

Governor's Energy Office

Distributed Generation Stakeholder Group

Meeting Summary

Thursday, October 14

1:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Meeting held via Zoom

Attendees

Stakeholder group members: Dan Burgess, Governor's Energy Office (Chair); Anthony Buxton, Industrial Energy Consumers Group; Bob Cleaves, Dirigo Solar; Garrett Corbin, Public Utilities Commission; Neal Goldberg, Maine Municipal Association; Sharon Klein, University of Maine; Andrew Landry, Office of the Public Advocate; Fortunat Mueller, ReVision Energy; Kaitlin Kelly O'Neill, Coalition for Community Solar Access; Jason Rauch, Central Maine Power; Jessica Robertson, Borrego; Phelps Turner, Conservation Law Foundation; Niels Zellers, CEI, Inc.

Members of the public via Zoom.

Welcome and introductions

Dan Burgess welcomed all stakeholder group members and members of the public. He noted that this is the second meeting for the group and the meeting would consist of four presentations, with public comments between presentations two and three. All members introduced themselves.

Distributed generation and beneficial electrification – Dr. Richard Silkman, Competitive Energy Services

Dr. Richard Silkman presented slides 2-15¹ detailing the Portland Regional Study on beneficial electrification and distribution generation. Results pertaining to transmission and distribution findings were presented along with key conclusions. Dan Burgess facilitated discussion, questions, and reactions among group members covering the following topics:

- Most of the challenges in Maine PUC Chapter 324 and Chapter 395 are not related to FERC generator projects. There is a need to move to socializing problems with these connections. These connections are being built because we want the load that the generation will serve and because we want to decarbonize the grid. The solution to the

¹ All slides from the meeting are available here:
https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/DG_StakeholderMtg_Slides_20211014.pdf

problem is not transmission, but rather it is generation. This study looked at maximum build out under the assumption that the state will eventually get there once the economics are more favorable.

- Microgrids were not considered in this study. This is because they are a reliability measure that may have value for a smaller number of entities. Currently, there are not many microgrids in the Portland area and there would be a need for a large amount of battery capacity for solar microgrids.
- Winter peak load is being driven by rapid adoption of electrified heat. While storage is a way of looking at peak demand, with prolonged days of severe temperatures (e.g., 5 days at -10° F) the storage energy will be used quickly and the grid will still be faced with peaks; any imported electricity for those days imposes a maximum load on the grid.

Overview of Massachusetts SMART program – Eric Steltzer, Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources

Eric Steltzer provided an overview on the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) program (slides 16-33). The presentation detailed capacity block sizes, compensation rates and adders, land use, and trends. Dan Burgess facilitated discussion, questions, and reactions among group members covering the following topics:

- Solar ownership will be a key conversation in the upcoming year.
- The program was able to be modified and adjusted between the conclusion of the SREC program and the SMART program. While SRECs provided a jump start to the program, there were higher costs associated with it due to the need for additional entities being involved. Further, financiers prefer utility creditworthiness as opposed to individual brokers.
- Financially, the program has been provided \$5B by companies for the first and second 1,600 MW blocks over the course of the program (20 years).
- Dual use agricultural land is a tricky issue; Massachusetts has Chapter 61A (Assessment and Taxation of Agricultural and Horticultural Land) and currently dual use agricultural systems are treated as commercial.
- Low-income uptake has been slower than expected at 2.5% of AC capacity in the program; per capita values are even lower. Identification of customers is a key issue, so the state has expanded the low-income definition for the program to include those in environmental justice zones which is about 33% of the state. This poses a threat of double-billing the participant, but there are models available to overcome this. The state is having an open and active conversation about stronger community engagement by looking into non-participation outreach.
- There is still more work to be done on engaging with municipalities with some history through Green Communities program. Further services are expected next year.

Public Comments

Dan Burgess opened the floor for public comments covering the following topics:

- The OPA expressed support for Maine’s efforts to achieve its climate goals and noted attention to ratepayer impacts.
- Capacity for renewables is important for industrial customers as the state considers load growth. Associated cost estimates will be a critical metric as the price of electricity may be driven up.
- The PUC provided a document update from the recent sessions:
 - <https://maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/attach.php?id=4436998&an=1>
- The importance of a diverse set of projects in the state was expressed due to interconnecting concerns in Massachusetts which may prevent incentives from being used to their fullest extent.

Vibrant Clean Energy Wis:DOM distributed energy resource modeling for New England – Karl Rabago, Rabago Energy

Karl Rabago provided an overview of modeling 80% clean energy by 2030 through distributed solar and storage (slides 37-52). The presentation detailed local solar and storage growth against a zero-growth scenario. Dan Burgess facilitated discussion, questions, and reactions among group members.

Carolina Net Metering Settlement – Lon Huber, Duke Energy and Thad Culley, SunRun

Lon Huber and Thad Culley provided an overview on modernizing the rooftop solar transaction through solar choice metering tariffs (slides 53-65). The presentation detailed settlement results, time-of-use periods, non-participant protections, and the transition for existing customers. Dan Burgess facilitated discussion, questions, and reactions among group members.