

Renewable Energy Advisory Council Meeting Notes

April 18, 2024

Attending from the council:

Alan Beane, Geograde Constructors
Amy Schlusser, Oregon Department of Energy
Angela Crowley-Koch Oregon Solar + Storage Industries Association
Joe Abraham, Oregon Public Utility Commission
Josh Peterson, Solar Monitoring Lab, University of Oregon
Rob Del Mar, Oregon Department of Energy
Stasia Brownell, Portland General Electric

Attending from Energy Trust:

Adam Shick	Dave McClelland	Leila Shokat
Alex Novie	Dave Moldal	Lidia Garcia
Alicia Li	Elaine Prause	Natalia Ojeda
Alicia Moore	Eduardo Beltrán	Matt Getchell
Alina Lambert	Elisa Simko	Michael Colgrove
Andi Nix	Hannah Cruz	Patrick Urain
Bayo Ware	Helen Rabold	Renita Lamberth
Betsy Kauffman	Joshua Reed	Thad Roth
Cameron Starr	Julianne Thacher	Willa Perlman
Chris Lyons	Kate Wellington	
Cody Kleinsmith	Kyle Petrocine	

Others attending:

Berit Kling, PacifiCorp
Haley Ellett, City of Hood River
Kyle Holmes, CLEAResult
Kheoshi Owens, Empress Rules Equity Consulting
Brian Lynch, AESC Inc.
Susan Brodahl, Energy Trust board
Clair Scribner, Bonneville Environmental Foundation
Evan Ramsey, Bonneville Environmental Foundation

1. Welcome and announcements

Dave Moldal, senior program manager, convened the hybrid meeting at 1:32 pm. 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 introduced Merissa Larson, Energy Trust's new community solar project manager.

Staff noted Energy Trust released its 2023 Annual Report to the OPUC on April 15 and is looking for feedback on the report's contents from advisory council members and the public through June 15. More information is at energytrust.org/reports.

2. Council engagement and recruiting

Topic summary

Staff presented on a project with Empress Rules Equity Consulting to help the council become more inclusive and lead with race, culminating in draft recommendations for engagement, membership and recruitment. Kheoshi Owens of Empress Rules expressed the need for the organization to have social infrastructure and more education to help further what she called net-zero racism. Staff discussed recommendations developed through the project, which include more dedicated staffing for advisory council management, council governance review, increased recruitment, a welcome packet for new members and council relationship development.

Discussion

The council expressed support for a welcome packet as a helpful reference (Stasia Brownell). It agreed with the need for increased resources to achieve council goals (Joe Abraham). The council suggested implementing terms for members might lead to decreased usefulness of the council due to limited membership (Josh Peterson) and recommended staff continually assess if membership remains mutually beneficial (Angela Crowley-Koch). Staff added this allows for educational opportunities to be presented cyclically.

The council asked how many people are on the council (Josh Peterson). Currently 12 members fill 18 slots.

Next steps

Staff will discuss recommendations with the board and develop an implementation team to undertake the approved recommendations.

3. Solar for All

Topic summary

Staff from Energy Trust, Oregon Department of Energy and Bonneville Environmental Foundation presented on preparations regarding the anticipated announcement of the Solar for All federal grant program. The ODOE-led Oregon Solar for All Coalition (OSFAC) applied for \$139 million to serve about 13,000 households through single-family and multifamily solar and community solar over five years. Participants would receive 20% household savings from solar generation. OSFAC strives to maximize existent household and community ownership models to increase resilience and grid benefits and develop a solar workforce in underserved communities.

Clair Scribner will manage Bonneville's Solar for All programs. It is the lead applicant in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, totaling \$200 million. In Oregon, it plans to focus on community solar projects in community-owned utility territories. These utilities have developed six projects.

Grant recipients could receive initial funding in July.

Discussion

The council noted a risk in overreliance on customer data from other sources as customers may opt out of data sharing (Stasia Brownell). It suggested categorical eligibility, for example, if a household qualified for SNAP benefits, may be a path to take (Evan Ramsey).

Next steps

None.

4. Draft energy resilience strategy and expected offers

Topic summary

Staff presented on the development of Energy Trust's energy resilience strategy, potential focus areas and incentives for battery storage systems. There is an increased need, especially in environmental justice communities, for resilience. Energy Trust is uniquely suited to support statewide resilience planning. The strategy will include access to funding, community engagement and capacity building, community planning and prioritization, tailored solutions, site specific planning, supply chain readiness and implementation.

The near-term focus will be increasing market-rate residential battery incentives on April 29 and opening a prescriptive non-residential battery incentive in June. There is also increased prescriptive development assistance for design, feasibility studies and planning for nonprofits, public, tribal entities and utility grant applicants.

To date, there have been more than 100 residential battery incentives, most of which have been market rate. Since Q1 2024, about 25% and 15% of solar applications have included storage in PGE and Pacific Power service areas respectively. Additionally, Energy Trust created custom development assistance for solar + storage projects for complex projects, including private entities.

Discussion

The council asked what supply chain readiness activities staff proposed to conduct (Angela Crowley-Koch). It would include increasing contractor awareness of new opportunities and developing the story of resilience in Oregon, so communities can understand the benefits of resilience technologies. The council also asked how long the battery incentives will remain at this level (Angela Crowley-Koch). Because Energy Trust's renewable program is currently in a budget surplus, there will be increased residential incentives this summer and for the remainder of the year.

The council asked if there have been studies to find the funding gaps and gluts (Stasia Brownell). ODOE's C-REP program is exclusively for tribal and public entities, so Energy Trust aims to serve private customers. There will be gaps and gluts; these funds are aimed at influencing the outcomes. PGE would like customers to seek funds from Energy Trust first before them. Additionally, it values relevant stories, so any stories that Energy Trust has would be helpful for marketing (Stasia Brownell).

Next steps

Staff will send the presentation that was reviewed and these questions to the council for additional responses.

5. Dee Bridge In-Conduit PRV Hydroelectric Project

Topic summary

Staff reviewed a proposed renewable energy installation incentive for the City of Hood River's pressure reduction valve (PRV) project. The city submitted an application in January 2024 for an incentive to install a hydroelectric turbine that will be operated in parallel with their existing PRV system. It plans to build a new powerhouse building, install a turbine and controls and interconnect it to the grid. There is no external environmental impact, as the system already exists; they are just adding equipment to harness the otherwise wasted energy. It is a low-risk project that has already received \$100,000 in development assistance. Energy Trust recommends a \$525,000 incentive and won't obtain Renewable Energy Credits.

Discussion

Considering that many similar projects have not been cost effective, staff asked what made this one successful. New direct pay provisions through the Inflation Reduction Act, technological advances, and current infrastructure already in place minimized capital expenditure. Staff stated there are six similar projects in Energy Trust's portfolio. Projects that can net-meter are more financially viable and qualifying facilities might have more opportunities due to IRA funding.

Next steps

None.

6. Revisions to Energy Trust's grant agreement

Topic summary

Energy Trust's Debbie Menashe gave an update on revisions to Energy Trust's grant agreement with the Oregon Public Utilities Commission that articulates terms and conditions for directing funding for renewable energy and energy efficiency support. In 2022, some of the funding was recharacterized, including stating that efficiency should be considered part of the utilities' generation portfolio and expanding the allowable purposes for renewables funding to include thresholds for supporting communities experiencing low incomes and adding distribution system connected technologies. It lifted the agreement sunset for energy efficiency funding and extended renewable energy funding sunset to 2035. The OPUC decided to sole-source this contract to Energy Trust instead of competitively bidding. OPUC staff sent the first draft of the updated agreement to Energy Trust, which in turn submitted comments. There will be a public process aligned with UM 1158, which includes a notice of schedule for an agreement to direct funding to a non-governmental entity (Energy Trust). On April 25, a copy of this agreement will be filed and there will be an opportunity for public comment in May.

OPUC staff will take in comments before and after the workshop and work with Energy Trust staff to come to a final proposed agreement, which will be sent to commissioners for approval in July.

Discussion

Staff asked if there is anything related to the renewables sector. Energy Trust staff informed OPUC staff that the language around renewables, which was similar to the current agreement, was out of date with what the sector now does and is identified under statute. There are two new appendices: Program Requirements and Equity Objectives. Staff recommended council members review and provide formal and informal comments to OPUC staff. Members may also provide comments to Energy Trust via Debbie Menashe (Debbie.Menashe@energytrust.org).

Next steps

None.

7. Public comment

There was no public comment.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:04 p.m.