

December 11, 2023

Testimony – Net Metering

Good morning, my name is Michelle Paya, thank you for allowing me to speak today.

My husband and I own a small business in Georgia Vt, along with a solar array the provides renewable energy to our small business, our home, and a small business in our local community. In May of 2022, we applied for an amended Certificate of Public Good for an expansion to our current solar array, bringing it to a 500KW system. During this time, we consulted with the Vermont Public Utility Commission (PUC) and were instructed to submit the amended application. As of today, we still have not received an approved CPG, and have been placed on an indefinite stay, with no communication or timeline from the PUC. We are now in our 19th month since submission of our application.

Throughout these 19 months we have provided the PUC site documentation, preferred site permitting from the Town of Georgia, all environmental eligibility requirements, testimony, and many other informational/document requests from the PUC. These requested were on a timeline in which we were held accountable to provide this documentation in this set timeframe, however throughout this process, PUC has never worked under a timeline within their responsibilities to communicate or move forward the application process in a reasonable and expected timeline. Leaving Vermont applicants in the dark and unable to move forward with important projects for our economy and environment.

We are in full agreement that the PUC needs to be mindful and responsible for approving permits that provide good to Vermont communities. We understand that the net metering process is under scrutiny and being evaluated for change. However, these changes should not come on the backs of Vermonters to delay their projects, while the PUC debates what the rules should be. The amendment process is clearly outlined within the PUC's net-metering rule.; however it is not transparent that the PUC has discretion to revisit how to apply the rule. If the new rule you are reviewing allows the PUC to put cases on hold indefinitely so that it can reconsider whether it should have adopted the rule in the first place as it is doing in our case, then why have a rule at all?

Since May of 2022, we have seen significant increases in the cost to construct our expansion, from interest rates, construction and labor rates, and equipment costs. These costs range from 20 to 30% increases. We have equipment that was purchased, sitting in a field degrading in functionality and value each day, with the hope that maybe we will have information soon, on when construction will start.

As a small rural business, we seek ways to diversify our revenue, so longevity is an option, and we may continue to serve and employ Vermonters. We strive to be responsible and seek ways to contribute to saving our environment so the next generation can have the same quality of life we have been fortunate to have. We support the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan by participating in renewable energy and moving towards the goals of 90% renewables by 2050.

We have done our part and are willing to put our resources to work for the State of Vermont in renewable energy creation. When will PUC do their part, and fulfill their obligation in reasonable timelines so we all may get on with what needs to be done? Nineteen months or more for permitting is

a disgrace and the state is failing their citizens. I am asking you to make sure that the new net-metering rule does not allow the PUC to use net-metering applications to create new policy not expressly stated in the rule itself.