

Renewable Energy Advisory Council Meeting Notes

June 28, 2023

Attending from the council:

Alan Beane, Geograde Constructors
Amy Schlusser, Oregon Department of Energy
Angela Crowley-Koch, Oregon Solar + Storage Industries Association
Brikky King, Fairway Mortgage

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
Bayo Ware
Betsy Kauffman
Cheryle Easton
Cory Hertog
Danielle Rhodes
Dave McClelland

Dave Moldal
Elaine Dado
Elizabeth Fox
Fred Gordon
Hannah Cruz
Jeni Hall
Jess Siegel
Josh Reed
Kyle Holmes

Kyle Petrocine
Leila Shokat
Lori Lull
Matt Getchell
Melanie Bissonnette
Mia Deonate
Natalia Ojeda
Renita Lamberth
Tracy Scott

Others attending:

Henry Lorenzen, Energy Trust Board
Sarah Hall, Oregon Public Utility Commission
Susan Brodahl, Energy Trust Board

Elizabeth Bryan, Solar Monitoring Lab, University of Oregon
Jane Peters, Energy Trust Board
Jake Wise, Portland General Electric

Welcome and Announcements

Betsy Kauffman, renewable energy sector lead, convened the hybrid meeting at 9:33 a.m. Notes were taken by Alina Lambert. 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/>.

Jess Siegel introduced herself as a new Renewable's Program Manager.

1. Proposed changes to the solar program

Topic summary

Energy Trust has supported over 25,000 solar installations, including 23,000 residential solar installations, and has successfully created a network of solar trade ally businesses and tools for customer guidance, education and marketing. Residential solar volume has tripled within the past three years and funding has shifted toward new equity-focused offerings, including Solar Within Reach. Staff are proposing some changes beginning either in late 2023 or early 2024 including discontinuing residential solar incentives and reallocating the funds to address areas of equity, resilience and grid flexibility, as well as shifting focus upstream, and expanding targeted outreach efforts. Staff are seeking feedback on this proposal.

Discussion

Members inquired where the \$2.1 million budget previously dedicated to residential incentives would be redistributed and how it would support equity and resilience projects (Angela Crowley-Koch, Ryan Harvey, Amy Schlusser). Staff will continue to support the market through customer leads and education but would include more focused efforts such as the Solar Ambassadors program, community solar carve-out incentives, financing, integrated battery storage offers, and targeted efforts to provide incentives to customers that have historically faced barriers (Dave McClelland, Betsy Kauffman). More work needs to be done to research the ways in which these funds can be reallocated to support equity and resilience projects (Dave McClelland).

Members expressed continuing priority for maintaining the trade ally network and onboarding new contractors that enter the market; Energy Trust has historically played a quality control role within Oregon (Angela Crowley-Koch). With the proposed changes to the residential incentives, staff acknowledges that reduced quality management oversight is part of the risk, however, it has become unmanageable to review the current volume of solar installations, especially for high volume contractors. Staff would like to work on a statewide strategy to continue quality management with utilities, Oregon Solar + Storage Industries Association, Oregon Department of Energy and other stakeholders (Dave McClelland). Trade allies have expressed the importance of customer leads and business development funds, and the intent is to support the trade ally network even if the incentive offers are different on a per project basis; Energy Trust will continue to provide new contractor support (Matt Getchell).

The timing of retiring residential incentives is a point of concern, due to high interest rates and a potentially slowing market. Some contractors may be supportive, some may not be; December may be too soon, and it's important to consult with trade allies and Oregon Solar + Storage Industries Association members first (Angela Crowley-Koch). Members discussed the benefits and drawbacks of whether Energy Trust should directly address financing availability and costs through program offers. Interest rates have continued to rise and it's a dangerous game to chase lower interest rates (Briky King). If Energy Trust offers financing options, recommend offering financing for all customers (Angela Crowley-Koch). Members also suggested doing more outreach within the community, especially in colleges to focus on workforce development and leads (Josh Peterson, Amy Schlusser, Joe Abraham). Members expressed general support of the proposed changes and would like continued collaboration to support Oregon's solar market (Amy Schlusser, Angela Crowley-Koch, Ryan Harvey).

Next steps

Staff will communicate and collect feedback on the proposed changes with trade allies.

2. Introduction of new Board Members

Topic summary

Three new Energy Trust board members introduced themselves to the Advisory Council: Jane Peters, an energy efficiency professional for over 40 years residing in Portland, Ellsworth Lang

in Southern Oregon, a member of the Klamath Tribal Council, and Bill Tovey, the Umatilla Tribes Director with construction experience of over 35 years.

3. Public Comment

Angela Crowley-Koch reviewed solar bills that were passed in the most recent legislative update including an extension to the state's Solar + Storage Rebate Program by six years, an additional \$20 million allocated to the Community Renewable Energy Grant Program, support for environmental justice communities, to name a few.

4. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:58 a.m.