

Renewable Energy Advisory Council Meeting Notes

July 26, 2023

Attending from the council:

Alan Beane, Geograde Constructors
Amy Schlusser, Oregon Department of Energy
Jaimes Valdez, City of Portland

Joe Abraham, Oregon Public Utility Commission
Josh Peterson, Solar Monitoring Lab, University of Oregon
Ryan Harvey, Pacific Power

Attending from Energy Trust:

Alanna Hoyman-Browe
Alex Novie
Alina Lambert
Ansley Guzynski
Bayo Ware
Ben Thompson
Betsy Kauffman
Dave McClelland
Elaine Dado
Elizabeth Fox

Greg Stokes
Hannah Cruz
Helen Rabold
Janelle St. Pierre
Jeni Hall
Jess Siegel
Kate Wellington
Kyle Holmes
Kyle Petrocine
Lori Lull

Lidia Garcia
Matt Getchell
Michael Colgrove
Megan Greenauer
Mia Deonate
Natalia Ojeda
Renita Lamberth
Themba Mutepfa
Taylor Navesken

Others attending:

Susan Brodahl, Energy Trust Board

Welcome and Announcements

Matt Getchell, program manager, convened the hybrid meeting at 9:31 am. Notes were taken by Jess Siegel. 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/>.

Staff announced the residential battery incentive launch and shared that there has been a lot of questions and excitement from trade allies around the incentives.

1. Solar Ambassador program

Topic summary

Bayo Ware, solar project manager, provided an update and lessons learned from the completion of the Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) Solar Ambassadors pilot program. The Solar Ambassadors initiative is an effort with community organizations to identify, train, and compensate ambassadors from communities of color to do community outreach and

education and expand the reach of Energy Trust's solar program and offerings. Staff discussed the levers of adoption for new technology and described the ways that Energy Trust and partners used those levers to explore increasing adoption in underserved communities. Ambassadors conducted an average of three engagements each over the course of a month. This included partnering with community organizations, attending tabling events, and discussing solar resources with friends and family. The coordination team tracked how many people went along the path to explore or obtain solar. The program did not lead to solar installations during the one-month pilot.

The documents, training materials and meetings were in English and Spanish. With more resources, the team would have translated the materials into Mandarin and other relevant languages. While the team found that customers were interested in the environmental and financial benefits of solar, it was clear project financing was a major barrier for customers. The team also found that the program led to interest in clean energy among solar ambassadors beyond the timeline of the program, including one solar ambassador finding employment in the clean energy industry.

Staff shared that next steps in the program could include expanding the program to cover energy efficiency; expanding deeper into the Portland metro area, rural areas, and tribal communities, and developing metrics to measure how the program is moving the needle on solar.

Discussion

Council members commented that the program could benefit from sharing energy efficiency technologies that provide more immediate benefits to residents and asked whether residents were educated about community solar (Amy Schlusser, Jaimes Valdez). Staff hypothesized that energy efficiency may be a good way to reach these communities and eventually help them move toward solar and that members were educated about community solar.

The council commented that the incentives will only be useful if people are able to take advantage of them and it may make sense to have fewer incentives that are worth more to increase adoption (Amy Schlusser). Additionally, council members commented that a standardized modest solar package would take variability out of the equation for residents and developers and potentially make it easier for these communities to adopt solar (Josh Peterson). Staff asked if members would be supportive of such an approach in which fewer incentives were provided. Members asked whether increasing the Solar Within Reach incentive would address this and expressed that more details would be needed (Jaimes Valdez). Staff shared that the Solar Within Reach incentive is based on income while the Solar Ambassador program is meant to reach BIPOC communities. A board member suggested reviewing the Solar within Reach program parameters to see a whole different subset of customers could be reached. Staff suggested that this program could be used as a marketing and outreach program primarily to raise awareness of Energy Trust renewable and energy efficiency programs to a previously underserved audience.

Next steps

Staff will consider feedback for incorporation into the program.

2. Deep Dive: Priority Topics for 2024-2025 Action Planning

Topic summary

In July, Energy Trust held Deep Dive sessions with all three advisory councils to better integrate early actionable stakeholder feedback into the budget process. These deep dives are also in response to direction from HB 3141 to tie budget priorities more closely to the priorities of the community members and industry experts who are stakeholders. Staff summarized past Renewable Energy Advisory Council engagements on budget priorities and outlined the remaining budget and engagement timeline.

To frame the discussion, staff provided an overview of the context for the 2024-2025 budget, with a focus on equity, resilience and grid flexibility. Staff have consolidated the budget and action plan into one for the renewables sector rather than two (one each for the Market Ready Solutions and Custom Solutions Teams), reflecting the team's reorganization away from a technology-based split. Staff also highlighted external funding that may affect activities in 2024-2025, before leading an engagement with council members.

Discussion

Members provided feedback on the outcomes they'd like to see for Oregon on the topics of equity and resilience. On the topic of equity, council members expressed support for 5-year goals of filling community solar carve-out capacity, and increasing funding and participation in resiliency and renewables projects in low-income and underserved communities (Ryan Harvey, Amy Schlusser). On the topic of resilience, staff commented that many of the council comments emphasized community. Council members commented on the connection between resilience and equity as an important consideration and noted that focusing on resiliency provides an opportunity to connect people rather than focusing on individualized benefits (Amy Schlusser, Jaimes Valdez). Members expressed that providing access to a resilience hub for every community is an important and reasonable long-term goal (Amy Schlusser).

Attendees reviewed the "Current and proposed renewable energy incentive offerings" memo and the 2024 Development Roadmap. Members asked for more clarity on Energy Trust's intention to participate in financing and mentioned that this could be a good priority since financing costs have substantially increased (Jaimes Valdez). Staff shared that they are in the initial stages of this exploration and have begun to contact credit unions and community banks on the topic.

Members were given the opportunity to share which pieces of the development roadmap they were excited about and curious about as well as which should be prioritized and deprioritized. Staff noted the focus on resilience as an important priority to members and shared that this is a focus for the team. Staff expressed commitment to prioritize the resilience work in 2024 whether the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant arrives or not. Members also expressed excitement about the new community solar offer and the targeted solarize campaigns. Notably, no members expressed that any current or planned programs or projects should be deprioritized.

Council members expressed support for the content of the roadmap and that staff are prioritizing the right things. Members reiterated that they would like to see increased focus on resilience at a community level and support solar + storage incentives for low- and moderate-income houses. Members expressed that they would like to learn more about programs that are in development but they all sound like good ideas; there wasn't anything concerning (Amy Schlusser).

3. 2023 Legislative Update

Hannah Cruz and Natalia Ojeda from Energy Trust's Policy Services team provided an overview of relevant bills that passed during the recent session.

Discussion

Staff provided background on the Environmental Justice and Tribal Navigation Support piece of the Climate Resilience Package in response to member inquiry. Staff shared that the purpose is to support communities and tribal governments in navigating various resources from technical assistance to funding.

Next Steps

The policy services team is going to provide a thorough review of the legislative session to the council in August.

4. Public Comment

No public comments.

5. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:32 a.m.