

# Renewable Energy Advisory Council Meeting Notes

July 18, 2024

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## Attending from the council:

Alan Beane, Geograde Constructors  
Angela Crowley-Koch, Oregon Solar +  
Storage Industries Association  
Jaimes Valdez, Portland Clean Energy  
Community Benefits Fund

Joe Abraham, Oregon Public Utility  
Commission  
Josh Peterson, Solar Monitoring Lab,  
University of Oregon  
Rob Del Mar, Oregon Department of Energy  
Stasia Brownell, Portland General Electric

## Attending from Energy Trust:

Akanksha Rawal  
Alicia Li  
Alyson McKay  
Bayo Ware  
Betsy Kauffman  
Cameron Starr  
Carolyn Rice  
Chris Lyons  
Dave McClelland  
Dave Moldal

Eduardo Beltrán  
Elizabeth Fox  
Erin Roach-Alberts  
Hannah Cruz  
Helen Rabold  
Jeni Hall  
Jess Siegel  
Kate Wellington  
Kyle Petrocine  
Lidia Garcia

Lori Lull  
Matt Getchell  
Megan Greenauer  
Merissa Larson  
Mike Colgrove  
Renita Lamberth  
Robin Brown  
Ryan Cook  
Sue Fletcher  
Tom Beverly

## Others attending:

Nikita Chan, CLEAResult  
Jake Wise, Portland General Electric

## 1. Welcome and announcements

Kyle Petrocine, senior project manager, convened the online meeting at 1:33 pm. The agenda, notes and presentation materials are available on Energy Trust's website at <https://www.energytrust.org/about/public-meetings/renewable-energy-advisory-council-meetings/>.

Staff provide an overview of several new program changes.

First, staff presented on changes to Energy Trust's community solar development assistance to kickstart projects for the Oregon Community Solar Program. This includes better aligning with requirements with the upcoming Solar for All grant; removing the incentive variance between small and larger projects; increasing incentives amounts; and increasing the cap on total annual dollars a single entity can receive. Later this year, staff will launch a prescriptive ratepayer-funded incentive for community solar projects that achieve at least 50% of subscribers with low-incomes. Energy Trust will eventually use Solar for All funds for this incentive. The council asked for written documentation of these updates (Angela Crowley-Koch).

Next, staff gave an update on the new Battery for Businesses incentive that launched July 1 for commercial entities including agricultural businesses, industrial businesses, public entities, tribes, nonprofits and affordable multifamily housing. Energy Trust has also expanded eligible uses of project development assistance to include energy resilience projects, including microgrid developments for public, tribal and private customers that provide community benefit. Lastly, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently announced that Oregon Department of Energy and subrecipients Bonneville Environmental Foundation and Energy Trust will receive a 5-year Solar for All grant award of \$86 million to increase residential solar to income qualified Oregonians.

### *Discussion*

The council asked if staff would send any signals to the market in advance of receiving funding (Joe Abraham). Community solar development assistance funding is currently available, and staff is starting a development process and community engagement for the prescriptive community solar assistance. The council recommended specifying community solar development assistance is only for community solar projects. PGE is releasing a Community Benefits Renewable Energy request for proposals for small-scale renewable energy projects that integrate community benefits, so there is concern the two initiatives might be confused in the market. These projects are not net-metered but cannot be community solar projects. The council offered to further engage to market all resources available for similar projects (Stasia Brownell).

The council asked if Solar for All is available to all electricity customers or simply those of the private utilities (Josh Peterson). It is available to all income-qualified customers. The council asked how much of the Community Solar Program's reported generation capacity is left, if Energy Trust has a goal to incent a portion of the remaining capacity and if the adder for low-income projects could be used for projects pre-certified or not pre-certified (Jaimes Valdez). Staff replied there has only been one additional pre-certified project not included in the report. Staff noted development assistance can be used for pre-certified or non-pre-certified projects and clarified the rest of the capacity is for low-income or community-based organization projects.

### *Next steps*

Staff will connect with council members to discuss information sharing of community benefit-integrated renewable energy projects.

## **2. Consumer protection for solar customers**

### *Topic summary*

Staff presented Energy Trust's historical, current and future approaches to consumer protection. Energy Trust's Trade Ally Network of contractors can utilize solar incentives, marketing tools and business development funds. To be a trade ally, contractors must adhere to installation requirements that can be verified remotely and on site; however, unlike in the past, only specific types of projects are verified.

The largest area of concern for consumer protection is in solar sales and financing. There are false claims of solar financing opportunities seen on social media where Energy Trust does not have a strong influence. Energy Trust prevents false claims within the network and works with the Oregon Construction Contractors Board. Energy Trust's public relations approach is to educate the public on scams. Work will be done to incorporate financing recommendations from Inclusive Prosperity Capital and a business practice code of conduct into the Solar + Storage Program Guide. Staff is also exploring how to support solar financing to combat expensive

dealer fees, which are not always disclosed to the consumer. Energy Trust plans to launch a program that connects customers and trade allies with affordable and transparent loans with additional consumer protection.

#### *Discussion*

The council stated PGE has the capacity to track social media scams, especially those that use PGE's name, offering to provide information to Energy Trust (Stasia Brownell). The council noted the prevalence of door-to-door sales practices and their success with messaging around utility rate increases and policy threats to net metering; it recommended communicating red flags to the market (Jaimes Valdez). Staff currently works with trade allies on transparent messaging. The challenge is safeguarding against those outside the network.

The council stated there is a legal disagreement if dealer fees are required to be disclosed, making alternative financing options important. In addition to sales standards, Solar Energy Industries Association released installation standards. Lastly, Oregon Solar and Storage Industries Association plans to work with Energy Trust and the Oregon Department of Energy on consumer protection (Angela Crowley-Koch). The council asked if solar financing would evolve the same way as energy efficiency financing, with the ability to pay loans via the utility bill, or how it might diverge (Jake Wise). The primary objective is to work through existing lenders and leverage Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund capital, rather than on-bill financing. There is also interest in looking into tools that leverage loan loss reserves. Members asked if the loans would be secured or unsecured (Jaimes Valdez). Solar loans are unsecured, although Energy Trust has an advisor it will work with.

#### *Next steps*

Staff at Energy Trust and PGE will connect to information sharing and distribute the blog post on solar scams: <https://blog.energytrust.org/how-to-avoid-solar-scams-that-overpromise-underdeliver/?category=our-news>.

### **3. Multi-year planning**

#### *Topic summary*

Energy Trust Executive Director Michael Colgrove gave an update on Energy Trust's transition to multi-year planning, covering the context, process design and savings assessment. The plan process design involves creating process documentation, an outline of information and data needs and a stakeholder engagement plan. The plan process will begin in January by setting savings and generation targets, developing the plan elements, engaging stakeholders including the council and moving to a six-quarter rolling forecast. A draft will be written combining the elements, which will be open for public comment in August 2025. Staff will finalize revisions with the final proposed plan being presented to the board for adoption in December 2025.

This year, the focus has been on the multiyear savings assessment to brainstorm strategies to achieve accelerated efficiency savings targets and setting longer term savings and generation targets. Project outcomes include a list of strategies by sector with associated data points and a rough draft of savings estimates by fuel. Starting this August, the renewable energy sector will develop five-year strategies, tactics and measures for generation and storage targets. This will include engagement with PGE and Pacific Power.

#### *Discussion*

None.

#### *Next steps*

None.

**4. Public comment**

There were no public comments.

**5. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:54 p.m.