



BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BEEAC)

Draft Webinar Meeting Summary: June 16, 2022

BEEAC Members in Attendance:

- Dawn Ashbacher, Frederick County (Chair)
- Marc Aveni, Loudoun County, VA (Vice Co-Chair)
- Amanda Campbell, City of Rockville
- Ellen Eggerton, City of Alexandria
- Kevin Milsted, Prince William County
- William Marsh, Fairfax County Government
- Emily Curley, Montgomery County Department of the Environment
- Stan Edwards, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection
- Wendell Rawlings, Constellation Energy
- Giulia Manno, Prince William County
- Mati Bazurto, City of Bowie
- Helen Reinecke-Wilt, Arlington County
- Najib Salehi, Loudon County
- Shawn O'Neil, Energy Manager Fairfax Water
- Debra Maes, Fairfax County Public Schools
- Sarah Campbell, City of Rockville

COG Staff:

- Leah Boggs, COG DEP
- Maia Davis, COG DEP
- Jeff King, COG DEP
- Tim Masters, COG DEP
- Madison Battle, COG DEP Intern



1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Dawn Ashbacher, Frederick County (BEEAC Chair)

Chair Dawn Ashbacher called the meeting to order. Leah Boggs (COG staff) went over the virtual meeting guidelines. The Chair also introduced the co-vice chairs Marc Aveni and Kendra Wiley.

2. OVERVIEW OF LARGE_SCALE SOLAR AND SOLAR@SCALE GUIDEBOOK

David Money, American Planning Association

The Solar@Scale Guidebook was developed in partnership with the American Planning Association and ICMA to assist and improve local governments in large-scale solar development. They also provide education and training to build local capacity to respond to large-scale solar development opportunities and challenges.

The foundational characteristics of large-scale solar is the technology, the relationship to the grid, and the relationship to the site. The capacity for large-scale solar projects can vary in range regarding the size of the site. For example, if the site is 20-50 acres, the power for solar is about 5 MW. If the site is 10-20 acres, the capacity is about 2 MW. If the site is 5-10 acres, the total is about 1 MW. The distinguishing factor between small-scale and large-scale solar energy systems are the size of the site area and the rated capacity. A small solar energy system is less than 1 acre, and the total capacity is less than 250 kW. A large-scale solar energy system is greater than or equal to 1 acre, and the capacity is greater than or equal to 250 kW. The difference between community-scale and utility-scale solar is the site area. The site area for community-scale solar is between 1-20 acres and the rated power is between 250 kW-5 MW. The site area for utility-scale solar is greater than 20 acres and the rated capacity is greater than 5 MW.

Community solar refers to shared solar projects that allow community members to purchase ownership shares or subscriptions and receive credit on electricity bills for the power produced. The potential community benefits of community solar are local economic development, direct payments to local governments, expanded access to clean energy, and ecological improvements. Other possible uses are more economical such as lease payments to landowners, construction jobs, construction multiplier effects, workforce development, and brownfield/gray field redevelopment. Along with the benefits comes the project features, such as the developer/operator can lease the land for solar projects. The developer can commit to hiring/training local workers. Projects can be sited near suitable temporary housing and services, and tasks can be sited on vacant or underutilized previously developed land. Finally, there are potential benefits to direct payments to local governments or community members. Some examples are property taxes, sales or use taxes, and host community or neighboring property payments.

Expanded access to clean energy has benefits such as increased local utility-supplied power obtained from clean, renewable energy sources. In addition, local utility customers can directly purchase clean, renewable power and lower electricity bills for individual customers. The benefits of ecological improvements are improved soil quality, which can establish new native groundcover. Another advantage is improved water quality which can also develop new native groundcover, which can minimize tree removal and protect or enhance riparian or wetland buffers. The last benefit is improved crop yields which can establish new pollinator-friendly groundcover.

The potential tradeoffs for large-scale solar development are:

- Changes to agriculture.
- Effects on wildlands and habitats.
- Effects on historical or cultural sites.
- Change to existing views.

Agricultural lands are often attractive to solar developers. However, large-scale solar development can disturb wildlands and habitats. It can also damage cultural or historic resources, raising security concerns. Also, large-scale solar can affect views from neighboring properties and roads. This can affect those who live on adjacent properties. Property owners often ask about how solar development can affect property value. Some studies show positive and negative effects, but the negative findings are minimal.

Comprehensive plan updates, development regulations, discretionary approval processes, and partnerships can capture the benefits and minimize trade-offs. Complete plan updates provide policy support for land-use development regulations and decisions and public investments. It also should establish the policy basis for any benefit-capture strategy or method. Development regulations and zoning standards can be used to steer solar projects. Zoning standards can incentivize specific project types or features that confer local benefits. Such as previously developed sites, solar power production with agricultural activities shared solar projects that allow community members to purchase shares or subscriptions, and projects that establish native, a pollinator-friendly groundcover that can minimize tree removal. Many large-scale solar projects go through a discretionary approval process. Local officials can condition project approvals on the provision of certain local benefits. In addition, local officials can negotiate development agreements that confer local benefits that offset project impacts. Local officials can also encourage negotiations between community groups and developers to secure additional benefits in exchange for a “social license” to operate.

Local governments can require specific community benefits if they host a solar project on local government lands, such as brownfield redevelopment, native, pollinator-friendly groundcover, and other features.

3. THE ENERGY EQUITY PROJECT: A FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING EQUITY ACROSS ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CLEAN ENERGY PROGRAMS

(Linkages: : [2030 Climate and Energy Action Plan Equity and Clean Electricity Actions](#) and [Metropolitan Washington Planning Framework for 2030 and Equity Emphasis Areas](#))

Justin Schott, Urban Energy Justice Lab, University of Michigan School for Environment & Sustainability

The Energy Equity Lab team at the University of Michigan has been developing the framework for 15 months. To apply the framework, the team looked at how other programs and initiatives improved equity within their programs and investments, as well as looked for examples of a step-by-step guide to help people adopt more equitable practices. Although what the team initially envisioned as being able to produce a single score for energy equity, they also wanted to replicate the map from the (Low-Income Energy Affordability Data) LEAD Tool in which you could click on the census tract and get an energy equity score.

Equity measurement applications are usually seen in utility investments, low-income assistance programs, decarbonization planning, climate resilience, equity mandates, infrastructure investments, affordable housing, COVID recovery, etc. The vision for their work is not only to create a framework for

measuring equity but using the framework to drive benefits to bypass lower-income and frontline environmental justice communities. This framework can help correct the energy system's history of being unjust.

The Energy Equity Team is working with the four pillars of energy justice: recognition, procedural, distributional, and restorative. The recognition pillar refers to vulnerable populations. The procedural element looks at people's power to make changes and influence planning, decision making, and implementation. The distributional pillar looks at the benefits and burdens, and who's the recipient of those benefits. An example would be energy benefits, whether access to clean energy jobs, climate resilience, or health improvements. The restored pillar looks at inequities and solutions to discontinue those inequities.

For metrics, the team looked at sample metrics, best practices and held sessions with communities. Workgroups were formed and are representative of community organizations and practitioners. The workgroup members are black, indigenous, or other people of color, charged with describing what makes an equitable program, specifically from the recognition, distributional, and procedural perspective.

The Energy Equity Project (EEP) created the framework by looking at 148 potential metrics. The metrics were rated by each workgroup member and prioritized based on feedback. National datasets available at the census tract level were used to find metrics. Through this exercise the EEP team found there were many data gaps around distributional justice, such as utility shut offs. To address this, the Energy Justice Lab collected national data over three months during the winter. The data showed disconnection rates by race. Another example is energy efficiency and clean energy programs. The EEP's workgroup looked at how long it would take to provide energy efficiency and clean energy programs to all eligible persons. For example, Minnesota calculated that it would take 291 years to weatherize all eligible homes in Minnesota. Another example is from CalEnviroScreen about disparities by race. People of color almost entirely inhabit the most polluted or impacted neighborhoods; the least impacted areas are majority white.

The [White House Justice 40 Initiative](#) builds on work that has been done by states originally. The initiative aims to provide 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments in seven critical areas to disadvantaged communities. The [NY Renew](#) coalition says that 40% of all the energy and climate benefits should go to the 29% of the population in disadvantaged communities. For example, about 18 billion dollars were invested in solar over the decade, and the rich are capturing many of the tax credits while more than half of people are only getting 10% of those tax credits.

4. UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

COG Staff

Maia Davis (COG Staff)

COG is working on releasing the local jurisdictions' draft greenhouse gas inventories for 2020. COG is allowing about a month for local jurisdictions to review and provide feedback for those greenhouse gas inventories, as well as providing during that month one-on-one meetings to discuss individual inventories.

Leah Boggs (COG Staff)

All jurisdictions received an email with an invitation to join a coalition for electric vehicle infrastructure by COG's executive director Chuck Bean on June 2nd. The deadline for joining the coalition is July 15th. This effort will be a focus at the COG Board retreat late July. One focus at the retreat will be on regional infrastructure development. The board is looking to attract additional local funding for this effort, Rockville and Prince George's County have already dedicated some funding. The project is under

development to identify and develop the desired outcomes and goals of this coalition. One of the desired outcomes is to enhance the regions collective effort to better position the region to compete for these federal infrastructure dollars, which has the work group looking at funding contributions.

The 2022 Climate and Energy Leadership Awards are open and accepting applications for government, NGO, and educational institutions. The deadline is June 30th.

5. 2022 MEETING SCHEDULE AND ADJOURNMENT

Dawn Ashbacher, Chair

Chair Dawn Ashbacher adjourned the meeting. The next BEEAC meeting is September 15th. CEEPC's next meeting is July 27th.

All meeting materials including speaker presentations can be found on the MWCOG website or by clicking the link below –

<https://www.mwcog.org/events/2022/6/16/built-environment-energy-advisory-committee/>

Reasonable accommodations are provided upon request, including alternative formats of meeting materials. For more information, visit: www.mwcog.org/accommodations or call (202) 962-3300 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD)