

Renewable Energy Advisory Council Meeting Notes

April 12, 2022

Attending from the council:

Angela Crowley-Koch, Oregon Solar +
Storage Industries Association
Jaimes Valdez, Portland Clean Energy
Fund
Josh Peterson, University of Oregon
Max Greene, Renewable NW

Oriana Magnera, Verde
Raphaella Hsu-Flanders, Bonneville
Environmental Foundation
Tess Jordan, Portland General Electric

Attending from Energy Trust:

Albert Stanfield
Alina Lambert
Amanda Thompson
Bayo Ware
Betsy Kauffman
Cameron Mathews
Dave McClelland
Dave Moldal
Elaine Dado
Elizabeth Fox
Emily Estrada
Fred Gordon
Greg Stokes
Hannah Cruz
Jay Ward
Jeni Hall
Josh Reed
Julianne Thacher

Kesean Coleman
Kyle Petrocine
Lizzie Rubado
Marshall Johnson
Matt Getchell
Melanie Bissonnette
Mia Deonate
Mike Colegrove
Renee Garrels
Robert Wyllie
Ryan Cook
Sarah Castor
Taylor Navesken
Thad Roth
Tracy Scott

Others attending:

Alexia Kelly, Energy Trust Board
Carla Wise
Dan Orzech, Oregon Clean Power
Cooperative
Elee Jen, Energy Trust Board
Henry Lorenzen, Energy Trust Board

Haley Ellett, City of Hood River
Jake Wise, Portland General Electric
Ryan Harvey, Pacific Power
Susan Brodahl, Energy Trust Board

1. Welcome and Announcements

Bayo Ware, project manager on the Renewables team, convened the meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Zoom. 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/>.

Renewable Energy Certificate (REC) Policy

Topic summary

Dave McClelland, senior program manager, provided an overview of Energy Trust's current Renewable Energy Certificates policy, which limits providing incentives to community solar projects that are larger than 360 kW-AC. Staff has requested an exception from this policy to the board's nominating and governance committee to allow support to large-scale community solar projects that provide a unique opportunity to benefit low-income customers and renters. The focus on the large-scale community solar project incentives would be for projects with low-income participation above the 10% minimum Oregon Community Solar Program requirement. Staff is seeking feedback from members on the requested change.

Discussion

Members wanted to know the type of community solar incentive being proposed (Jaimes Valdez). Staff explained that the proposed incentives would likely be prescriptive and based on the projected savings for low-income customers. Separately, the program expects to release a second round of custom solar incentives in 2022 for small-scale (<360-kW) community solar projects. This could possibly be expanded to include larger public and nonprofit projects if there was support from the board (Dave McClelland). Members were largely supportive of the exception request (Jaimes Valdez, Angela Crowley-Koch, Erik Anderson, Tess Jordan). A board member asked for clarification on if tribal members are considered in the low-income participation portion of the Oregon Community Solar Program (Elee Jen). Staff clarified that low-income customers are defined by their household income and that tribal organizations are part of the carve-out designation of the program (Lizzie Rubado, Ryan Cook).

Next steps

Staff will inform members of the outcome of the board's decision on the policy exception request.

2. Budget Discussion: Market Intelligence

Topic summary

Renee Garrells, senior project manager, facilitated a market trend discussion in the clean energy industry, including customer needs and emerging opportunities to assist Energy Trust in new budgeting and planning for the 2023/24 budget cycle.

Discussion

Members discussed various trends within the renewables industry, including an increase in battery storage paired with residential and commercial projects, an increase in residential installations overall, difficulty in the development of utility-scale solar in Oregon, challenging land-use decisions and negative effects from supply chain demands (Angela Crowley-Koch). The current U.S. Department of Commerce investigation of solar panels that may result in additional import tariffs is a growing concern within the industry (Tess Jordan, Angela Crowley-Koch). Inflation and cost increases in general for materials and labor and the step down of the federal Investment Tax Credit, and the statewide solar plus storage rebate sunset in 2024 are causes for projects to be more difficult to develop (Angela Crowley-Koch).

Indigenous, low-income, rural, Black and communities of color continue to not have the same access to solar, and workforce opportunities are needed within Oregon (Oriana Magnera, Jaimes Valdez).

Opportunities on the horizon include Oregon's Community Renewable Energy Grant Fund (CREP), House Bill 2021 establishing a 100% clean electricity standard, solar installation costs dropping, new technologies being developed and fossil fuel prices increasing (Angela Crowley-Koch, Tess Jordan, Josh Peterson). Members suggested partnering with the City of Portland's Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund, Oregon Department of Energy's Community Renewable Energy Grant recipients, utilities, community organizations that haven't been traditionally involved with energy and tribal organizations, as well as building on pilots for energy resilience and designing support programs for financial resource mobilization for underrepresented groups (Angela Crowley Koch, Tess Jordan, Jaimes Valdez, Alexia Kelly). Better technologies include smart inverters, bifacial modules, heat pumps paired with solar, blockchain and mobile energy storage technologies (Angela Crowley-Koch, Josh Peterson, Jaimes Valdez, Alexia Kelly). Energy Trust should maintain flexibility as the market continues to change (Angela Crowley-Koch).

Next steps

Staff will be providing a follow-up interactive planning workshop on July 27.

3. Solar Within Reach Results

Topic summary

Matt Getchell, project manager on the Renewables team, presented an update on the Solar Within Reach initiative that launched in 2019 and provides higher solar incentives to low- and moderate-income households. There has been dramatic growth in the number of eligible Solar Within Reach trade allies, applications submitted and installations since its launch. A survey to recipients in 2021 informed staff that the biggest barrier to installing residential solar is the upfront cost. Nearly all respondents to the survey were white and English-speaking, indicating that while Solar Within Reach is effective at increasing the income-diversity of its participants, there is still work to be done to increase the racial diversity of its participants. A significant portion of the Solar program's budget will be dedicated to Solar Within Reach moving forward, and the offering will be the primary tool to count toward the newly implemented 25% low- and moderate-income requirement established in House Bill 3141, the public purpose charge modernization bill.

Discussion

Members inquired about the comparison of the system cost versus the incentive (Tess Jordan). Staff mentioned that the average system cost was \$31,000 with the incentive range being \$6,000- \$7,000 (Dave McClelland). Members asked if there is consideration to change the requirements of the offering to lower the income guidelines and increase the incentive amount (Angela Crowley-Koch). This approach, along with tiered incentives, may be considered by staff to be a part of the House Bill 3141 framework (Matt Getchell). An attendee inquired about potential customer barriers, responding to the difference between annual project submissions and installations (Jake Wise). Staff clarified that this difference is largely due to project timing with many systems installed in the calendar year after application submission. Attrition within the offering is low and comparable to other residential solar projects (Matt Getchell). Council members suggested using the Solar Ambassador program to help fulfill broader access to low-income and increase diversity in customers (Tess Jordan).

Next steps

None.

4. 2022 State Legislative Session Outcomes

Topic summary

Hannah Cruz, senior stakeholder relations and policy manager, provided an update on a number of bills that staff monitored in the short state legislative session. Staff focused on monitoring bills that may have impacted Energy Trust's funding, related to efficiency and renewable energy programs, impacted the customers we serve or applied to the organization's annual goals and strategic objectives. Senate Bill 1518 establishes a Resilient, Efficient Buildings Task Force to explore decarbonization and building codes in the built environment. Energy Trust staff were asked to provide organizational impact and program incentive information at an upcoming task force meeting. Senate Bill 1536 relates to supporting Oregonians during extreme weather events and passed with bipartisan support. The law funds multiple programs to deliver cooling outcomes for Oregon homes, apartments and community spaces. House Bill 4077 renames the Environmental Justice Task Force as a council and directs the council to develop an environmental justice mapping tool that can be used by natural resource agencies to improve equitable allocation of state or federal funding and more beneficial outcomes to environmental justice communities.

Discussion

None.

Next steps

None.

5. Summary of Solar Monitoring Lab

Topic summary

Josh Peterson, University of Oregon's Solar Radiation Monitoring Laboratory, provided an overview of the Solar Monitoring Lab's purpose and recent data findings on solar irradiation throughout Oregon.

6. Public Comment

No public comment.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.