

Boxborough Energy Committee December 2014 Minutes

Date/Location: Wednesday, December 10, 2014, Town Hall

Attending: Members: Margo Webber, Richard Garrison

BOS Representative: Vince Amoroso

Guests: Arnie Epstein

Members Absent: Santiago Tapia-Perez, Abby Reip, Larry Grossman, Francie Nolde, Kesahva Srivastava

Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 14, 2014, Town Hall.

Minutes

General business

- There were only two members present so no minutes were approved.

Main Discussion

Arnie Epstein, the Stow Solar Coach, was a guest and made a presentation on their experience running a solarize program in the Town of Stow. Below is a summary of Arnie's presentation.

Both Stow and Boxborough are similar sized Towns, have a municipal light plant (MLP) and similar demographics. Neither Town can participate in the Solarize program because the MLP does not donate money to the RET. MLP's also don't offer rebates or special treatment. The MLP will require a homeowner to outright purchase a solar system and not allow a power purchase agreement (PPA). The Hudson Light MLP did not offer Stow residents net metering, but rather allowed residents with solar to pay the wholesale electric price. Residents whose solar system was determined to get 80% optimal capability (i.e. no shade from trees), were able to get a small State Rebate.

The Town of Stow Solarize program had five tiers, Tier 1 : 1-25kw, Tier 2 : 25-50 kw, Tier 3: 50-100 kw, Tier 4: 100-200 kw and Tier 5: >200 kw. Stow reached the Tier 5 level, with most residents signing up in the last two weeks. Everyone who signed up for the program got the same price based off the Tier level achieved, regardless of when they signed up. Some systems had add on's, i.e. ground mounts or hot water, that added expenses to the Tier 5 rate.

The RFP to select the solar firm must include language that will make sure the Town is not subject to any legal action. The procedure the Town of Stow took was: provide Solar forums, send out an RFP to installers allowing 6 weeks for quotes, spent 6 weeks reviewing proposals (they had 12) and then choose installer. There were a number of variables to consider when choosing an installer. Stow chose an installer that would help with the marketing and offered a municipal PV installation if a set amount was sold.

Once an installer was chosen, Stow did more community outreach meetings. These were time consuming and some worked well and some did not. They did 3 solar forums, 6 open houses, 2 table sessions at ACE Hardware, 4 coffee's, Electronic newsletters, a banner, 40 signs and Stow TV coverage.

Lessons learned were to keep working on outreach, have a finite end date for signing up to avoid Volunteer burnout and enlist support from all Town agencies. Finally, the majority of the people sign up in the last two weeks.