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Via Email 1-10-21  
Item #200621

**To:** The Honorable Mayor Lauren Poe and the Gainesville City Commission

**From:** Utility Advisory Board

**Subject:** Annual report (covering 2019/2020)

The Utility Advisory Board is a relatively new Board for the City of Gainesville that was created in 2016. Most of the first few years of this Board's existence was occupied with developing a new and more financially sound relationship with the biomass power plant. With this work accomplished, the Board has moved on to a number of other critical issues. Following the City of Gainesville's Board template for advisory committees, our comments follow.

### **Mission Statement**

The city's Utility Advisory Board serves as an advisory body to the Gainesville City Commission on policy and governance decisions regarding utility services. Formed in 2016, the seven-member board meets at least once a month.

This mission statement is found on GRU's website.

### **Most Important Issues worked on during 2019/2020**

The original Board members and the newest cohort have all felt that the City should be guided by documented energy policies that help us look to the future with planning and foresight, rather than reacting to each crisis as they inevitably occur. With that in mind, the most important work the Board has accomplished during this time is to develop a draft Energy Policy document. This has been produced and sent back to the Commission for review and comments and will soon become a more useful and public document.

In an effort to support the City's drive to support a 100% renewable electric grid, the Utility Advisory Board encouraged, reviewed and unanimously voted for the 50MW solar PPA. The addition of this amount of solar to the GRU grid in combination with existing photovoltaic (PV) capacity will make Gainesville the most solar-powered city in Florida.

Less exciting, but no less important, the UAB has spent many hours reviewing and approving GRU plans to refinance its accumulated debt load. Certain time-dependent market conditions in the last two years presented GRU with the opportunity to more favorably manage its debt going forward. These reviews were usually short windows and required detailed analyses review on top of normal oversight activities.

### **Most Important Issues for the Future**

Assist and help to develop a more equitable system to guide general fund transfers (GFT) from GRU. Several methodologies have been used throughout the history of this Utility but possibly more attention needs to be paid to the financial health of the Utility during this period of transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

Our UAB Energy Policy plan needs to be presented to the public in a manner to engage the citizens of this community. The Energy Policy should be developed alongside community input so as to produce a more living document.

While the GFT and the Energy Policy work will occupy the majority of the Board's time in the near future, the Board will also be on the lookout for additional plans for more renewable energy, guided by a thorough review of the Integrated Resource Plan. Of notable interest would be further conversations with other utilities to increase GRU's interconnection capacity.

During 2021 we expect to devote considerable attention to issues surrounding the goal of achieving 100 percent renewables by 2045. This effort could prove to have major implications for capital outlay and bonding and is sure to be a major public policy issue in Gainesville.

#### **What could the City Commission do to help your Board better serve our neighbors?**

Probably the single most important thing that the City Commission can do is to truly get behind this effort to revamp the GFT mechanism. Having this vital funding mechanism operate on a predictable basis that is beneficial to the successful funding of GRU operations and the City of Gainesville would be a huge accomplishment.

#### **What else do you need the City Commission to know about your Board?**

We are very approachable and vitally interested in the energy future of our community. Send us an email (~~individually, of course~~ via Robin Baxely), ask us anything that comes to mind. The more individual conversations that we start, the better.