



Via Email

May 22, 2020

Patrick Woodcock, Commissioner
Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources
100 Cambridge Street Boston, MA 02110

RE: SMART Public Comment

Dear Commissioner Woodcock,

On Tuesday April 14, 2020, DOER filed a revised 225 CMR 20.00, the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) Program, with the Secretary of the Commonwealth as an emergency regulation. This regulatory update was the result of DOER's review of the SMART Program and engagement with stakeholders, which began upon the qualification of 400 MW of eligible Solar Tariff Generation Units. The regulations went into effect immediately.

On May 22, 2020 the DOER held a virtual public hearing seeking comments, and accepted written comments until 5 PM on May 22, 2020.

Zero-Point Development would like to thank the DOER for the opportunity to provide comments on the emergency regulations and appreciate the DOER's continued leadership in the development of the SMART program.

Zero-Point Development is a Massachusetts based solar development company committed to advancing renewable energy solutions as a viable alternative energy resource for all consumers in the United States. Having successfully developed and installed over 115MW, DC of solar capacity in the Commonwealth since 2011, we believe strongly in the independent and sustainable energy production capacity of the Commonwealth. Zero-Point development is filing the below comments on specific issues related to the April 14, 2020 filing. We believe the adoption of these comments are necessary for reaching the Renewable Energy goals the Commonwealth has set forth.

Public Entity Solar Tariff Generation Unit Definition:

Under the new regulations, a Solar Tariff Generation Unit that is Sited on privately owned property must assign 100% of its output to Municipality or Other Governmental Entities in the Municipality in which the Solar Tariff Generation Unit is sited to qualify as Public Entity Solar Tariff Generation. This seems to unreasonably restrict a Municipality or Other Governmental Entity that does not own a location suitable for the installation of the Solar Tariff Generation Unit, from participating in the program. Further, this would prevent the construction of a Solar Tariff Generation Unit within a municipality that currently has a portion of its power purchase already under contract and cannot take 100% of the output from a Solar Tariff Generation Unit. Solar installations of over 1MW typically must be large enough to absorb the high interconnection costs currently seen within the commonwealth.

We believe the language should be modified such that 100% of the output must be assign to a Municipality or Other Governmental Entity within the same Distribution Company and Load Zone.



Low Income Community Shared Solar adder:

We applaud the DOER's allowance for a Solar Tariff Generation Unit to qualify for the low-income adder by assigning it's output to a low income shared solar program administered by the Distribution Company. Financing with Low Income Off-takers is very difficult without the high level of off-taker credit scores normally required from financiers. Shielding this risk by assigning that output directly to the Distribution Company for the benefit of Low-Income customers resolves the issue and opens the door for that much needed public benefit. We urge the DOER to set strict timelines on the Distribution Companies to file a tariff to support this and begin it's implementation. This will allow Solar Projects that would normally fail under the new regulations to become financially viable again as long as they provide this community benefit, preserving the invested capital, tax income for municipalities, and workforce employment within the commonwealth.

Land use restrictions:

There were a number of comments on land use restrictions. I have personally been involved in renewable energy for many years. One of the greatest benefits of Solar that we seem to have forgotten about is that it does not permanently remove land from potential use for farming. In an emergency, or anytime after the useful life of the project, it is simple to remove. The removal costs have already been paid for or bonded by the developer as a requirement to permit and build. The land can then resume the growth of vegetation or farming if desired. This is a far better benefit than a commercial or housing development that leaves the land permanently unavailable for farming, and in many cases, the removal of difficult shallow rock, and the smoothing of the landscape required for Solar makes agriculture possible on high value soil areas where it would not have been previously feasible regardless of its soil classification.

It is understandable that abutters may lose a pleasant view offered by someone else's property, However, they are not paying the taxes and the landowner in many cases needs the financial help, and the town needs the tax revenue that comes without the expense of additional town infrastructure or resources.

We do certainly need to maintain a healthy eco system. We urge the DOER to ease any land siting requirements that are not supported by Global Warming and Environmental Science.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at +1 617 823 6169.

Sincerely,

Greg Hunt.

Principal, Zero-Point Development.