



Minutes for November 3, 2022

**Members attending the meeting:**

Christina Bouler, Mark Campen, Tiki Dixon, Tim Hill, Terry Ledford, Gwen McKenzie, Amy Midis, Kent Minault, David Myers, Stephen Smith

**Others in attendance:**

Facilitator: Dawn Ford

KUB Staff: Gabriel Bolas, Jamie Davis, Derwin Hagood, Tiffany Martin, Mark Walker, John Williams

KUB Board Members: Jerry Askew

**New Business**

The Community Advisory Panel met at 3:00 p.m. on November 3, 2022 at KUB's Mintha Roach Corporate Services and Training Center.

Dawn Ford welcomed the panel members and asked if anyone had corrections to the October meeting minutes. There were no corrections.

Ms. Ford explained the purpose of today's meeting was to continue discussion about outreach for the weatherization assistance program and begin discussion about energy efficiency programs. An update on KUB's broadband initiative will also be provided, as requested by the panel.

Ms. Ford introduced Chasity Hobby, KUB's Environmental Program Lead, to update the panel on KUB's recent efforts related to weatherization outreach.

Ms. Hobby shared an update about KUB's efforts to share information about weatherization assistance and encourage eligible customers to apply, including a partnership with SEED, SACE, Sierra Club, and ThreeCubed and an internal KUB team working on outreach efforts. She shared a new handout KUB developed and welcomed panel members to share the handout throughout the community and share any additional input they may have.

Ms. Ford asked if panel members had other input they would like to share related to outreach for weatherization assistance.

Dr. Smith asked about KUB's recent meeting with SACE and other partners and the proposal the group submitted. He asked if the proposal is being considered by KUB and if it is helpful. Mark Walker confirmed the proposal is helpful and KUB is currently reviewing it and will respond to the group to continue discussion of partnership opportunities.

Dr. Smith shared a suggestion for panel members to help monitor Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding opportunities KUB may be able to pursue to support sustainability initiatives. Specifically, he expressed interest in opportunities for homes to shift to electrification and use less natural gas. He asked how KUB is looking at the IRA and if the panel will be able to stay engaged in these opportunities.

Mark Walker confirmed KUB is researching the IRA and working to engage professional consulting services to assist. He welcomed information from panel members who are willing to share it with KUB.

Kent Minault mentioned he recently asked Molly Cripps of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation if her group may be able to help educate others on how to pursue IRA funding opportunities. He said Ms. Cripps explained she is currently researching the IRA herself so she can understand the opportunities better. Kent suggested the State may be able to host a meeting that could include members of this panel to learn more about the IRA.

Dr. Smith emphasized the importance of being proactive and ready to pursue the funding and not miss out on opportunities.

Ms. Ford noted the topic of IRA funds would be listed on the "Parking Lot" to come back to at a future time so the panel could close out their discussion about weatherization outreach.

Tiki Dixon said he likes the flyer KUB provided, and he felt it would be helpful to see the application to better understand the requirements, especially related to rental properties.

Mr. Dixon also shared input related to the application being online and shared through a QR code. He is concerned about some community members not having access or knowing how to navigate the online application.

Mark Walker agreed and noted this is an important aspect of KUB's discussion with SEED and other partners to make the application process as easy as possible.

Gwen McKenzie suggested making the material available at CAC and advertising it on community radio.

Amy Midis asked if KUB has considered sharing the material with churches.

Tiki Dixon suggested that KUB share the material with KICMA and the Interfaith Leaders Initiative. He suggested the Faith Leaders Initiative led by Cynthia Finch on Thursdays at 5:00.

Terry Ledford suggested sharing the material with local employers who have lower-paid employees. He noted many people may not realize they qualify under the income guidelines for the program. The group also referenced employees at hospitals and schools.

Ms. Ford asked if there were any additional suggestions related to weatherization outreach. With there being none, she explained the panel would begin discussion of energy efficiency more broadly, and she recognized Chasity Hobby to share an overview of KUB's energy efficiency and clean energy initiatives.

Ms. Hobby shared highlights of KUB sustainability initiatives, including:

- \$1 million annual budget commitment for low-income weatherization assistance, in addition to customer contributions to Round It Up, TVA contributions, and other funding sources. On an annual basis, a minimum of \$2 million is expected to be available for weatherization.
- Increased investment of \$3.1 million/year to purchase 325 megawatts (MW) of solar power through TVA's Green Invest program
- \$1.4 million to build Knoxville's first community solar site
- Evaluating additional options for renewable energy through TVA's power supply flexibility program
- Electric vehicle charger rebate for residential customers (343 rebates have been issued)
- \$2 million investment to build two electric vehicle fast charge stations over the next year
- Recent partnership with TVA on the Community Centered Growth Pilot with energy efficiency improvements for 11 small businesses in East Knoxville
- Recent partnership with TVA on a Smart Thermostat pilot for residential customers (464 thermostats were installed)
- Water Savers program to provide efficiency improvements and repairs in homes being weatherized by CAC.

Chasity noted KUB is seeking the following input from the panel:

- What sources of funding may be available to support additional efforts?
- If additional funding becomes available, what kinds of efforts do you recommend?
- What programs are most suitable for KUB to offer as opposed to efforts customers should be directly responsible for? Keeping in mind that KUB is not for profit and all programs are funded by ratepayers.

Dr. Smith asked if the solar being purchased through Green Invest is being sourced out of Mississippi. Mark Walker confirmed most of it will be in Mississippi, and 55 MW will be in Tennessee.

Dr. Smith asked what the capacity for KUB's community solar array is. Ms. Hobby explained it is 1 MW.

Dr. Smith asked about the amount of renewable energy KUB is permitted to self-generate through TVA's power supply flexibility program. Mark Walker confirmed it is 80 MW.

Dr. Smith asked about the electric vehicle fast charge stations KUB is planning to build. He noted the technology is rapidly changing and KUB should be aware that what is installed may no longer be considered a fast charge by the time the project is complete.

Kent Minault asked if KUB is putting new dollars into Green Invest. Mark Walker explained that yes, KUB's initial investment was planned to be \$1.6 million annually for 502 MW, and it is now \$3.1 million annually for 325 MW.

Kent Minault asked if KUB has considered a program to help customers who do not have access to an electric vehicle charger at home have access to a public site for charging. Ms. Hobby confirmed the EV charger rebate program is open for residents who live in condominiums, for example, and KUB is evaluating other options to potentially serve customers in other situations. He asked if KUB has considered an incentive to help customers purchase an electric vehicle. Ms. Hobby confirmed KUB is looking at future options for the program.

Ms. Ford explained the panel would break into small groups to discuss their suggestions for funding sources that may be available to support programs, what programs KUB could consider with any new funding, and what programs are most suitable for KUB to offer as opposed to efforts customers should be directly responsible for. The following groups were formed:

- Stephen Smith, Kent Minault, Mark Campen
- Terry Ledford, Amy Midis, Tim Hill, and Gwen McKenzie
- Tiki Dixon, Christina Bouler, David Myers

Christina Bouler shared suggestions from her group, which were:

- Expanding energy efficiency incentives
- Considering ways to help customers with the upfront costs for energy efficiency improvements
- Using social media to share energy savings tips and tangible examples of the dollar saving impacts of efficiency behavior changes
- Being more strategic to provide energy savings workshops for groups that may not know about them
- Considering a referral process or alternative application for people to apply for weatherization but may be hesitant to share personal information
- Providing a list of qualified contractors customers may use to implement energy upgrades
- Having workplace or business EV charger incentives
- Working to build relationships to reach individuals who are harder to reach

Kent Minault shared suggestions from his group, which were:

- Having a strategy to inventory and improve all of the housing stock in the area and not just homes of low-income customers

- Maintaining awareness of IRA funding opportunities to offer programs to improve housing stock for customers of all income levels
- Having greenhouse gas reduction goals for programs so customers have visibility of the impacts and will know how their participation is helping
- Considering ways to increase time-of-use program participation and consider asking current program participants about their experiences with the program
- Communicating the time-of-use program benefit and impact in a way that helps the community understand the level of participation needed to create results that benefit the whole community by reducing demand on the system. Establish a goal for demand reduction and communicate it to the public to generate buy-in.
- Sharing information about energy efficiency federal funding opportunities with customers of all income levels
- Consider energy efficiency programs for schools and churches

Amy Midis shared suggestions from her group, which were:

- Partnering with KCDC for outreach to tenants and landlords to help them with energy efficiency and lower bills
- Sharing more information about TVA EnergyRight programs for commercial and industrial customers
- Sharing more information related to gas and water efficiency
- Evaluating opportunities to get information to customers effectively

Gwen McKenzie commented on the importance of helping tenants understand assistance that may be available, such as a home audit, to determine what energy efficiency measures could help them lower their utility bills and where they may be able to work with their landlord to apply for assistance for home improvements.

Tiki Dixon inquired about energy efficiency information given to customers when they start a new account and information given to customers who come in to pay their bills. Chasity Hobby said KUB keeps materials related to bill savings in its customer service centers and shares information through newsletters and other communications with customers throughout the year.

Ms. Ford recognized Jamie Davis, Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, for a brief update on broadband. Mr. Davis shared that the broadband launch is continuing to go well. KUB has produced some television commercials and there was a recent article and Op Ed from Gabe Bolas in the Knoxville News Sentinel. He noted KUB has multiple sales and marketing initiatives underway and is connecting new customers to the service by the dozens each day. He explained service is now available in the Riverside Drive / Martin Luther King area and Arlington / Washington Drive area and is now expanding to the Cumberland Estates area. He noted KUB is currently offering internet service and intends to make television products available after the first of the year. He shared that KUB has been approved to participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program to offer income-eligible customers a discount of \$30 / month on internet service. KUB is also working with local officials to launch a student internet access program and hopes to launch this in early 2023. He shared that KUB is receiving a \$15 million grant from the State of Tennessee to

provide service in rural areas that are currently underserved in Grainger, Union, Jefferson, and Sevier Counties. Mr. Davis noted that customers are providing great feedback.

Dr. Smith asked if KUB has met or exceeded the metric for customer connections in the areas where service is now available. Mr. Davis noted it is still very early, and he talked about yard signs and other efforts being used to spread the word in these areas. He also noted it takes time for people to make the decision to sign up. Dr. Smith asked about the timeline for serving other areas, and Mr. Davis explained customers may access the “fiber availability tool” on KUB’s website to see when service is expected to be available in their areas.

Ms. Ford noted the next meeting will be on January 5<sup>th</sup> from 3:00 – 4:30 p.m., and the topic will be KUB’s Community Solar program. The meeting will be held at the City of Knoxville’s Public Works Community Room so the panel may view the solar array.

Dr. Smith asked about a timing consideration related to federal funding and the timing of the community solar project becoming active. Mark Walker explained it appears KUB may qualify for a 30% tax credit if the project does not become active until after the first of the year, and KUB is managing the project accordingly.

KUB Board Chair noted this is his last meeting with the panel as his term on the Board is ending in December. He expressed his appreciation to the panel for their service and the valuable information they have shared with the Board.

The meeting adjourned at 4:12 p.m.