

Renewable Energy Advisory Council Meeting Notes

November 21, 2024

Attending from the council:

Alan Beane, Geograde Constructors
Alexia Kelly, High Tide Foundation and
Craft3
Angela Crowley-Koch, Oregon Solar +
Storage Industries Association

Joe Abraham, Oregon Public Utility
Commission
Josh Peterson, Solar Monitoring Lab,
University of Oregon
Ryan Harvey, Pacific Power
Stasia Brownell, Portland General Electric

Attending from Energy Trust:

Abi Sloan
Akanksha Rawal
Alicia Li
Alina Lambert
Amber Cole
Bayo Ware
Betsy Kauffman
Dave McClelland
Dave Moldal
Eduardo Beltran
Elisa Simko
Elizabeth Fox
Ernie Guerrero
Gemma DiMatteo
Heather McNeill
Jane Hammaker

Jeni Hall
Jess Siegel
Josh Reed
Julie McMorine
Kyle Petrocine
Lori Lull
Matt Getchell
Melanie Bissonnette
Merissa Larson
Renita Lamberth
Shannon Wall
Sue Fletcher
Themba Mutepfa

Others attending:

Eva DeCesaro, Portland General Electric
Jake Wise, Portland General Electric
Kyle Holmes, CLEAResult
Nicole Maticic, Solar Oregon
Nikita Chan, CLEAResult

1. Welcome and announcements

Josh Reed, project manager, convened the online meeting at 1:31 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 introduced several new Energy Trust employees: Shannon Wall, project manager; Ernie Guerrero, equity initiatives manager; and Zach Sippel, senior program manager for Solar for All.

Staff provided an update on solar financing. Energy Trust has signed a contract with Inclusive Prosperity Capital, a nonprofit spinoff of Connecticut Green Bank. It will act as a consultant to help set up financing and help conduct outreach to lenders in the coming months. Energy Trust will work with a platform called Smart-E Loan for solar financing.

Stasia Brownell of Portland General Electric announced PGE's program: Community-Based Renewable Energy, a new pathway for community members to have ownership of renewable energy. The website is live at portlandgeneral.com/CBRE. If you have additional expertise in funding opportunities, guidance or any other helpful experience in renewable energy, fill out a [job form](#) (under Networking Opportunity) and PGE will match your experience to someone seeking your expertise. There is also a list of landowners who are interested in connecting with individuals seeking space for a project.

2. One year of battery incentives

Topic summary

Staff presented Energy Trust's results after more than a year of providing incentives for residential batteries. The residential battery incentive is \$500 per kWh (up to \$6,000 per customer) for both electric utilities. From July 2023 through September 2024, Energy Trust received 383 PGE service area standard applications (106 income-qualified applications) with 160 projects receiving incentives totaling \$745,255 (30 income-qualified projects totaling \$316,300). In Pacific Power service area, Energy Trust received 201 standard applications (103 income-qualified applications) with 104 projects receiving incentives totaling \$369,065 (54 income-qualified projects totaling \$511,685). Energy Trust launched a non-residential customer incentive in July 2024 of \$500/kWh and up to \$15,000 per customer. Since launching, 18 applications have been submitted and \$90,000 incentive dollars have been reserved.

Staff found supporting trade allies with solar and battery development assists in increasing battery adoption. In April, staff launched Battery Storage Development Assistance funding up to \$5,000 that can be paired with Solar Development Assistance funding for up to \$7,500 to support early feasibility studies for eligible participants.

In 2025, Energy Trust will explore a community resilience offer for public, tribal and private customers. Staff is planning for Solar for All and looking to fund multifamily, single-family solar + storage and community solar projects). Other opportunities involve a financing offer for residential customers. A market summary report will be available to contractors in 2025 to provide market intelligence on solar and storage systems.

Discussion

The council asked to clarify the 45% of trade allies offering storage (Angela Crowley-Koch). Staff confirmed 45% refers to solar trade allies, not all trade allies, which includes those that are a part of other programs (e.g., lighting installation). Trade allies included in this data are contractors who have submitted or are applying for the battery incentive from Energy Trust.

Staff discussed the complexities of storage feasibility design. Customers may not know their needs for a storage system. It can be expensive and time-consuming for contractors to provide multiple scenarios of different systems to the customer, especially if the solar system was installed by a different contractor. Staff asked Angela Crowley-Koch how trade allies see battery storage installations as part of their future business model and if there is a demand for training. She has not heard of an increased desire for training, which could be a result of OSSIA trainings. Trade allies are seeing an increase in demand for storage and Energy Trust, PGE and Pacific Power incentive programs are helping move that along.

Staff discussed the typical final price for the customer after Energy Trust and utility incentives. The cost is still high, but it varies; solar is still a big upfront cost for people with low and moderate incomes. In Solarize campaigns, costs were minimal due to Energy Trust and PGE incentives. The council asked if an individual battery costs \$5,000, what the other associated costs were (Josh Peterson). Staff responded that the total cost for a storage add-on is around \$24,000 and likely includes labor and any electrical upgrades.

The council asked what is the goal for the storage system to cover (Josh Peterson). The solar incentive only has to offer resilience to the home and that could mean anything for that customer. Energy Trust is not collecting data on what appliances or customer motivations. The battery only has to provide some sort of backup if the grid goes down and it has to be paired with qualifying solar that meets Energy Trust's guidelines. Once the market summary report is published, staff will standardize our comparison of the system sizes by looking at the \$/kWh and set the incentive design by looking at the market and seeing what is available. The incentive cap is set at about one Tesla Powerwall, which is 13 kW. In the market, we are seeing customers installing two or three Tesla batteries.

Next steps

None.

3. 2025 renewable energy budget

Topic summary

Staff provided information about the renewable energy budget and plans for 2025. The budget comment period has closed, and the board of directors will review the final version of the 2025 budget on December 13. This is the last year Energy Trust is doing a one-year budget, as the organization is moving into multi-year planning. Renewables is budgeting for two new hydro projects coming online in 2025. Funding for custom renewable energy is still available. For solar and storage, the budget increased 5% from 2024; generation is expected to increase 57% due to an extension of residential solar incentives. Next year, Energy Trust will have \$4.6 million for battery storage; 55% is allocated for income-qualified and equity-focused projects. To continue to help customers, Energy Trust will work with local banks and credit unions to launch a financing offer for customers with about \$100,000 for a loan loss reserve to support a \$12 million market of customer-friendly solar and storage loans.

Discussion

The council said it supports the idea of setting up a loan loss reserve and moving into financing to complete the full package of a climate debt product (Alexia Kelly). The council asked how much money Energy Trust is bringing in and how much of that money is being allocated toward programs (Alexia Kelly). Staff responded the budget for renewable incentives is \$15 million and the total budget is about \$25 million. The incentive budget is higher than what we have received in the past due to increased utility rates and using reserves from previous years' underspending.

Next steps

None.

4. Multiyear planning update

Topic summary

Staff presented an update on Energy Trust's transition to a multiyear plan for 2026-2030, outlining next year's plan development timeline and reviewing the plan's key elements.

Energy Trust is shifting to multiyear planning to provide a longer runway to have a greater impact and to allow staff to spend more time implementing programs, rather than working on annual budgeting. Forecasting of spending will be done on a rolling 18-month basis. From January to June of 2025, all main elements of the multiyear plan will be developed. In August, Energy Trust will put a draft plan out for public comment through mid-September. There will be a Joint Advisory Council meeting on August 7 to gather feedback. In the fall, Energy Trust will incorporate the public input into the multiyear plan and present the final version to the board in December 2025.

Discussion

The council asked if the multiyear plan is really a five-year plan or an 18-month plan (Josh Peterson). The council wants to ensure Energy Trust has a five-year plan but that it is dynamic for changes. Staff confirmed Energy Trust aims to craft the multiyear plan at just the right level so that year-to-year fluctuations or market changes don't alter the five-year strategies. The 18-month forecast will help Energy Trust compare where we are to where we thought we would be. This will help staff see progress towards five-year targets and give insight into where we need to course correct. There will be plan management mechanisms in place to help us stay on track, including a way to reopen and review the plan if needed.

Next steps

Staff will invite the council to stakeholder workshops to be held in mid-February through mid-March to give the council an opportunity to provide input on the plan's activities and strategies.

5. Public comment

The council asked for Energy Trust's perspectives on the new federal administration concerning funding Energy Trust has received (Stasia Brownell). Staff does not believe there will be a change in staffing and programs. Most of Energy Trust's funding comes from Oregon utility ratepayers, but staff is monitoring federal policies and comments closely. Federal funds for Solar for All have been obligated, which is a legal contract. There may be some targeted repeal of some specific provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act. Staff is watching the investment tax credit and how that might affect projects we work on.

The council also asked about the impact of increased tariffs on Energy Trust's programs (Stasia Brownell). Staff agreed this could increase the cost of the projects we fund, and Energy Trust might have to increase incentives to make up for the higher cost. It is possible there would be an increase in demand before policy changes or anticipated market changes. Solar trade allies who have relationships with local distributors have better access to supplies but could still see an increase in cost.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:59 pm. The next meeting is on January 23, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.