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Public Meeting Minutes
Solar Setback Subcommittee

August 27, 2024

Virtual Meeting Minutes

Meeting was called to order at 10:03 AM

1) Roll Call

- John Couture – Absent
- Mark Durrenberger – Present
- Luke McKneally - Present
- Ian Finlayson - Present
- Darien Crimmin - Absent
- Patty Sheehan - Present
- Jake Nunnemacher Fire Marshall Designee – Present
- Sam Pillsbury - Present
- Jason Ferschke - Present

2) Work product to be created by this subcommittee

- a) Review 10th edition language regarding solar setbacks and possible future amendments.

Charles Kilb commenced the discussion by presenting the 10th edition solar setback language, noting that with a minor exception, the language is I-code language unamended. **Ian Finlayson** provided some background on how the language came to be welcomed opinions by users of the code on both the fire side and solar side opinions. **Mark Durrenberger** detailed some complexities and challenges in the current solar installation code, particularly around fire safety and access requirements. He stated code interpretation issues for things like ridgeline setbacks based on solar coverage also impact on solar production. **Mr. Durrenbeger** explained New Hampshire's flexibility with working paths. Given the increasing demand for electricity and the role of solar in meeting that demand, optimizing roof space is crucial.



Jake Nunnemacher stated the complications of solar panels during firefighting operations, particularly regarding roof access, rescue operations and ventilation. **Jason Ferschke** reviewed possible code flexibility with both the 2021 IRC and the proposed changes to the fire code allow for some flexibility regarding rooftop access, pathways, and setbacks if a code official determines that rooftop operations are safe. Some solar systems are designed to produce more energy than the household uses, which could impact the perspective on the necessity of pathways and setbacks. If a system is overproducing, it might seem less critical to prioritize pathways for maintenance or emergency access. **Sam Pillsbury** focused on NH amendments which attempt to balance fire safety and industry needs.

Charles Kilb indicated the group is free to discuss any appropriate amendments, but noted that it would need to start with the unamended 2024 IRC. He noted that the BBRS will probably require justification for any changes as the BBRS has historically required I-Code language to be adopted without amendments whenever possible.

Ian Finlayson says that the standards were based on California specific conditions regarding solar power, also would like to hear what the fire code is prior to making any changes to the 11th edition. **Jake Nunnemacher** says the western fire services is much different then the northeast. Larry Fisher thinks it's important for all involved to work together to create the right language. The group went on to discuss amendments and changes made or potentially to the 527 CMR 1.00 codes based on the NFPA 1, 2021 edition.

- b) Draft guidance clarifying permitting requirements for solar installations

This matter was not reached

- 3) Other matters not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of meeting.

None

Jake Nunnemacher made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sam Pillsbury seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 11:32 AM.

ITEMS RELIED UPON

Agenda

780 CMR language