



Public Service Commission <psc@utah.gov>

Comments on Docket 13-035-184

Public Service Commission

Martin Cuma <m.cuma@utah.edu>

Wed, Apr 9, 2014 at 10:04 AM

Reply-To: m.cuma@utah.edu

To: psc@utah.gov

I write to express my strong support for Utah rooftop solar customers, and my opposition to Rocky Mountain Power's proposed fee increase of \$4.25 per month targeting these customers. Utah's solar owners are making critical investments in clean energy at a time when Rocky Mountain Power is not.

I am one of those Utahns who have put solar panels on their roof a year ago. It was not an easy decision, and not totally financially wise one as well. My estimated pay back for the solar installation was about 15 years, with the lifetime of the panels being 25 years. This is after all the state and federal tax incentives were subtracted and with a fairly low system cost that I got from a local solar installer (\$3.88 per Watt, before incentives, while a relative in California was recently quoted about \$6 per Watt).

Now, after a year in service, my payback will probably be even longer than I anticipated. The reason is that RPM is already charging a \$2/month flat charge for "energy use" when we are net meter positive (= give RMP back more than consume). This happens about 5 months in the year, which means an extra \$10/year charge. It may not be much but with our average electricity usage about 400 kWh/month \$2 at ca. 8 cents/kWh translates to about 25 kWh which is 5% of our monthly usage. So, that right there extends our pay back by about a year.

If RMP does what they want and add the \$4.25 per month charge, that'll in our case effectively make the payback about 20 years. I am asking you - would there be anyone with sound financial knowledge investing in something that pays back in 20 years? If RMP has its will, only the enthusiasts will be putting rooftop solar on, not the average homeowner. And it's the average home owner who needs to be encouraged to divest from polluting energy sources.

I have another argument for why the solar rooftop owners should be encouraged. It saves RMP money. The panels produce most when it's the hottest in the day so RMP does not need as much expensive peak generation capacity. That alone puts the value of solar produced kilowatt higher than the average kilowatt that RMP sells. So, in essence, what we give back to RMP through net metering has higher value than what we buy from RMP at night. It would be very beneficial if the UPSC conducted a study that would put hard numbers behind this argument determining the value that the rooftop solar owners give to RMP, or any other utility in the state.

Sincerely,

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