

Energy Commission Notes
Dec 11, 2012

Members Present: Chris Vials, Grace Adams. Guests: James Finger, Kate Donnelly, Patrice (N2N), Andy Bauer (Portland, CT)

REPORTS FROM N2N (Kate)

Tabling at the Willy Coop this Saturday from 9 to 4pm. Kate will provide all the literature/info. There is also a free home energy basics workshop on Jan 8 @ 10am at ECSU; Kate needs help flyering

DISCUSSION WITH ANDY BAUER

Bauer offered the following tips about applying for the Solarize CT program (and offered the following info about the program itself):

Application. You need to have grassroots leadership – if you have a good grassroots presence in town, chances of success go up. What is program looking for among applicants? The **best pitch is to demonstrate how well you can communicate solarize to your community**. Listing your N2N contacts is a great place to start.

If you have contacts with press, use them to kick off your solarize endeavor. Before you submit your application, try to get more “solar ambassadors” on board.

Larger communities are not automatically at an advantage; grass roots presence is more important

Once the program is in place, the goal is to get people to sign up for a **free solar visit**. Solar visit takes an hour. They measure roof and look at your utility bills.

In Portland, one of their contacts used a GISS system to identify east/west facing roofs in town. They then sent postcards out to people who have southern facing roofs

Everyone wants solar – the goal is to get them to progress in what they want. Educating people on their energy costs over 10 years is key task. Questions need to be addressed like: what am I going to pay over 20 years by going solar? What happens if I sell my house? (Andy tells people that for every \$1000 you spend on solar, you get back \$1500 when you sell your house)

To promote the program in Portland, he’s spoken at bodies like the Lion’s Club, the Boy Scouts, the Masons, and at retirement communities.

Costs for solar users? There are no interest loans available to cover the cost of what you will be reimbursed later by the federal government. CEFIA subsidies are instant (you don’t have to wait for reimbursement). Key for a place like Windham is the solar lease. On a solar lease, the maintenance of the panels is taken care of, and the lease is transferrable.

On average, it costs \$5000 per kw installed (before CEFIA and Fed incentives); the more kws you have installed, the cheaper it gets for everyone. Kate had 4.5kw system for her house, and she has 3 children.

CEFIA said it would have its lease program in place by March. In this program, you pay no money down at all for solar installation. You then get billed monthly until the system is paid off (the amount you pay per month is still less than what you would pay CL&P)

Key Conditions for House. You must have a roof in good condition. A southern facing roof is optimal. The pitch of your roof and its shadiness are other factors.

Environmental Concerns. Andy was asked if we're really helping the environment by going solar given that solar users still feed into an overproducing grid. He said that the more people who go solar, the more it brings down the peak (used to calculate the rate of overproduction). Energy companies like CL&P have shown unease over the increasing number of solar users.

Size of Portland relative to Windham. 8500 people in Portland, and they have 3500 meters; most houses are less than 50-60 years old

Installing a solar system for half of your home's energy use? Contractors don't make money installing 2 kw systems; they prefer something like 10 kws. If installation is less than a 4 kw system, they kinda lose money. That said, they do install 2.5 systems at times. When you interview installers, you can negotiate prices.

Technology Improvement. We probably won't have solar incentives in 10 years as it becomes a more viable commercial product. So if you wait, your overall price won't really change, and you'll have missed out on more years of saving money.

Future Andy Help. Andy will come back if we get the application to help us negotiate with installer. James Finger will consult with Andy about application

THE TOWN

Town Manager knows about all this. We don't require approval from Town Council for a solarize CT application because it doesn't require spending any money.

TASKS

Application is due on the 21st.

James will draft bulk of application.

Kate will work on the outreach section.

Chris will look at old proposal and suggest what to change (must do in the next few days)

NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, JANUARY 8 @ 5:00pm