

## **Analysis of the April 19, 2016 MGE Community Workshop Public Comments**

By Nancy Korda, Co-Chair RePower Madison, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017

### **The setting of the Workshop:**

The participants of the Workshop were invited by MGE. MGE designated the organizations they wished to be represented and in some cases even designated which individual should attend. MGE provided the infrastructure and personnel to expedite collection of comments from the participants. The participants were a mix of energy professionals, climate/air quality professionals, community organizers/advocates, minority group representatives, business and industry representatives. All the attendees cared about energy and energy policy but only a small percentage had experience or technical knowledge. The questions asked of the participants were posed by MGE and were very general. The videos and the hand-outs for each session were developed internally by MGE and no outside materials were allowed. MGE provided food and drinks. The only observers allowed were a few members of the press. There was very tight security at the entrance to the building admitting only those with an invitation.

After the workshop MGE refused to provide data from the workshop or a list of attendees/organizations. A summary of the results appeared on their website within a few weeks but it was the same summary/information provided to the attendees at the end of the evening workshop. A more complete summary (but nothing statistical) was included on the MGE website 7 months after the workshop. A list of organizations or attendees was never provided. The full list of comments was also on the website after 7 months. The full list of comments was provided as an image PDF making it very difficult to do anything but very labor intensive research (nothing could be copied, sorted, or searched). That very labor intensive research was done with the results below.

### **The Method of Analysis:**

On its website MGE summarizes the results using 9 categories. The summary is verbal, not statistical even though the Executive Summary indicates that coding took place. It also gives a few examples of participant's suggestions in each category.

My analysis used 10 categories (mostly different than MGE's). The categories from the analysis of the Community Conversations (Attachment A) were similar but here some categories were collapsed giving 10 instead of 26. 1364 participant suggestions were coded into the 10 categories listed below. The rest of the collected comments, about 700 (MGE's total count of 2034-1364=700), were either just comments/observations (not suggested actions or ideas) or were questions. Neither were categorized in this analysis.

## **April 19, 2016 MGE Workshop Categories (for my analysis)**

1. More clean or renewable energy, distributed generation, including incentives, lower emissions
2. Change rate structures, including: lower fixed charge/usage based, add a low-income rate, peak pricing etc.
3. Increase Conservation/energy efficiency programing (education and incentives)
4. Improve/increase general outreach, better communication, more transparency, develop a community energy partnership
5. People vs profit, better balance of customer and shareholder interests
6. Improve, specifically, the way they approach and include customers with diverse cultures, languages, or demographics
7. Move to new ways of doing business as a utility; forward thinking, restructure utility, internal inclusiveness, new areas of business
8. Political concerns, regulation conflicts (PSC, City, County, State, Federal)
9. More general education of customers
10. Miscellaneous suggestions

These categories worked well for the first three sessions of the Workshop but required some further breakdown for the last session (Community Engagement). Because over 50% of the suggestions in the last session fit into one category it seemed worthwhile to attempt to further breakdown the suggestions.

## **Results by session (see Table 1 for the data):**

### **The Warm-up:**

*MGE's question was: "What are you most interested in sharing and learning about tonight?"*

- **34%** of the suggestions want MGE to interact more with its customers (code 4)
- **20%** wanted more information about renewable energy and a cleaner environment (code 1)
- **14.6%** wanted MGE's programs and outreach to be more attuned to customer diversity – e.g. language, culture, demographics like income (code 6)

Close behind were concerns/interest about conservation (code 3) 9.3% and rates (code 2) 8.8%

## **Energy 2030:**

*MGE's question was: "From your perspective, what advice or observations do you have for MGE as it works to advance it's 2030 Framework and address the challenges of a changing energy world."*

- **22%** wanted more outreach (code 4) in the form of information on how the Framework goals would be reached and updates on progress.
- **22%** want MGE to be more 'forward thinking' (Code 7) including things like higher goals in general, more internal inclusiveness, change in business structure, and new business ideas.
- **13%** want more programs/information about energy efficiency and conservation (code 3).
- **12%** want more use (higher goals) of clean renewable energy (code 1)
- **10%** wanted MGE outreach on the Framework to have sensitivity to diversity (code 6).

## **Products and Services:**

*MGE's question was: "From your perspective, what are the needs of customers that you think MGE products and services should address in the future and why?"*

- **24%** want more programs/information concerning conservation and energy efficiency (code 3).
- **17%** wanted more outreach (code 4)
- **17%** more diversity sensitive outreach (code 6).
- **12%** want MGE to be more forward thinking and innovative in its approach to products and services (code7).
- **11%** want more programs/information about renewable energy (code 1)

## **Community Engagement:**

*MGE's question was: "What have you learned in your experience with community engagement that could be helpful to MGE in planning its future engagement?"*

- **51%** had suggestions to increase and/or how to improve community engagement (code 4).
- **17%** expressed concern that the outreach be sensitive to diversity (code 6).
- **16%** had specific education ideas to enhance community engagement (code 9).

Since 51% of the suggestions were about community engagement I tried to do some further analysis. About 1/3 were simply indicating there should be more communication and outreach

to customers and the other 2/3 gave very diverse but specific ideas about how to proceed doing further outreach. Most of the suggestions had to do with working with existing groups or communities. There were a few that said that MGE's current efforts were well done but always included a follow up that more and very regular communication was necessary. There were several comments that the current employees that specifically do diversity outreach do a very good job. But it was also suggested that MGE needed more internal staff to increase the amount of high standard diversity outreach already in place. Only two of the outreach suggestions were for more use of the MGE website.

### **Summary: What are MGE's customers asking for?**

1. Primarily MGE customers want regular communication with MGE. They want to know what MGE is doing and why they are doing it. How was the old goal achieved and how will the new 2030 framework be achieved? How well are MGE and their customers performing? What more can customers do to help? How has MGE incorporated customer's suggestions from past outreach? When will MGE be talking to customers again?
2. They want MGE to be more sensitive to the diverse nature of their customers and reach out to them more often. More sensitivity to culture, language, and demographics, and to be sure that their outreach and program activities speak to diverse groups in a way that is sensitive to their needs.
3. They want MGE to be more forward thinking, to look at their business structure, their internal diversity, new business ideas, embrace the changes that will be necessary to be the utility of the future that MGE wants to be. The community and customers want them to get there. The most important aspects of the changes are:
4. More conservation programming and information, more use of clean energy and a commitment to a cleaner environment.

### **A Final Question:**

These results are not very controversial or unexpected – why was MGE so reluctant to release the information and where have they incorporated it into their planning and programming?