

# Governor's Energy Office

## Distributed Generation Stakeholder Group

### Meeting Summary

***Tuesday, June 21, 2022***

***9:00 – 11:00 a.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; Bill Harwood, Office of the Public Advocate; Jeremy Payne, Maine Renewable Energy Association; Jessica Robertson, Borrego; Phil Bartlett and Deirdre Schneider, Public Utilities Commission; Robert Cleaves, Dirigo Solar; Neal Goldberg, Maine Municipal Association; Phelps Turner, Conservation Law Foundation; Tony Buxton, Preti Flaherty on behalf of Industrial Energy Consumers Group; Fortunat Mueller, Revision Energy; Peter Cohen, Central Maine Power

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.

### Progress review and status updates

Dan gave a brief overview of the work that the group did in 2021, relevant policy passed during the last legislative session, the goals and directives of the group, areas of consensus reached in the interim report, and an outline for the work that is to be completed through the end of 2022. A final report with recommendations for the design of a successor program is to be completed and delivered to the legislature by January 2023.

### Stakeholder group purpose and directives

**P.L. 2021 ch. 390 – *An Act To Amend State Laws Relating to Net Energy Billing and the Procurement of Distributed Generation***

- This law directs the GEO to convene the Distributed Generation Stakeholder Group, outlines the objectives of the group, specifies membership, and directs submission of an interim report to the Legislature on December 31, 2021 and a final report by January 2023.

## Recent legislation and context

### **P.L. 2021 ch. 702** – *An Act Regarding Utility Accountability and Grid Planning for Maine’s Clean Energy Future*

- This law is aimed at holding Maine’s electric utilities accountable, improving their performance, strengthening oversight and ensuring they provide safe, reliable, affordable service and facilitate achievement of the state’s climate objectives.
- It establishes minimum performance standards, requires the utilities to submit quarterly public reports tracking their performance, and requires an annual evaluation process.
- Among other requirements, it also establishes two planning requirements: integrated grid planning and climate change planning.

### **P.L. 2021 ch. 659** – *An Act To Reduce Volatility in the Net Energy Billing Program and To Define “Competitive Electricity Provider”*

- This law establishes a new tariff for net energy billing projects consistent with tariffs implemented in neighboring New England States.

Dan asked for questions or comments from members on each of these policies as they relate to the stakeholder group’s work.

Ethan Tremblay provided a status update on the net energy billing program, including what’s operational, what’s in the pipeline, and a summary of offtakers and customer types. The interim report used November 2021 data. Ethan provided an update using the most recent data from May 2022. Maine is approaching 20,000 utility customer accounts enrolled as offtakers of operational net energy billing projects.

Members discussed takeaways from charts, potential anticipated rate impacts of the tariff program, and the effect of cluster studies currently underway. In response to a question regarding the relationship between ongoing cluster studies and potential project attrition, David Norman provided an update on the status of the three active cluster studies underway for projects in Versant’s Bangor Hydro district, noting the first two were complete with minimal upgrades identified, while the third may trigger substantial upgrades. Peter Cohen agreed to provide a similar update after consulting with colleagues.

Ethan noted the GEO is issuing a solicitation for expert consultants to support the work of the Stakeholder group, including the development of a cost-effectiveness test.

## Final Report Workplan

Ethan initiated the discussion portion of the meeting with slides focused on two main topics critical to development of the final report, starting with the development of a cost-effectiveness test and followed by the topic of issue-focused work sessions which were called for by the interim report to obtain broader feedback on key elements of a successor program.

## Cost-effectiveness test

### Discussion notes:

- How can solar be cost effectively deployed and still meet all goals/benefits of distributed generation? What are economics of solar today? How does that inform us about how cheaply solar can be built while achieving goals?
- Need to identify benefits we're getting from program so we can design program aims to maximize these benefits.
- Concern about rate impacts on both residential/LMI customers and business customers. LMI and business customers being constrained by rate increases.
  - Local energy solution in long term to volatile energy prices, not main cause of high energy prices.
- Broad agreement that transparency in the accounting of costs and benefits will be important to allow group members and eventually legislators to weigh tradeoffs of potential program designs.
- Interest in hearing from other states/jurisdictions that have done this work. Maine is not the first state to ask these questions and may be able to build off existing work from other locales.

## Issue-focused work sessions

### Discussion notes:

- Group had discussed equity and access, and land use considers last fall and the need for issue-focused work sessions on these topics. Interim report calls for targeted sessions to get feedback from broader range of stakeholders.
  - A need to work closely with LMI customers/advocates, environmental justice advocates, and others in these sessions.
  - Members emphasized the need to define targeted outcomes and objectives early in this process to help focus design work and process.
- Other potential topics for issue-focused work sessions include interconnection, grid planning, excise taxes, and the role of energy storage.
- Sub-Groups will be created to plan and begin coordinating work sessions.

### Sub-Group planning and coordinators for work sessions:

- Bob Cleaves volunteered to coordinate land use work sessions. Jessica, Neal, and Jeremy also signified interest in participating.
- Kaitlin Kelly O'Neill volunteered to coordinate equity/access work sessions. Fortunat and Bill signified interest in participating.
- Fortunat, Dave, and Jessica signified interested in participating in work sessions focused on interconnection.
- Kaitlin Kelly O'Neill volunteered to coordinate work sessions focused on billing and crediting.

## 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 scheduled for mid-July. Members should be prepared to share progress reports on planning for issue-focused work sessions (dates, agenda, registrants, etc.) to happen in late July.

GEO staff can help members post work sessions on the state's public meeting calendar.

#### Public Comment

Dan opened the floor for public comment.

#### Peter Evans

Peter supported the idea that the issue-focused work sessions start by defining their desired outcomes. He encouraged members to try hard to quantify benefits and costs, recipients of benefits and costs. He also highlighted the benefits of storage and suggested the group should focus on achieving and allocating benefits of an asset rather than saying they prefer or don't prefer collocated storage.

#### Melissa Winne, ISO-NE

Melissa offered ISO-NE as a resource to the group. Happy to be helpful in any way ISO can.

#### Closing

Dan suggested the group meet bi-weekly going forward for 2 hours per session or once monthly for 4 hours.

Proposed next meeting for July 18 or 19. Will be hybrid in-person/Zoom.