

## **DISTRIBUTED GENERATION BOARD MEETING**

**February 25, 2015**

**4-5:30pm**

**Conference Room B**

**Department of Administration**

**Board Members Present:** Ken Payne, Sharon Conard-Wells, Sheila Dormody, Sam Bradner

**Others Present:** Chris Kearns, Sue AnderBois, Ryan Crowley, Shauna Beland, Barry Wenskowicz, Tim Roughan, Russ Maymon, Eric M. Martin, Fred Unger, Emily Rochan, Mike Lanni, Bruce DiGennoro, Frank Epps, Dylan Levings, Jon Mancini

### **Call to Order**

Mr. Payne officially called the meeting to order at 4:17, once quorum was present.

### **Update on the Public Utility Commission Docket Proceedings for the Renewable Energy Growth Program**

Mr. Payne first wished to address item number two on the agenda. With no objection, the meeting began. Chris Kearns reported that in the coming month, the docket proceedings will take place for the filings the board made before Christmas. National Grid has filed documents for the enrollment process. PUC will have hearings March 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. There were no parties that filed objecting to the board's recommendations this year. Decision to take place by end of March. Mr. Kearns noted that Dan Major responded to a request from the Public Utility Commission about the filing. The technical session is March 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Update by National Grid on the current and pending changes to the Interconnection Tariff Rules and Regulations**

At the recommendation of Mr. Kearns, Mr. Payne permitted National Grid to make its presentation next. Tim Rowan presented Reason's for Changes. For smaller projects the process has been simplified and resulted in now allowing up to 15kw single phase, up from the original 10 kw single phase; raised screen 2 from 7.5% of feeder load to 15% of feeder load; minor system modifications are now allowed in the process when significant amount of DG is in a small area. The application was also modified to allow "one-stop" shopping so customers can also apply for REG enrollment.

The changes for larger projects include a pre-applications report that is designed to provide valuable information to prospective customers regarding the "condition" of the electric distribution system in the location for proposed DG and enables customers to better understand the impact of their proposed project prior to submitting an application. Also projects that pass all expedited screens would no longer have to pay for an Impact Study for Renewable DG (ISR DG) and receive an executable Interconnection Service Agreement (ISA)

quicker. Larger projects require interval metering for all projects over 25kW. Changes for larger project also provide for refund language in the event a customer pays for an upgrade that a subsequent customer takes advantage of. And finally, ISO-NE requirements are clarified, specifically OP14.

Mr. Kearns asked if larger project changes really impact the tariff program. Mr. Rowan said they can. He cited projects that have a common line that connect each of them as an example of when this could apply. Mr. Kearns asked if the 3.5 megawatt project in Quonset and other project 1.5 megawatt nearby would be impacted. Mr. Rowan said that remains unclear and National Grid is working with ISO-New England for clarification. Mr. Kearns asked if DG Board could get an update on this part of National Grid's program.

Frank Epps asked Mr. Rowan to define single line and asked if it is Mr. Rowan said if there are truly different owners the language would not apply. Mr. Epps asked if there was a maximum to the curtailment that could be established. Mr. Rowan said currently there is no maximum. Mr. Kearns said the Distributed Generation Board will look to get clarification on the commercial scale program and noted that the board is not looking to open enrollment until late June/early July.

#### **Authorization for the Request to the Public Utility Commission for Reconciliation Funding for the 2016 Ceiling Price Services**

Mr. Payne wished to address this agenda item next. There was no objection. Office of Energy Resources (OER) is requesting the board to approve authorization to make a filing to Public Utilities Commission for \$65,000. Kearns says goal is to start process with consultant in spring. By approving now, it gives OER an extra two months to flesh out the 2016 plan. Sharon Conard-Wells motioned to approve and Sheila Dormody seconded. Mr. Ferguson asked what the basis for the \$65,000 amount was. Mr. Kearns stated his belief that \$65,000 should be enough but an amended filing could be presented to PUC if necessary but asked if board wants to release another RFP or just contract with SEA. Board will have to discuss whether or not they want to go out for RFP. Mr. Payne noted 2016 is a big increase in amount of DG the board will be overseeing. Ms. Conard-Wells asked if the scope of what to ask for from consulting group will change with new request. Mr. Kearns said it could and offered to get a scope of work for March meeting. Ms. Conard-Wells asked would there be part of what was done in the past continuing or will this program be new. Mr. Kearns said the structure of program is the same the difference is the increase in megawatts from 25 megawatts in 2015 to 40 megawatts in 2016.

Mr. Payne said it wouldn't be a replication of REG program startup cost and his expectation is that there will be more room in this funding to take up other issues, but board needs to get something in play. Mr. Ferguson asked who hired the consultant. Mr. Payne stated State Purchasing does but it's the Board's consultant and reminds board of statutory obligation to take into account the needs of OER. National Grid's representative noted they support beginning the process as early as possible.

Motion passes with no opposition.

### **Discussion on barriers for multi-family and low-income customers to accessing the Renewable Energy Growth program**

Mr. Payne stated DG Board has obligation to make sure this program is functional in all communities, not just municipalities so benefits of program are as widely distributed as possible and that social benefits occur appropriately. There may be specific social benefits to having DG lower utility bills in lower income neighborhoods that may not be present in high income neighborhoods. To get first year of the DG Growth program up and running it was deferred to this year for discussion. This should come as no surprise to anyone following what the board has been doing over the last year.

Mr. Kearns began discussion by stating that as ceiling prices are developed board needs to make sure it is not eliminating properties. He suggested when 2016 ceiling prices are designed, it is a market the board may like to tap into. Ms. Dormody said the board was trying to assume if federal assistance would be available. Mr. Kearns said the filing the board made factored in that there is one more year with federal tax credit in place.

Ms. Conard-Wells stated that her colleagues in community development sector are not familiar with this resource. She asked if the process can be this be combined with other things the board does and suggested the board should engage these folks to determine if the program and its requirements are a match. Also said there is an education component that needs to be addressed with the general population. Mr. Kearns mentioned Commerce RI and OER would be interested in doing presentations for the purposes of education. Ms. Conard-Wells added understanding how the money works is something else that should be addressed and the Housing Network of Rhode Island should be included. Mr. Payne suggested having a meeting for members of the housing network to look at DG growth program and determine interest. Ms. Conard-Wells suggested housing counseling individuals can help board understand the profile of buyers. Mr. Ferguson compared individuals with double/triple deckers and asked what can landlord and tenants benefit from it.

Sue AnderBois stated that OER has informal sub committees that work through these kinds of issues and suggested that this kind of subcommittee would be a good idea for DG Board. Mr. Payne said a working group would be appropriate so long as members and ex officio members are not participating and suggests that it should be added to the agenda for the next meeting to create/address a working group. Mr. Ferguson said working group should find resources already available. Ms. Conard-Wells recommended RI Housing and Housing network folks are involved and invited to these meetings.

National Grid said one of the starting points for program as it is, is that there is one system and one account. Nonprofits can't take tax credits through ownership of these systems. Residential systems should be able to participate. Also suggested that energy efficiency coordinated piece of the small solar program potentially available through grid is also an area to discuss in terms of bundling efficiency and retrofits of existing homes.

Mr. Kearns asked what the timeline is on configuring efficiency and renewables as part of 2016 program. National Grid said there is no sense of timeline as of yet.

Ms. Dormody said once the structure is determined, advertising this program may be challenge. Ms. Conard-Wells said the housing counselors would be beneficial. Ms. Dormody said an open meeting should be done to begin the process. Payne said if DG Board decides to pursue this it will be done very publicly until it is done.

Fred Unger stated Rooftop solar is difficult because any multi family home is usually coverage by trees, kids, etc. Massachusetts can assign a value for one account. DG Program is essentially cash, affordable housing is support by tax credits. Cash received would put them in violation of their tax credits. Mr. Payne said based on Fred, the DG program may not be a good fit in many situations in affordable housing and that virtual net metering would be better. Ms. Dormody said, OER should follow up on the matter.

Emily Rochan from Boston Community Capital said board needs to define what is meant multifamily affordable housing, as challenges will be different for each property and different for each strategy and asked rhetorically, why is solar appropriate in these communities. She said Rhode Island faces challenges that are not presented to other states. Mr. Payne said a working group will be established to explore this matter and will be on the agenda for the next meeting to flesh out the parameters of this issue and the board will work with OER.

### **Approval of the December 15<sup>th</sup> and January 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Dormody made a motion to pass and Mr. Ferguson seconded the motion. All approved

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment at the conclusion of the meeting. Those in attendance were permitted to speak during the meeting as time permitted.

### **Adjourn**

Meeting Adjourned at 5:21pm.