**Net Metering Solar Task Force Meeting**

**Wednesday February 25, 2015**

**10:00am-12:30pm**

Task Force Members in Attendance: Jolette Westbrook (alternate for Angie O’Connor); Dwayne Breger (alternate for Dan Burgess), KatePlourd (alternate for Janet Besser); Larry Aller (alternate for Geoff Chapin); Eric Krathwohl; Liam Holland; Fred Zalcman; Amy Rabinowitz; Lisa Podgurski; Jamie Tosches (alternate for Paul Brennan); Camilo Serna; Bill Stillinger; Senator Benjamin Downing (arrived late).

Jolette Westbrook (alternate for Angie O’Connor): Welcoming remarks

Dwayne Breger (alternate for Dan Burgess): Introductions

Dwayne Breger outlines process and next steps.

Survey Monkey survey provided to task force members; to receive input on need to identify a limited number of scenarios to model for Task 3 work. Survey builds on presentation from last Task Force meeting. Asking Task Force members to respond to survey by Friday at noon. Going to make survey available as PDF form for public, available soon. Any questions on survey?

Fred Zalcman: Underscore need for PDF to socialize to members.

Camilo Serna: Will responses be made public?

Dwayne Breger: Yes. And consultants will make responses and aggregate data public.

Eric: Will interviews be made public?

Dwayne Breger: Yes. March 4th meeting at DOER on 2nd floor. 10:30am – 1:30pm. Recognize NESEA conference and SEBANE conflicts. Have limited time to meet deadline; date was chosen as result of doodle poll.

Tom Thompson: Asks if there is any way to move meeting, would be appreciated.

**Public Comment**

Stephen Jones, South Congregational Church in Amherst: 2007 congregation set goal of net energy building. Reduced energy by 70% before installing solar array. Net metering helps meet that goal. Concerns. Have a 3 tier system – generate in one month, then use next month. Generate in one month, use another. Parsonage rate is different than church. In favor of not including systems under 1 MW under the cap. How do we make system in long run – by setting caps and discussing on that over and over again. 25 kW cap causes problems for churches that have more load than that – have to work on two systems. There are inequalities in the system.

Fred Unger, Heartwood Group, Inc: Proposes a new “fair solar” proposal. Brought a 1 pager on this to share. Consider with open mind, every member can support. Most proposed solar, subsidy, payment for grid, fair payment – can’t tell if solar providers are getting paid fairly for what put on grid. Impossible for TF or legislature to develop policy without answering this. Not a value of solar tax. Separate different components of solar policy to determine. We should pay our fair share of using grid – in a fair way. Bundle policies- should evaluate each piece. Every party can agree to parts - treats all generators, utilities and ratepayers fairly. This TF has not discussed goals. Net metering caps are urgent, other issues deserve more time to develop. Good short term policy should also consider a long term policy. Permanently eliminate cap on projects under 1 MW right now. Long term: solar should be based on competitive pricing. The market isn’t accounting for certain benefits. Feb 20th letter contains details. Best option for MA, provide a national model.

Christopher Smith, Mass. Solar Owner’s Association: Meet GWSA and Clean energy and Climate Plan. What are the future MA solar goals? Putting cart before horse? Setting plans before long term goals. Supports Fred Unger plan. Support BEAT plan for possible goals going forward. Add: lift cap on net metering. Begin to determine long-term goals first (100% renewable electricity by 2050; minimum of 25% of solar from 2025; ? goal by 2018). Go beyond the ideas of H.4185. Discard old ideas in terms of constraints on solar. Tied to old utility model. GCA changed landscape of solar – solar PV growth lowered cost of equipment, community solar makes solar ownership for 80% of ratepayers. 6 of 7 models presented are the same as H.4185. None are designed to develop PV growth. Presented as an unwanted but necessary generation. Best first step of TF is to determine true value of solar – more than just how does it compete in market place. It is not can we continue to afford growing solar, but rather how can we not grow solar.

Dwayne Breger: Notes that Task Force encourages written comments. Asks that commenters please summarize and limit to 3 minutes.

Hector Figarella, Neighbor to Neighbor: Lift NM cap that exists immediately. Expand community shared solar projects. Advocates for policies that also work for MLPs.

Quinton Zondervan, Climate Action Business Association: Don’t represent solar industry, just small businesses in MA. Climate change presents threat to small business. Creates durable local jobs. Should be no caps on net metering for solar. Virtual NM provides efficient, flexible option for businesses. Support Community shared solar. Concerned with implications of minimum bill. Concerned with long-term progress of solar market.

Chris Derby Kilfolyle, Berkshire Photovoltaic Services (BPVS): Co-signed Fred Unger’s policy recommendation. 7 options from consultants. Review 2 studies – Lawrence Berkley Lab – financial impacts of net metered PV. Energy Law Journal – does destructive competition mean death spiral for utilities. These show there aren’t dire consequences for future of utilities. Consultant work is reiterating H.4185. What will be impact of these options? Minimum bill will impact customers: maple sugar producers use electricity in March/April. Must have electric accounts for rest of year. Generate solar electricity in summer and use in2-3 months. Saw mills. Community shared agriculture. Fair ground. Minimum bill hurts bottom line. Early adopters don’t benefit from SREC. Urges Task Force to look at history of solar policy in MA.

Emily Rochon, Boston Community Capital: Solar in low-income communities. In rush to meet deadline the Task Force runs risk of developing policy that harms low income communities. Solar small and solar large – rooftop vs. NM projects separated. This is a policy decision. Dorchester triple deckers need access to virtual NM projects. No consideration of policies specific to low income communities. Competitive solicitations is a potential – disadvantages developers of low-income systems because they don’t have staffing to compete. Can’t always compete on price – higher soft costs, installation costs. Declining blocks disadvantaging low income. RI has no solar program for low income program becauseof buy all, sell all market. Take step back and maker sure policy path doesn’t exclude low income communities left out – protecting virtual NM does that best.

Haskel Werlin, Solar Design Associates, Harvard Community Solar Garden: First member owned garden. 524 kW system that is interconnected. Don’t want to slow growth/experiments going on. Taxation of solar projects. Commercial taxation burdens community shared solar. Support Fred Unger proposal. National Grid cap almost reached – cheaper to build, utility better to work with. Why have to wait for one utility to reach cap before see room everywhere. Net metering surcharge recovery isn’t affecting ratepayers – very small.

Rev. John Remis, Colrain, Monson, Cummington. Farmer – why can’t he share with residential. Fairness issue. Pole mounted array installed. Grass roots efforts underway, but process last year felt top-down. Threatened by utility fee impact calculations which planned 8-10 years out. Thrilled by the work of PV production.

John Ward, Solar Store of Greenfield: From my experience in our area, a lot of accounts would be loss of allocation, by minimum bill. Have multiple customers with barn and open fields on one side of road and house on another. Can’t cross public ways with electric lines. Put array on barn – can allocate to house account to lower household electric bills. If can’t allocate, have 2 minimum bills – their home bill isn’t reduced by what is put on barn. People aren’t able to use money coming back to them to offset $ invested in capital. Should be fair compensation for capital invested – not just to offset the cost of putting system in but also fair compensation in taking risk and investing capital. Utilities should have some fair payment but shouldn’t be on back of low income, rural, farmers, sugar shacks. Allocation to family and friends – if want to put PV array on my house should be able to share with my elderly low-income mother. Chilling effect of regulations on people who haven’t done this. 6 out of 7 paths proposed by consultants have minimum bill. Low energy users – getting minimum bills. Very chilling effect on the market.

Claire Chang, Solar Store of Greenfield: Room understands about climate change. MA is #1 in EE, but #1 at 10% isn’t enough. If going to get near 80% in green house gases, utilities, municipalities, residences all must look at doing something. Solar PV is only a slice. Solar PV must reach full potential before federal tax credit expires. Only thing holding us back is net metering cap. National Grid is a dream to work with, won’t talk about other companies. How to eliminate NM cap under 1 MW or eliminate them completely until end of 2016. At least then we’ve taken full advantage. 8300 MW to retire, want to retire fossil fuel plants – that is capacity. Make 4,000 MW of PV in 4 years. Not an impossible figure and incorporate with energy storage. Virtual net metering – if goes down in amount, there is no way for community shared solar can move forward.

Jim Cutler, Town energy manager, solar coach, member of MAPLAN: Trying to get people to understand the energy situation in MA, New England. Fees on interconnection need to be taken away. Caps need to be removed. Who’s countering these arguments? Who says something different? Task Force is an important body - decisions make will be looked at by people all over country. Every day you take to make decision delays jobs, destroy aquifers. Need you to make decisions to make it possible for people who don’t have solar can get it. Don’t make competition of people who need electricity and those who provide it.

Julia Blyth, Northfield: New Homeowner. About to install solar panels because of net metering and incentives. Hope these opportunities are available to everyone. Concerned with expanding fossil fuels.

Joe Gravline, Northfield, MA resident: Installed solar PV. Helps me meet my commitment to the next 7 generations. Solar generation around for 1700 years here in valley. Wants to put another 7 kW system up to help neighbors who can’t. 3/31 deadline – taking “tin man attitude” about developing these policies. Place in the conversation for corporations, but not at expense of little people. Want more people to come on board with solar. That conversation will be more difficult with caps, minimum bill.

Tom Hunt, Clean Energy Collective: Builds and runs community solar projects. Great tool to get everyone involved in solar community, especially for those that are underserved. Encourage to not throw baby out with bathwater. Build on good work that MA has done. Looking at other states is not only option. MA does some things better – MA definition of community shared solar is best. Clear, simple. Not discussed yet – opportunities to reduce costs re: interconnection fees. IREC has proposed some good suggestions to address this.

Doug Pope, Pope Energy: Policies since 2008 have only been start – but haven’t had a goal. Establish long-term goals, then everything else falls into place. 8,300 MW scheduled to retire – about 5,000 MW should be located in electric hub in ISO-NE. Building that in solar would employ a generation of people. Net metering must be uncapped. What’s the cost? 600 MW/year – costs 4 mills/kW. That is half of what was paid to go from regulated to deregulated economy. Moving to 20% by 2025 transition to a renewable economy – we are not strangers to transitions.

Laura Kaye, Northfield, MA: I represent 80% of people who can’t have solar. Lift caps on virtual net metering – capping keeps us running in place or going backwards.

Wade Clement, Westhampton, MA: Homeowner. Energy efficiency process is terrible. In process of solar, simplify the process for paperwork. Make sure I know that benefits are going to come back to me. I just need to know what the rules of the game are. Ignore the consultants paid by highly paid utilities. Listen to people who will live with this.

Scott Nielson, Amherst: Process of decision making. Intent good, experts qualified – not enough time. 6 of 7 proposals produce same results. Minimum bill defeats clean energy goals of 2020 – based on opinion not scientific investigation. Raise NM cap, keep virtual net metering alive. 37% increase in electric bill was shocking. Get bill to extend Task Force timeline done. SREC I worked – keep it going.

Ariel Elan, Montague: Endorse everything has heard. Low income. 100 year events are now new normal. Simple solution is in our hands – sun is free of charge. Why are we not using it? TF members can help different future come about. Or can help utilities. Out of pocket costs – incremental ways to equitably distribute a clean energy future. Room is full of expertise to get this job done.

George Rockwood, Leverett. Increase cost or changes system used to, detrimental to getting people to install solar – change is detrimental.

John Rubell, Manfacturing in Lancaster: Makes medical devices for aviation/military. Manufacturing jobs still a major part of MA economics. one third of payroll generated from manufacturing jobs in MA; one quarter of jobs. Manufacturing very sophisticated, modern. Electricity is third biggest cost at his plant. How to plan for that? Competing with other states, regions of country. Solar has proven to work. Anything can do to expand solar, become a more stable cost for business – will help grow jobs. Known utility costs is huge – will help to grow and expand. Solar is a job creator – not just for solar installers and for those who utilize solar.

Lynn Benander, Co-op Power: Members prioritized community shared solar as #1 priority. Signed contract with PV Squared. Want to do 9 more installations. Consider: keep focused on goals. Ask utilities to partner with us – encourage that. Keep focus on public good, equity, assign cost of grid fairly. Limited resource communities get access to solar and jobs with it. Small businesses can’t keep up with policy changes. Build on commercial lot, get commercial rate, but use at residence with residential rate.

Dwayne Breger: Task Force benefitted from this morning, giving good ideas. Move to Task Force discussion? Specific or more general.

Fred Zalcman: Thank everyone for time, thoughts. Resolute voice for continuing the momentum in MA. Comments of goals – need means of evaluating frameworks? What is Task Force evaluating frameworks against? Haven’t had chance to design goals. As look at models, need overlay how low income community is treated, incorporated.

Dwayne Breger: Numerical goals, timetables in survey, but allow for a more open comment. Use comment box for your goals and vision with that selection.

Bill Stillinger: Thanks for comments. There is a dividing line between smaller scale projects/users and larger-scale projects. Looking for general equity in finding that dividing line.

Eric Krathwohl: How to integrate solar policy in Municipal Light Plants?

Amy Rabinowitz: Hearing passion for wide-scale solar. Shows need for sustainability in long run. If everyone is getting paid under NM and no one is doing the paying, how is that sustainable? High costs associated. National Grid customer bill – two-thirds is electricity. One third is stringing wires, restoring service, answering phones, costs to support renewables. Non-participants paying for renewables will be equal what spending for non-renewable services. Need sustainability. Virtual net metering isn’t same as net metering – must take into account. Solar is different than EE – solar uses grid.

Senator Ben Downing: Thanks for members for coming to Holyoke. Dealing with Climate change is greater than deference to Municipal Light Plants. Role for municipalities and role for investor owned utilities to play. Small vs. large – tricky parts in legislating these issues. Senate members aware this is a timely issue. Will share with TUE committee members about the Task Force. Looking forward to product from Task Force.

Larry Aller: Point about small vs large systems is important. Not sure we have a definition of market segments yet. Echo muni/low income discussions. Timing – solar is a good investment in MA. Between now and 2016, have opportunity for Federal government to send us money on this. 30% of money goes away. How take advantage of that money as much as possible, in a cost-effective way. Then, how do we set things up for success after that.

Chris Derby Kilfoyle: What is real cost to all ratepayers? What are benefits to system?

Chris Smith: $800 million – what does National Grid do with kW that goes in grid?

Amy Rabinowitz: Refers to net metering and SREC costs.