

Renewable Energy Advisory Council Meeting Notes

November 20, 2019

Attending from the council

Joe Barra, Portland General Electric
(for Josh Halley)
Alexia Kelly, Electric Capital Management
Anna Kim, Oregon Public Utility Commission
Nate Larsen, Pacific Power
(for Erik Anderson)

Suzanne Leta, SunPower
Michael O'Brien
Frank Vignola, University of Oregon Solar
Monitoring
Dick Wanderscheid, Bonneville Environmental
Foundation

Attending from Energy Trust

Shelly Carlton
Quinn Cherf
Shayna Choulet
Amber Cole
Ryan Cook
Grace Diller
Becky Engel
Matt Getchell
Samuel Girma

Fred Gordon
Jeni Hall
Betsy Kauffman
David McClelland
Lizzie Rubado
Thaddeus Steerman
Julianne Thacher
Peter West
Robert Wyllie

Others attending

Matt Mills, TRC
Josh Peterson, University of Oregon Solar Monitoring
Adam Schultz, Oregon Department of Energy

1. Welcome, Introductions, Announcements

Betsy Kauffman called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Council members were introduced to Joshua Reed, the new Other Renewables Project Manager.

The agenda, notes and presentation materials are available on Energy Trust's website at: <https://www.energytrust.org/about/public-meetings/renewable-energy-advisory-council-meetings/>. The meeting was recorded on GoToMeeting. If you'd like to refer to the meeting recording for further detail on any of these topics, email info@energytrust.org.

2. Update on Community Solar Development Assistance incentives

Topic Summary

David McClelland provided an update on the Community Solar Development Assistance (CSDA) incentives following feedback received at the October 16 council meeting.

Discussion

CSDA budget and allocations between electric utilities

Members asked about the funding available for each electric utility (Michael O'Brien). The budget for CSDA is split evenly between Portland General Electric and Pacific Power territories. Overall, more solar funding is available for projects in PGE territory. Staff opted to balance the amount of funding available in each utility for this offer to improve access for a more diverse set of projects. If Energy Trust decides to offer installation incentives for community solar projects, there will be less funding available for projects in Pacific Power territory. Staff will monitor the CSDA budget and can shift funds in response to demand.

Eligible technologies, including batteries

Members asked if batteries were supported under the CSDA incentive (Frank Vignola). Staff clarified that systems that incorporated batteries were eligible, but that there is no preference or additional funding provided. A list of reimbursable work is available, and all reimbursable work included in CSDA applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Project development assistance and installation incentives

Members asked about the relationship between project development assistance and installation incentives (Michael O'Brien). The current focus is on project development, which could inform possible installation incentives. Staff clarified that further discussion is warranted when considering installation incentives.

Changes to CSDA criteria before next council meeting

Members asked if there would be any significant changes to the CSDA criteria before the next council meeting (Michael O'Brien). Staff hopes to receive CSDA applications before the next council meeting and do not anticipate making any changes before the February 2020 council meeting.

Action Items

Staff will monitor incoming CSDA applications will share an update with council members at the February 2020 meeting.

3. Solar Within Reach offering for moderate income families

Topic Summary

Lizzie Rubado provided details about the budget for and design of the new Solar Within Reach offering. Solar Within Reach features a higher-than-standard incentive for moderate-income Oregonians.

Discussion

Criteria for selecting solar trade allies eligible to offer Solar Within Reach

Members requested clarification on which solar trade allies were eligible to offer Solar Within Reach, and how many contractors were currently enrolled (Anna Kim, Suzanne Leta). To be eligible, trade allies must have the highest star ratings, offer a seven-year warranty for Solar Within Reach projects and complete additional training around engaging with potential customers, among other requirements. Fourteen solar trade allies have enrolled in Solar Within Reach to date. Staff acknowledged the criteria for participating trade allies may need to be re-evaluated if there are concerns that the pool of eligible trade allies is insufficient to provide competitive bids to all customers.

Workforce Diversity

Members inquired about how the Solar Within Reach selection criteria affects the diversity of the solar trade allies (Anna Kim). Staff explained that the current focus for Solar Within Reach

is on geographic diversity, but that a separate trade ally/workforce diversity initiative was already underway as part of Energy Trust's overall Diversity, Equity and Inclusion operations plan. Staff confirmed that few of the overall pool of solar trade allies identify as a minority-owned or women-owned business.

Incentive rate and budget

Members asked for clarification on the overall budget and incentive for Solar Within Reach projects (Joe Barra, Dick Wanderscheid). To start, the Solar Within Reach incentive is \$1.50 per watt, capped at 6,000 watts. It will be monitored in the biweekly Solar Status Report. The incentive may need to decrease over time. Community-based organizations provided input during the development of the offering that it was preferable to go "too high first" and adjust the incentive as needed. Staff noted that the offer was within above market cost parameters.

Relationship with state rebate program

Members inquired about how Solar Within reach projects relate to the new state rebate program (Joe Barra). The Solar Within Reach incentive lowers the net cost of a solar system, which would lead to a lower state rebate. There is a mechanism in place to ensure these projects are not over-incentivized. Staff clarified that Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) has a different pre-qualification method for identifying low-to-moderate income customers.

Financing and leveraging home equity

Members asked if Energy Trust had partnered with any financing organizations, or if there was a way to leverage the added value of solar on a home (Joe Barra, Frank Vignola). Staff noted that Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory has been conducting a national study on the contributory value of solar to a home, and is working to integrate the results into an appraisal tool. At present, Energy Trust not partnered with any financing organizations, as recent interviews with customers who would be eligible for Solar Within Reach did not express desire to take out a loan. Staff may explore financing partnerships in 2020.

New homes

Members asked if Solar Within Reach was eligible to new homebuilders and expressed that there may be a gap in the offering, since many sales are completed using third party lead generators (Suzanne Leta). Staff stated that they have engaged with Habitat for Humanity, but would be open to considering this topic further.

4. Energy Trust's draft 2020-2021 budget

Topic Summary

Betsy Kauffman presented budget highlights and key changes from the first round of the budget.

Discussion

Members suggested creating a one-page fact sheet specifically for the solar budget, to be shared with the Oregon Solar Energy Industries Association (OSEIA) and other stakeholders detailing special programs, budget allocation by utility, and highlighting differences between 2019 and 2020 (Suzanne Leta). Staff will consider this in the future.

5. Solar and storage and resilience

Topic Summary

Jeni Hall presented information on Energy Trust's work to support communities and customers who want to use solar combined with storage to improve their ability to manage power during outages. Thaddeus Steerman presented other example projects that have been installed in other regions to improve resilience. Adam Schultz from ODOE presented information from its Resilience Guidebook.

Discussion

Project funding

Members asked what funding was available for communities wanting to install solar and storage resilience projects, and if Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant funding was an option (Frank Vignola, Dick Wanderscheid). FEMA offers a 75% match for pre-disaster mitigation funding, but that many projects consist of numerous smaller individual grants.

Future resilience topics

Staff members inquired about what other resilience-related topics members would like presented at future council meetings. Members suggested topics on the utility perspective on resilience, and the overall budget and project costs for commercial projects, solar plus storage projects, and microgrid projects (Suzanne Leta, Frank Vignola).

6. Opportunity for questions regarding memo on separation of public purpose funds and community solar administration sub-contract funds

Topic Summary

Betsy Kauffman offered an opportunity for council members and other meeting attendees to ask questions about the budget memo, which highlights how Energy Trust maintains an appropriate separation between the two funding sources.

Discussion

Members requested clarification around the budget for Community Solar communications and outreach (Michael O'Brien). Staff explained that a small percentage of the overall budget is allocated to communications generally, but that the Communications and Customer Service (CCS) staff at Energy Trust bills on a time and materials basis when working on any Community Solar tasks.

7. Public comment

There was no public comment.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

The next Renewable Energy Advisory Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 19, 2020 from 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.