

POSITION STATEMENT FORM

(Completed form to be provided to the Legislative Committee)

GENERAL SUBJECT AREA -- TITLE OF PROPOSAL:

COMMUNITY NET METERING

PROPOSAL:

Support legislation creating a “community customer” net metering definition. A community customer would be a net metered generation facility sited on a single location with multiple owners, with all the owners receiving a share of the net metering credits. The legislation should demonstrate a positive cost benefit associated with residential net energy metering (NEM). The avoided costs associated with NEM should be sufficient to offset the utilities’ lost revenues and incremental net energy metering program administration and customer costs.

SOURCE:

Environmental Quality Advisory Council, September, 2013

BACKGROUND:

Renewable energy offers great promise for job growth and economic opportunity in Fairfax County, and can help the county reach its Cool County goals. While the Board of Supervisors supported expansion of renewable energy in the last legislative session by endorsing the Power Purchase Agreement, legislation which incentivized renewable energy by reducing upfront costs, additional legislation is necessary to expand the availability of renewable energy by allowing more owners. Other benefits to expanding local generation include less transmission loss, less burden on the grid, provision of peak energy, and less need for new generation.

Additional background information:

Renewable energy is currently not available to many industrial, commercial or residential customers, including tenants of rental properties and those with properties that are shaded or otherwise not suitable for solar installations. In fact, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory estimates that three quarters of residential buildings in America do not have access to solar.

Community net metering was considered in the 2013 legislative session as part of HB1695, introduced by Delegate Randy Minchew (R-Leesburg). The bill as enacted did not include community net metering, but it did include aggregate net metering, which is similar in concept, albeit with restrictions. In aggregate net metering, energy from a single renewable energy installation can be attributed to more than one meter (e.g., solar panels on a barn can also serve a farmhouse on the same property); however, the meters must serve the same customer and the properties involved must be contiguous.

Community net metering will allow a group of residential, commercial, industrial, and other customers to establish a “community customer” to act collectively to install a renewable energy facility sited on a single location with multiple owners. The multiple owners may develop a system that provides that all the generation will be credited to the owners to offset a portion of their electricity bills.

RECOMMENDATION:

(Do not fill out-- This will be indicated by the Legislative Director and County Executive)

POSSIBLE SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION BY ORGANIZATIONS:

(List any organizations or groups, if any, which might be in favor of or against the proposed position)

Delegate Minchew has reiterated his interest in passing a community net metering bill. Other local governments are interested in this legislation, as is the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Although we are not aware of any formal positions of support from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, in the Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee’s Proposed 2013-2016 Action Plan, jurisdictions are encouraged to “help support, where appropriate, state and federal legislation that reduces barriers to renewable energy. . .” This legislation is also a high priority for environmental groups including the Virginia Conservation Network (a coalition of 150 organizations), the Sierra Club, and the Piedmont Environmental Council.

This provision would help expand participation to achieve net metering’s potential, including reducing both peak demand and energy purchases from PJM.

STAFF CONTACT PERSON(S):

(Provide name and phone number of County staff person(s) best able to provide any additional research or necessary information)

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