them. >> Not only on parking structures, as well flat parking lots. We see that as a real opportunity to cost effectively expand. We've done real well to your other point in terms of local solar. Our intent is to get to 200 megawatts of local solar and with these blacklands we'll exceed that. And then we are -- we've exceeded the interim goal of 110 megawatts. So getting even more will most likely entail covered

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parking of some sort because you avoid the need to assure that the roof can support the structure. This is a new building. Obviously there's not a problem there. And frankly, providing covered parking is an asset and people are willing to pay more for that. >> Alter: Great. I think there's a lot of really interesting opportunities. I know there's some non-profits. I know that my synagogue opted to do solar and I just wondered if there are some other folks that if we could change some of the cost curve by doing some things like this, that it might encourage even more solar on a larger scale than just a house. Thank you. >> Pool: Any other questions? Great. Thank you so much. That brings us up to item 5, which is the ERCOT market update, electric reliability council of Texas. And I'm happy to say that our chair has made it. And -- >> Tovo: Thank you very

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much. Thank you, councilmember, for taking charge among other things, I had a flat tire. Happy to be here and thanks for filling in. So let's see. Would you -- >> Okay. So I am going to provide a high level review of this past summer's ERCOT market performance. So some key observations for the 2019 summer are that June and July were fairly mild and August was very hot with September being the hottest on record. Weather is one of the many drivers affecting the supply-demand balance and the viability of what is in our supply-demand market. There were many days in August that the system experienced tight conditions, energy system alert level one was declared twice in August. And energy emergency alert is an orderly predetermined procedure for maximizing the

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use of available resources. The alert is sent out when the amount of physical response capacity or units that can move quickly to meet the demand on the system have dipped below an ERCOT predetermined level. The tightest conditions frequently occurred this past summer earlier than the time of the highest load or when we peaked. This means that the demand on the market or the people across the state using the highest amounts of electricity in the market were not always driving the high prices. This past summer. This is important because it's different than what the market has experienced in the past. The nature of some energy market resources or some market supply was a significant contribution to the tightness in the market conditions when certain supply did not show up. The resources are not bad. It's just we're learning how to manage the ever-growing amount of these renewable

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resources in our market. So that's what is the story. The market had strong performance from the balance of the energy resources and ultimately market outcomes supported our reliability needs. So what are more unique items that stand out this past summer from previous Summers? The intermittency of the system drove pricing and system conditions when the market was tight. And when I mean tight I simply mean the amount of supply available to meet demand on the system. Another way to say this is that the demand on the system wasn't at its highest or load didn't peak when we experienced those tightest conditions. It was the amount of supply available or lack of it to meet the demand that created the tightness on the system. There were two energy emergency alert levels. Level one days that occurred on August 13th and August 15th. ERCOT peaked on the 12th with load consuming

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74,666 megawatts. That's a little over 1.5% higher than last year's peak. So the economy is strong in Texas and demand on the system continues to grow. This past summer the market enjoyed 2,400 megawatts of additional wind capacity over the previous 2018 summer. And ERCOT increasing -- increased transmission Youngs to the system, which also improved reliability. So throughout this past summer, there were effective and efficient communications throughout the market. Market participants had eight notices, this is the first of four levels of communication issued by ERCOT in anticipation of a possible emergency condition. Market participants receive 25 advisories, which is the second four levels of communication issued by ERCOT in anticipation of a possible emergency condition condition.

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Then market participants experienced two watches, which is the third four levels of communication issued by ERCOT in anticipation of a possible emergency condition. And finally, as I mentioned before, market participants received two energy emergency alerts, which are level one, which is the fourth of the four levels of communication issued by ERCOT anticipating emergency conditions. Additionally there were conservation requests. During August as well as some voluntary conservation requests the first week of September. So ERCOT's demand response is working. The table that you have here in front of you is a reflection of the demand response on the system during that hot week in August which generated the two EEs. Please note these numbers represent ERCOT's system and also demand response just to

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remind everyone is when customers agree to reduce their load during critical times, albeit for reliability or for price. So the reality I previously discussed is here, with it peaking and prices not being at their highest. On August 15th the market had over 9,000-dollar prices and energy emergency variety but not nearly as much demand on the system than the days surrounding it. August 15th is that example of the supply conditions that are driving those market conditions. So the table shows you how demand responded in the ERCOT market during that hot week in August. It's roughly three to five percent of the total load. And it's a larger and larger contributor to reliability. Each year. Also remember, Austin Energy is four percent of ERCOT's

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market and Austin Energy deployed all of its various demand response programs over the summer with consistent success similar to previous Summers. AE plays a part in ERCOT market's demand response activity. So a couple of perspectives on the 2017 summer. So the market's changing resource mix is impacting the dynamics and conditions of the market. ERCOT responded well to the tighter conditions this past summer through its customer and through its planning. The system continues to be reliable and market participants are responding according to whether it is in their communication plans, whether it's in their demand response activity or with regards to proper resource planning. And then a couple of future considerations for ERCOT, what we should expect to hear being discussed in the next several months and

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years, demand response in ERCOT's four coincident peak program are being discussed and inquired about at the public utility commission. The coincident peak program is where volume participants veerly

reduce their consume during the highest consumption days in order to reduce their demand charges on the transmission system. Another item that's being discussed is the state of the retail market. It continues to be under scrutiny whether it's the municipals and the co-ops or the ebb and flow that we see with retail electric providers. And lastly, realtime co-opmizetation has been a lingering public utility commission objective for some' time now, which is intended to improve the efficiency and effectiveness in this market. There's been some solid movement in the past year to develop this particular market feature. So that's all I have for you today. I don't know if you have any questions for me.

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>> Pool: Questions? >> Mayor Adler: Can you say what pec can [indiscernible]. >> We've heard from a couple of commissioners that there's a lot of retail electric providers out there, but it's just one of those items that is for discussion that some of them are buying each other out, you know, we had a couple of them, I think one had some problems over the summer making a payment. And so that was an issue. But there's a lot of retail electric providers out there. I just think it's something that the public utility commission is watching very closely. >> Mayor Adler: Just a number of them and some aren't healthy. Does that impact at all the looking at the field of providers, municipal versus the investor owned utilities? >> It's hard to know what the public utility public utility members are thinking. Really it has to do also with credit, with regards to the credit that's in the ercot market.

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There have been some changes that ercot has implemented with regard to how they manage credit for the retail electric providers, which has been very healthy step. So if one or two end up not being able to provide their collateral or meet their credit obligations, it doesn't hurt the liquidity in the ercot market. So they have made some significant changes. And I think some of that scrutiny that you've seen from the public utility commission has helped affect some of these changes just to try and keep that liquidity and you know, the market as robust as possible. >> Mayor Adler: Okay. >> Tovo: So with regard to the conservation request, I assume when ercot issued those every utility that participates gets that message out to their customers. Is that the way that works? >> Every utility is encouraged to do so. >> Tovo: But they don't necessarily deliver that message to their customers? >> I mean, I think it depends on the utility.

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If it's volunteer, we -- utilities are encouraged to send it out. I don't have a list of which ones sent or which ones didn't. There is a did he lien nation between -- delieniation about ercot sending it out or the utility on their own behalf. So we do have to walk a fine line. If it is something that a utility wants to do

or wants encourage their customers to conserve, we need to make sure we message that in a way that is explicitly coming from the system or coming from the iso or coming from the utility itself. So there are some rules there that we have to watch and with respect with regards to who is the one that's asking for that, if it's system reliability or if it's just conservation for its own effort. >> Tovo: Do you have a sense when they are ERCOT conservation requests, do you have a sense of how Austin's response -- how are customers' response is compared to responses from

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customers in other places? >> I don't have a way to compare how our customers respond versus someone in Dallas or someone in Houston, per se. That data is all lumped together and so it's a little hard to distinguish. >> Tovo: Okay, thank you. Any other questions on this issue? All right. Thank you very much. Okay. So that was our last agenda item. Any future items? I know vice-chair pool noted -- she made a request for the dates to come back to us. Are there any other items that you would like to see on next month's agenda. Okay. We stand adjourned at 2:18.