

Renewable Energy Advisory Council Meeting Notes

March 18, 2021

Attending from the council:

Andria Jacob, City of Portland
Anna Kim, Oregon Public Utility
Commission
Brikky King, All Pacific Mortgage
Erik Anderson, Pacific Power
Jaimes Valdez, Portland Clean Energy
Community Benefits Fund
John Cornwell, Oregon Department of
Energy

Josh Halley, Portland General Electric
Josh Peterson, University of Oregon Solar
Radiation Monitoring Lab
Les Perkins, Farmers Irrigation District
Max Greene, Renewable NW
Suzanne Leta, SunPower

Attending from Energy Trust:

Betsy Kauffman
Dave McClelland
Lizzie Rubado
Matt Getchell
Alina Lambert
Amber Cole
Caryn Appler
Cheryle Easton
David Moldal
Hannah Cruz
Jay Ward
Jeni Hall

Josh Reed
Kyle Petrocine
MacKenzie Kurtzner
Peter West
Robert Wyllie
Sal Mlitello
Shelly Carlton
Steve Lacey
Thad Roth
Tyrone Henry

Others attending:

Alexia Kelly, Energy Trust board
Henry Lorenzen, Energy Trust board
Angela Crowley-Koch, Oregon Solar +
Storage Industries Association
Heather Moline, NW Energy Coalition
Jed Jorgensen, Farmers Conservation
Alliance
Jeff Goby, Blue Raven Solar

Joe Marcotte, TRC
Kacia Brockman, Oregon Public Utility
Commission
Kathi Appleberry, CLEAResult
Kyle Stuart, Northwest Energy Efficiency
Alliance
Rick Hodges, NW Natural
Zach Sippel, Elemental

1. Welcome, Introductions and Announcements

Betsy Kauffman, sector lead for renewables, convened the meeting at 9:31 a.m. on Zoom. 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/>.

Josh Peterson announced the Solar Radiation Monitoring Lab will be convening its annual meeting in April and will send out an invite. Angela Crowley-Koch announced OSEIA has changed its name to OSSIA. Dave McClelland announced that Energy Trust will soon hire a solar project manager. Jaimes Valdez announced the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund has approved the first round of grant recipients and they will be sent to Portland City Council for approval April 1.

2. Community Solar Program Update

Topic summary

Ryan Cook, program manager for the Oregon Community Solar Program subcontract, updated members on the status of the Oregon Community Solar Program, which has now been open for projects to apply for over a year. The first projects by Neighborhood Power are operational and currently billing customers. The carve-out section of the program has capacity remaining in Pacific Power and Portland General Electric territory. Energy Trust has developed incentives to assist in financing this section of the program to incentivize new projects and assist with project economics. There is a waitlist in both Pacific Power and PGE territory. In PGE territory, the first projects are generally providing savings of 5% to participants. Low-income participant enrollment has been a challenge in the program and the Oregon Public Utility Commission is discussing the next step for the second release of capacity for the program.

Dave McClelland, senior project manager on the renewables team, gave an overview of the Energy Trust community solar incentives that are part of the organization's Equitable Solar Initiative. Projects that qualify for the incentive must be dedicated to serving low-income participants, meet Energy Trust's incentive requirements, be less than 360 kW-AC in size and be prepared to apply for pre-certification in the Oregon Community Solar Program within six months of receiving the incentive.

Discussion

Members asked if there were deeper discounts available to low-income customers (Jaimes Valdez). Staff confirmed deeper discounts are structured in the program for low-income customers (Ryan Cook). Attendees asked whether Energy Trust's community solar incentives would apply to both ownership and subscription-based structures and if there is a deadline for applications (Kacia Brockman). Staff said various models are acceptable and there is no deadline for project applications. Members asked how long funds will be held for the incentives and if the parameters were too restrictive for projects to apply (Jaimes Valdez). Staff clarified funds can be held for up to two years and two to three projects that are currently pre-certified may apply for the incentive. The hope is that these incentives attract new projects.

Next steps

None.

3. Energy Trust's 2020 Results

Topic summary

Betsy Kauffman and Dave McClelland presented highlights from the past year for the renewables sector. Energy Trust exceeded goals and installed more solar than anticipated. Incentive reductions were paused in 2020 to assist in stabilizing the market during COVID-19 and the solar industry has been resilient. There have been 1,812 solar systems installed and \$6 million in incentives distributed. A third of funds were reserved for equity-focused offers. The

Solar Within Reach initiative has reached 86 installations with \$700,000 in incentives paid. There are 21 applications to date in the Equitable Solar Initiative, reserving \$1.7 million for tribes, affordable multifamily housing and nonprofit service providers. Energy Trust has supported seven proposed small and public nonprofit community solar projects. More activity has shifted to Pacific Power territory over the past year and residential systems are increasing in average size within both utility territories.

Dave Moldal, senior program manager, highlighted two custom renewable energy projects that completed in 2020: the City of Salem's Willow Lake cogeneration biopower project, which provide about half of the electricity required to operate the facility, and the City of Hillsboro's Gordon Faber pressure reduction valve hydropower project, which net-meters generation against the recreation complex's electric load. Additionally, the Three Sisters Irrigation District's McKenzie hydropower project in Central Oregon is expected to reach commercial operation later this year after being delayed due to a challenge to its county conditional use permit. Also, the irrigation modernization program has leveraged more than \$167 million from other sources to help fund modernization work and irrigation district piping installation. The program is funding an assessment of municipal pressure reduction valve hydropower projects in Oregon. This work will be completed late summer. Finally, staff is helping convene or engaged in discussions in three communities focused on recovery of high strength organic material as a possible renewable energy resource.

Staff played a video of the October 2020 ribbon cutting of Central Oregon Irrigation District's irrigation modernization project in Central Oregon.

Discussion

None.

Next steps

None.

4. Results of Energy Trust's Customer Insights Study

Topic summary

Shelly Carlton, senior marketing manager, presented findings of the 2020 Customer Insights Study that surveyed approximately 30,000 Oregon households in the first part of 2020. Energy Trust received 7,280 completed surveys with a 19% response rate. The survey provided valuable data that can help in identifying underserved groups and identify barriers to participation. Takeaways include: census tracts are not a good proxy for measuring equity across income and race; program participation is lower for Black and Hispanic/Latinx, low-income, renters, non-single family and Eastern Oregon residents; awareness of Energy Trust's offerings is low across all groups, and more so for renters, those in rural areas, low-income communities and communities of color. Nearly half of respondents reported being willing to pay more for renewable energy and 80% reported they are always looking for ways to lower their energy bills.

Discussion

Attendees asked staff about on-bill financing options and the lack of interest in this type of financing, suggesting access to financing tools and education on energy resilience can help fund opportunities (Alexia Kelly). Staff agreed that using this data to identify common needs and educate could assist in analyzing bill re-payment. Bundling finance is historically difficult because businesses and homeowners have limited incomes. Researching different structures,

such as loan loss reserves, can assist in moving into more beneficial lending circumstances. Members noted the general model of on-bill financing has been successful (Andria Jacob).

Next steps

Staff will interpret and act on findings related to participation, awareness, customer needs and sentiments. Alternatives to the census tract approach for tracking program equity will be discussed.

5. State Legislative Update

Topic summary

Hannah Cruz, senior communications manager, presented an update on energy legislation before the Oregon Legislature. House Bill 3141, a public purpose charge modernization bill, came together after 12 to 18 months of stakeholder work and at the convening of the governor's office. The bill recently passed out of the House Energy & Environment Committee with a bipartisan vote of 5-2 and is now referred to the Joint Ways and Means Committee. A change was made to the bill in the process that removed a portion of additional temporary bill payment assistance for low-income households. The bill reduces the public purpose charge from 3% to 1.5% and extends the sunset to 2035. Energy-efficiency funding is removed from the charge and transferred to standard OPUC ratemaking processes.

House Bill 2475, the Energy Affordability Act, would allow the OPUC to set rates based on energy burden for low-income customers and other inequities faced by customers. The bill would also expand intervener funding. The bill was passed by the House and awaits committee assignment in the Senate.

Energy Trust is also monitoring House Bill 2398, which would allow cities and counties to require REACH code be set in their jurisdictions. Another bill, House Bill 3221, the Oregon Renewable Options Program, would allow local governments, local service districts and tribal governments to request certain renewable electricity to serve their jurisdictions.

Discussion

Members noted House Bill 2190, a community energy resilience bill, will have a working session. House Bill 3180 and House Bill 3221 both would provide avenues for renewable expansion (Les Perkins). The City of Portland staff is tracking House Bill 2180, an EV-ready code bill (Andria Jacob).

Next steps

None.

6. Public Comment

None.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:57 a.m. The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 14, at 1 p.m. and will be a joint meeting with the Conservation Advisory Council and Diversity Advisory Council for the purpose of developing 2022 goals for Energy Trust.