

Governor's Energy Office

Distributed Generation Stakeholder Group

Meeting Summary

Tuesday, July 19, 2022

11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Hybrid meeting with attendees in person and via Zoom

Attendees

Stakeholder group members: Dan Burgess, Governor's Energy Office; David Norman, Versant Power; Kaitlin Kelly O'Neill, Coalition for Community Solar Access; Jeremy Payne, Maine Renewable Energy Association; Fortunat Mueller, Revision Energy; Phelps Turner, Conservation Law Foundation; Peter Cohen, Central Maine Power; Deirdre Schneider, on behalf of Commissioner Bartlett, Public Utilities Commission; Bill Harwood, Office of the Public Advocate; Lars Gundersen, on behalf of Bob Cleaves, Dirigo Solar; Todd Griset, on behalf of Tony Buxton, Preti Flaherty - Industrial Energy Consumers Group; Jessica Robertson, Borrego Energy; Jesse McKinnell, CEI/Bright Community Capital.

Staff: Celina Cunningham, Ethan Tremblay, and Caroline Colan, Governor's Energy Office (GEO).

Members of the public.

Welcome and introductions

Dan Burgess welcomed all stakeholder group members and members of the public. All members, both in person and online, introduced themselves.

Ethan Tremblay reviewed the agenda and meeting materials including a planning template for the issue-focused work sessions aimed at creating continuity across topics and seeking input from diverse stakeholders prior to developing plans for a successor program. Topics covered at the meeting include discussions of key objectives of the issue-focused work sessions, key stakeholders to proactively invite, and a process for finalizing details and holding work sessions in August and September.

Review of issue-focused work session plans

The interim report, finalized in December 2022, of the DG Stakeholder Group calls for targeted issue-focused work sessions to engage and get feedback from a broader range of stakeholders on key issues relevant to the design of a successor program. Since the last meeting, planning has commenced on several topics. Planning updates and considerations include:

Equity and Access – Volunteer Lead: Kaitlin Kelly O'Neill

- At least two issue-focused work sessions will be held on this topic to explore how to design a program that can better reach low-income customers, what the existing barriers are to reaching low-income customers (social, communication, financial, etc.), and what the best program design might be to overcome these barriers.

- Will invite representatives with substantial state expertise, specifically experience working with and reaching energy justice populations in Maine. Will likely also want participants with national experience who can share best practices.
 - Members suggested states like New York and Connecticut could provide valuable information to the group.
- Will encourage all participants of this work group to attend an August meeting of the Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council led by the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) on ratemaking and consumer assistance. This session will explore what policies and protections currently exist for low-income ratepayers in Maine and will be useful context for the work of the DG issue-focused work session on equity and access.
 - This session will be hosted by the OPA’s Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council, created by the legislature. Currently it is an 18-person council evaluating the affordability of electricity. Bill Harwood suggests that the DG Stakeholder Group and the OPA Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council coordinate their work where overlaps exist.
 - **Meeting information for Monday, August 22 at 1:30 p.m. meeting of the Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council:** <https://www.maine.gov/meopa/reports-and-testimony/council#Meeting>
- DG members discussed what currently available data suggests about the economic diversity of community solar subscribers in Maine and the need to pay attention to how to ensure access for low-income individuals.
 - Desire for better access to customer data. There could be several different ways to appropriately access customer information, with potential sources including interconnection data and customer enrollment data from utilities, and customer data from shared net energy billing providers. CMP believes they could pull statistical data without revealing confidential information like account numbers and addresses. Such information could be overlaid with sociodemographic data to better illustrate who is accessing solar programs.
 - Noted an action item to coordinate with utilities on data needs and requests.
- Also discussed procedural equity. How do we improve access to these work sessions? Should think mindfully about scheduling. Consider providing structured questions or topics for input along with meeting materials in advance of the session and potentially open response/public comment forms to follow.
- Groups brainstormed potential presenters and panelists.

Land Use – Volunteer Lead: Bob Cleaves

- Discussed having an initial meeting to key in on target areas and identify analysis needs for the incoming consultant supporting program design. Other early questions and considerations:
 - Must consider cost containment, costs of interconnection, and how locational costs align. Getting some specific costs together for review would be helpful.
 - Are special incentives or disincentives required? L.D. 1711 authorized the PUC to establish locational incentives in the distributed generation procurement conducted in 2020, although such incentives were not implemented and the procurement was ultimately closed without any projects selected and later repealed by L.D. 936. Could consider incentives to drive location specific development.

- Other financing options?
- How should we prioritize relative tradeoffs? How should we measure and understand those? Want to be clear about what and how priorities are determined.
- Group agreed this topic could be difficult to discuss without some draft program design language to review. Suggested starting the first meeting off with a draft value list for types of locations (what's preferred/not preferred?). Then follow up with ground-truthed data—how many of those types of locations are undeveloped today?
- Important to build off the work of the Agricultural Solar Stakeholder Group. Would like someone to present from that group.
- Agrivoltaics and evolving technologies should be discussed. What types of products can be produced on farmland in conjunction with solar production?
- Groups brainstormed potential presenters and panelists.

Billing & Crediting – Volunteer Lead: Kaitlin Kelly O’Neill

- Kaitlin has invited utilities and two community solar firms via email to discuss plans for a billing and crediting work group.
- Billing implementation challenges are common in the rollout of community solar programs in all jurisdictions, and early and frequent collaboration and communication is a key best practice.
- How can we share customer information? (lower customer acquisition costs)
 - Need more insight into usage, how energy is showing up on bills. Appropriate management of crediting customer is receiving.

Other Potential Issue-Focused Work Sessions

Some discussion of additional potential work sessions, including energy storage, interconnection, and taxation, took place. Members agreed to contact GEO staff if they are interested in organizing sessions on these topics.

Update on Consultant Work

The GEO has a solicitation for expert technical services that closed on July 21. GEO anticipates having a contractor on board near the end of August who will coordinate closely with the DG Stakeholder Group.

Public Comment

Dan opened the floor for public comment.

Peter Evans

Peter works for New Power Technologies, but is solely representing himself on the call. Discussion on land use reminds him of many competing priorities in all these topics. Would suggest all these conversations start by articulating desired outcomes and metrics of success.

Howard Marshall

Howard is the Chair of the Harpswell Energy and Technology Committee, but is listening in as member of the public. Their committee works to promote renewables among town residents. Howard was not sure if it is within the purview of the group, but he believes that RECs should not be separated from the generation source. For example, he believes RECs from solar should not be sold to another powerplant to offset their emissions, but rather bring more renewables online and allow RECs to go to a utility and then be retired.

Cluster Study Updates

During the last meeting, working groups requested additional information on ongoing cluster studies to better understand the current pipeline of solar project. Meg Sullivan on behalf of CMP and David Norman of Versant each provided an update on their respective cluster studies.

Meg Sullivan, CMP

Slide deck (pdf): https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/CMP%20DG%20Cluster%20Studies_20220719.pdf

- CMP is working to manage safe and reliable interconnection of renewable resources, including DG resources under 5 MW.
 - CMP anticipates approximately 1000 MW of distributed resources in the next 10 years (based on ISO-New England's most recent CELT report).
 - Expecting Maine will shift to a winter peaking system in the next decade.
 - There are approximately 730 applications in the distribution interconnection queue.
 - Approximately 1,800 MW of active projects in distribution queue (approximately equal to CMP's current peak winter load).
 - Approximately 740 MW have ISO-New England i.3.9 approval and interconnection agreements executed.
- CMP filed a white paper in PUC docket 2021-00262 that describes the cluster study process and may interest stakeholders
 - Anticipate increasing complexity in cluster studies.
 - ISO manages FERC jurisdictional projects.
 - Need to anticipate network upgrades in future, rather than just addressing what's broken. Need to work on curtailment issue.
 - Have some challenges keeping up with deadlines, but keep stakeholders up to date.
 - Execute NDAs with cluster participants, which enables timely sharing of results and information for decision making.
 - Have worked to increase communications since 2019.
 - Have current docket, 2021-00227, hoping to increase efficiency of cluster study process.

David Norman, Versant Power (no slides)

- Bangor Hydro District – cluster 3.3 update.
 - Delayed due to tripping on the system and 20 MW criteria violation that needs to be cleared by ISO rules.
 - Decided to move ahead with 3.3, still working out issues. Expect it on August ISO Reliability Committee Agenda or September meeting for final approval.
- Currently working out list for cluster 4.
 - Also added PSCAD requirement.
 - Anticipate 160 MW of solar feeding area that only needs roughly 100 MW. Need to think about how that will work in the future, think about tripping.
- Maine Public District – Versant announced in June their intention to do integrated system planning under the Planning Advisory Group (PAG) process set forth in their tariff. Related to LD 1959, stakeholders will be engaged.

Next steps and timeline

All meetings of the Distributed Generation Stakeholder Group will continue to be public and include opportunities for public comment.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the DG Stakeholder Group will be on Tuesday, August 23 from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. It will be a hybrid meeting with in-person and virtual attendance options.

By the August meeting issue-focused work sessions will be noticed and scheduled.

GEO also anticipates the consultant will be under contract and will be available to kick off their work.