PublicService Commission <psc@utah.gov>

NEM Docket 14-035-114 Solar NEM Study

1 message

brucehastings@comcast.net <brucehastings@comcast.net> Fri, Feb 6, 2015 at 9:12 PM
To: psc@utah.gov

Utah Public Service Commission
<psc@utah.gov> NEM Docket 14-035-114

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to urge your consideration of all relevant costs and benefits associated with solar net metering as you proceed with the inquiry mandated by Utah's legislature in Senate Bill 208.

A full and fair analytical framework will include all aspects internal to the grid as well as those cost and benefit impacts that have historically been shifted to the general public. Rate payers, tax payers, and all Utah's citizens deserve a comprehensive --not partial-- investigation.

Please schedule technical conferences to examine the within-grid impacts of using net meter solar electricity to offset fossil fuel generated electricity. In addition to Rocky Mountain Power's load research, data should be collected comparing fuel costs, power capacity requirements, transmission and distribution costs, line energy loss, environmental compliance costs, and other data sets that docket interveners deem relevant to the study.

Additional technical conferences should be scheduled to examine the societal health, economic, and environmental impacts of replacing coal and gas with net metered renewable energy as the fuel source for generating electricity. Experts from the medical sciences and public health officials should join economists and environmental scientists to share data and analysis models at these conferences.

Your regulatory body now has a golden opportunity to set the record straight on the pros and cons of moving Rocky Mountain Power's electrical system from carbon combustion to renewable energy, such as that provided by net meter customers. I hope you will seek to maximize the knowledge base this costs-benefits inquiry has the potential to provide.

Below are two other considerations I thought may be relevant.

(1) Perhaps infrastructure and other non-energy related costs should be unbundled from energy costs in power bills. If infrastructure costs are based on energy usage, that may not be the best way to recover those costs. Infrastructure costs should be allocated across all classes of customers in an equitable way. If infrastructure costs are recovered through a surcharge and through energy charges, is it possible that a net metering customer may be paying double when using power from the grid?

(2) Alternative energies are fledgling industries. The upfront costs are substantial when

compared with returns. If the ROI is decreased due to a surcharge, then the payback period approaches the expected lifetime of solar panels, which would be a huge disincentive. Disincentives for any alternative energy, especially at a time when fossil fuel costs (oil and natural gas) are decreasing, reduces demand which affects cost reductions and incentives for developing alternative energy innovations.

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Thank you for seriously considering my public comment.

Sincerely,
Bruce Hastings