

To: Debra A. Howland
Executive Director of the NH PUC

From: Dr. Michael D. Prange
Member of the Energy Committee for the Town of Shelburne, NH

Re: Public comment on DE 10-212, Modifications to the commercial and industrial solar incentive program.

The Energy Committee for the Town of Shelburne, NH, has been examining the economic feasibility of installing a solar electric array on our town hall roof in order to both reduce electricity costs for the town and to offset our carbon footprint. Our town is fairly evenly split between those who are willing to invest in infrastructure that will reduce our carbon footprint, and those who feel it is either a waste of money or that there are better “non-green” projects for the town to focus on. Blood runs high in both camps over this issue. Since a two-thirds majority is needed at our town meeting in order to fund such a project, we need to appeal to both groups in order to succeed. We do that by proposing it as an approach for reducing the town expenses for electricity. Given the high upfront costs associated with installing a solar-electric array, the payback period is long, making this is a difficult proposition to support.

This is where the NH Solar Incentive Program comes to the rescue. The margins are so tight that this grant, combined with an appropriate bank loan, makes it possible to reduce town electricity expenses starting in year one when compared with our status quo Eversource costs. Without this grant, it will be hard to justify the much longer payback period. This solar project has been a long, uphill battle. I hope you can recognize the importance of this grant in making a solar array possible for Shelburne.

As an aside, I also recommend that you work to restructure the solar REC marketplace to increase pricing by removing the current market distortions. Allowing a fairer valuation of RECs would greatly decrease the payback period for solar projects and lead to a boom in solar deployment and employment.

Michael