

Distributed Generation Board Meeting
Monday, September 21, 2015
4:00-5:30 p.m.
Department of Administration – Conference Room A

Members Present: Sue AnderBois, Samuel Bradner, Sharon Conard-Wells, Sheila Dormody, Bill Ferguson, Marion Gold, Kari Lang, Ken Payne, Ian Springsteel

Others Present: Shauna Beland, Ryan Crowley, Jason Gifford, Chris Kearns

Call to Order: Chairman Ken Payne called the meeting to order at 4:10p.m.

Before the board began addressing items on the agenda, members introduced themselves to new member Kari Lang.

1. Approval of the August Meeting Minutes

The vote to approve the August meeting minutes was delayed because they were incomplete. Samuel Bradner made a motion to delay the vote on the August meeting minutes. Bill Ferguson seconded and all approved.

2. Updates on the development of the 2016 Renewable Energy Growth Program – Office of Energy Resources

Jason Gifford said comments on the 2016 Renewable Energy Growth Program will be collected until the end of the month. All comments will be considered. A third and final set of proposed ceiling prices will be proposed thereafter.

Sharon Conard-Wells asked what in the proposal might change due to the feedback received. Chairman Payne recommended the board review the statutory standards of what the board can adopt. Ms. Conard-Wells stated her concern with the prices that are being set, meeting the needs of businesses in Rhode Island. Sue AnderBois suggested that Mr. Gifford might consider presenting how comments have been incorporated in future presentations. She added that such a presentation may offer comfort to those who have offered feedback. Bill Ferguson asked if Rhode Island is meeting megawatt goals. Chris Kearns said the market is suggesting that what the board adopted last year is working.

The DG Board will be provided final version of ceiling prices, the proposed megawatt allocation and National Grid's Solar Wise program and will vote on Monday October 19. OER will then prepare the legal language to be submitted to the Public Utilities Commission in November.

3. Overview of the Rate Design Docket – Sue AnderBois

Sue AnderBois gave an overview of the Rate Design Docket. Mr. Ferguson asked what kind of charges all customers would pay. Ms. AnderBois referred to the overview that that it would include a customer charge and a per kilowatt hour charge. Ms. AnderBois said that the proposal suggests that an average user who may not closely monitor their bill and does not change their behavior will only incur an additional 5 percent charge or could see their bill drop up to 5 percent.

Chairman Payne stated system now in place was designed before current conditions emerged. This current scenario could be disadvantageous to certain parties. He added that the underlying idea of the docket is very good and although the subject matter is not easy, one way or the other the underlying issues have to be addressed so there is a constructive outcome. Commissioner Gold added that the renewable energy growth law is the reason for the docket. Ms. AnderBois informed the board that Massachusetts is grappling with the same concepts.

Mr. Ferguson asked if the docket was revenue neutral by class of customer. Mr. Springsteel was unsure. Sheila Dormody asked if the 5 percent is based on the infrastructure upgrades that are required for creating the energy system of the future. Sue AnderBois reiterated that a 5 percent change would be only applied to those customers that do not change their behavior – if customers underwent energy efficiency or installed distributed generation, changes are not known.

Chris Kearns said as part of SEA's development of the ceiling prices, it was requested that they prepare a memo on the quantitative analysis regarding rate design filing by National Grid, related to the impacts on the DG Renewable Energy Growth program. It should be completed and sent to board members by the end of the month. There may be an appropriate time later in the fall season for the DG Board to publicly weigh in. Commissioner Gold suggested that there may be a counter proposal. Mr. Springsteel asked if there was counter proposal in the works. Commissioner Gold said there was a collaborative discussion taking place. She added that the System Integration Rhode Island working group should guide the work being done.

Mr. Kearns asked for clarification on if National Grid thinks the access fee should be incorporated into the ceiling prices. Mr. Springsteel said yes. Mr. Kearns stated his concern that the ceiling prices are almost complete and that changing course now would be counter to how the DG board has operated. Chairman Payne asked that National Grid communicate with OER regarding the access fee. Mr. Ferguson asked for a clarification on what an access fee is. Ms. AnderBois said a per month kilowatt charge for distributed generation systems with no onsite load.

4. Update on the development of the Solar Wise Program – National Grid Presentation

Mr. Springsteel presented an update on National Grid's Solar Wise program. Ms. AnderBois asked if there is a timeframe around doing energy efficiency work and distributed generation work or must it be all in one contract. Mr. Springsteel said you must place a deposit and be committed to the measures agreed upon. If you wish to do additional work, another contract may be entered. Ms. Dormody asked if it would be the same vendor throughout the process. Mr. Springsteel clarified the vendor is involved in the initial screening and the bid process and then the client would work directly with the installer and National Grid. He added that 5 firms are interested in participating in the program.

5. Taxes on Renewable Energy Growth Systems – Board Discussion

Due to the complexity of this subject matter, Chairman Payne recommended that this agenda item be moved to the next meeting.

6. Other business:

Mr. Springsteel noted that National Grid has been reviewing issues with the plan as it has been developing. He said medium solar is not as active in the plan. He added that a small solar uptick and large amount of wind activity may result in a less than full allocation in 2016. National Grid will provide any comments to the board in writing.

7. Adjourn

Mr. Ferguson made a motion to adjourn. Ms. AnderBois seconded and all approved. Chairman Payne adjourned the meeting at 5:45pm.