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Governor's Commission adopts EAC Report

by Robert Farmer, ©1997

WEST PALM BEACH, December 3rd — After three months of review and discussion *The Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida* adopted in its entirety its Energy Advisory Committee's *A Report on Energy Issues*.

Over strong utility industry objections and after some debate the Commission also adopted, with a two-thirds majority vote for each, a new recommendation and additional action steps to two existing recommendations which had also been put forward by the EAC. These non-consensus items were not supported by the utility industry members of the EAC and covered the following issues:

- convening a multi-stakeholder group to consider electric industry restructuring in Florida
- assuring the selection of least-cost alternatives to create a level playing field for DSM
- encouraging utilities to develop energy resource acquisition plans for sustainable energy systems
- expanding regulatory models to remove the tie between utility revenues and increasing sales
- providing a balanced consideration of the cost effectiveness of conservation programs including environmental costs and benefits

- strengthening DEP's regulatory framework to support efficiency and clean renewables; PSC to use in energy procurement review proceedings.

Having followed these proceedings closely since the EAC presented its report to the Quality Communities Committee in September, it became clear that a majority of the commissioners intended to endorse the sustainable energy path advocated by the EAC. What was not clear, was whether the Commission could find the common ground with the utility industry on the EAC's non-consensus issues. The utility industry, for their part, tried to accommodate the Commission and reiterated their active role in the EAC's report for a "mutually shared vision of the need to move toward a more sustainable energy future". The Commission sought understanding and alternate language but, unfortunately, it proved impossible. The bridge, for the present, proved too great to cross.

It's easy to appreciate the utility industry's concerns but on the other hand, as DCA Secretary Jim Murley noted, this is only the beginning of the process. And that's the key. Progress is made by putting all the cards on the table, no matter how undesirable they may first appear.

From my perspective, the Governor's Commission really had no choice but to advocate the strongest sustainable

position possible, and the utilities had no choice but to defend the *status quo*. The sustainability high ground has been taken and it is only the beginning of the process, but at the end of the day the Governor's Commission has put everyone on notice, once again, that it cares deeply about the sustainability of the planet and of Florida in particular. After all, it's a question of survivability. •



Robert Farmer is an energy planning engineer and energy policy specialist. A comprehensive resource on technologies, issues, and policies, he offers clients strategies, briefings, and presentations on planning a sustainable energy future.

His technical expertise includes large scale to small scale power generation, combined heat and power (CHP), marine and surface transportation, and alternative fuel applications.

A Florida resident since 1984, Robert was a member of the Energy Advisory Committee of Governor Chiles' Commission for a Sustainable South Florida.

He is a Regional member and Market Development Chair of the Gold Coast Clean Cities Coalition (a U.S. Department of Energy program), and a member of the Southeast Air Coalition for Outreach (SEACO, an initiative of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection).

He is a member of the international Association of Energy Engineers (AEE) and since 1992 has served on the Board of the Southeast Florida Society of Energy Professionals, the local AEE chapter. He is a member of the Sound Science Initiative of the Union of Concerned Scientists, and a member of the United States Association for Energy Economics (USAEE).

He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Tallahassee-based law firm, Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation, Inc. (LEAF), and of Third Planet, a Fort Lauderdale-based public charity.

He graduated as a Planning Engineer with Bristol-Siddeley Engines/Rolls Royce Gas Turbines Ltd. in the United Kingdom and has over 30 years engineering, sales and service management experience in the engine power industry in North America.

robertfarmer@conceptcommuniques.com
CONCEPT COMMUNIQUÉS INC.
5200 N Federal Hwy Ste 2
Fort Lauderdale FL 33308
(954) 493-8127

www.conceptcommuniques.com