

Community Shared Solar Brookline Working Group

Minutes

1/13/2016, 6:00 pm, Denny Room, Public Health Building

Blake Cady, Werner Lohe, David Lowe, Dave Pantalone, Jack Spence, Willy Osborn, Morley Kimelman (Green Cambridge), Quinton Zondervan (President, Green Cambridge), Jocelyn Tager (founder, NeighborhoodSolar.org)

Next Meeting: February 10 (2nd Wednesday), 6:00 - 7:30 pm,
Denny Room, Public Health Building, 11 Pierce Street)

Tasks:

- Consumer Questions or FAQ for Climate Week (first draft; see below) - Willy
- Progress Report for Climate Week (first draft; see below) - Werner
- Catalogue of CSS Options for Climate Week (first draft; see below) - Werner

Updates

Jocelyn Taylor described her work with NeighborhoodSolar.org. She began this shared purchasing project herself, working with SunBug Solar. In three months in Watertown, she signed up eleven households to purchase solar on their homes at a 20% discount. In a second round, 26 households were signed up. She and Quinton Zondervan hope to continue the work in Cambridge, and the group discussed including Brookline in a cooperative effort. No immediate commitment could be made since this would not be a community shared solar project, but rather a somewhat related individual solar initiative, which would be under the auspices of Climate Action Brookline.

Quinton also described an initiative by the city of Cambridge to local a large solar site outside of Cambridge to provide all of the city's municipal electricity, which might create an opportunity to do community shared solar on municipal roofs. Werner mentioned that Tommy Vitolo had suggested a somewhat similar "civil investment" model for Brookline. Assuming that the Town will develop solar itself on the best municipal sites, as it is now doing on Single Tree Hill and at the Skyline Park DPW site, more marginal municipal roofs might be developed as community shared solar with residents accepting lower returns in order to model civic commitment to solar.

Brookline Community Shared Solar (CSS)

Werner noted out that after meeting for about nine months, we are approaching a juncture in terms of the mission of this working group. We will have completed a major phase of work when we report to the public at Climate Week at the end of March, and then need to consider the future. He noted that we remain hopeful about the Carlisle site for a major, resident owned CSS development, and while he will continue to pursue the possible use of the roof of the new Audi building, otherwise, we have exhausted site possibilities. Willy noted that the marketplace has become even more complex, with quite a few big players involved, so that our goals has become a "moving target." Uncertainty about needed state legislative action on net metering further complicates things. Werner suggested that we may enter a quiescent phase beginning in April; Willy pointed out, and the group agreed, that there is no need to make any plans in this regard until March.

CSS at Brookline Climate Week

David Pantalone described tentative plans for Climate Week. CSS will be part of an event on the evening of Wednesday, March 30. It will take place in a location still to be determined, and will consist of a number of presentations, followed by discussions in audience break-out groups. There will be three major topics, with sub-topics. There may only be three speakers—one for each of the three major topics—or there may be more:

Gas Leaks in Brookline (Mothers Out Front)

School Building Efficiency

Where Do We Get Our Electricity?

Municipal Aggregation (informational presentation
on initiative recently passed by Town Meeting)

MassEnergy's New England Wind program

CSS

After a great deal of discussion, the group agreed to pursue the following activities for the March 30 Climate Week CSS presentation:

1. Progress Report - Our presentation during the first part of the Climate Week event will be largely a progress report on our work to date. We will prepare a short, written report. We may or may not decide to distribute this publicly at the event or later, but even if not distributed, it will be valuable preparation for the oral presentation.

2. Questions or FAQ - We will distribute a list of questions or an FAQ at the Climate week event, or both. At a minimum, we will distribute a list of questions that potential purchasers of “retail” CSS should ask vendors to help them decide which option to choose.

3. Catalogue of CSS Options - We will distribute a catalogue or list of CSS options (with contact information) at the Climate Week event. Particularly with regard to retail options, we will try to make it as comprehensive as possible, though we will not make recommendations with regard to individual vendors.

4. We will invite CSS vendors to participate at the March 30 Climate Week event.

5. We will encourage each CSS vendors to ask a resident of Brookline who has purchased or participated in its option (that is, a consumer) to attend the event in order to be available to answer questions from members of the public one on one.

CSS Website

Since our focus for the next two months needs to be on Climate Week, the group decided not to plan any work on our website.

Our next meeting will be on 2nd Wednesday of February, February 10th, from 6:00 – 7:30 PM in the Denny Room, Public Health Building, 11 Pierce Street.