



## **Solar Workgroup – February 20, 2018 conference call summary**

A conference call of the Solar Workgroup of Southwest Virginia was held on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018 around updates to the SolSmart program, the Solar VISTA position, updates to the PPA bill, solar site development, and preparing for the Economic Forum and possible Solar Fair at UVa-Wise in May. Call participants included Mark Moormans, Adam Wells, Matt Wasson, Lonzo Lester, Nick Polier, Christine Gyovai, Stan Botts, Brad Kreps, Lou Wallace, and Lydia Graves. Highlights of the call are below, and any questions may be directed to Adam Wells at [adam@appvoices.com](mailto:adam@appvoices.com).

### **Workgroup updates:**

#### **o SolSmart progress**

- What it is: Program supported by Dept. of Energy, National designation program. Partners with NACo. Goal: reduce soft costs and other policy barriers to solar development for counties and localities. Workgroup has set goal to get all 7 counties in SWVA to pursue SolSmart designation as a region, resulting in securing Technical Assistance support from Dept. of Energy via SolSmart Advisor. Result- makes it easy and affordable to install solar in the region.
- Have met with: (Lee, Wise, Dickenson, Russell approved! St. Paul) (Buchanan last month, deliberating) and in Tazewell for the March meeting, Norton. Outreach help is welcomed for Scott County.

#### **o Solar VISTA welcome**

- Have made some interviews but not yet offered the position to anyone. Still time!
- Looking for someone to do community outreach activities surround the work of the SWG.

#### **o SunShot update**

- Solar in Your Community Challenge- SWG was awarded a \$10,000 Technical Assistance Voucher and the group is narrowing the list down of possible contractors to assist the Workgroup.

### **PPA Bill (Power Purchase Agreement)**

- o HB 1252, the PPA bill, was introduced in the house by Delegate Kilgore after meeting with Workgroup members. The bill allows tax-exempt customers to enter into 3rd party purchase agreements. Those groups cannot make use of federal renewable tax incentives and a PPA agreement allows those groups financial access to solar.

- Next steps (Senate support?) Amendments? Clarity on “tax exempt” language. APCo & ODP installed capacity cap for solar that strikes a balance.

- Feedback/concerns on process

Were there any changes on the bill as it was presented to Kilgore or no?

- Changes made include clarification that the bill did not affect Dominion’s existing Pilot Program. Other change is the change from the bill having a sunset date that mirrored the federal ITC for solar to an overall cap.

- What happens after it passes?

- It would create an easier path forward for solar installation at tax-exempt ambassador sites. SWG may ask partners for a couple more phone calls or letters to Sen. Carrico’s office.

- **Roadmap Site Development**

- Legal project development support available from Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC). Questions/Interest?

SELC office in Cville has contributed to SWG in the past. SELC has hired a solar legal expert- Hannah Coman. They have offered to help represent interest of building/site owners as free legal advice. Adam can introduce her to building owners. Solar Workgroup members expressed support for Hannah’s assistance with the Solar Workgroup.

- DA/ARC grants as resource to advance projects [Concept note link for the grant.](#)

Another round of POWER funding is available, with a deadline in May, and plenty of opportunities for involvement. Thinking we’d submit a full implementation grant to aid in the development of roadmap sites. Potential partner of Natural Capital Investment Fund. They have a program specifically aimed at investing in energy projects in regions like SWVA. Ongoing discussion about getting in an application to ARC for implementation money.

### **RFQ thoughts and questions**

The bids on the project would not be very local, and using an RFQ process would help create a fair process to select a developer and give the workgroup a good feel for the best firm in terms of pricing and service.

**Thoughts or questions about that process?** Multiple projects being developed at once as a group in one RFQ. Another benefit is that groups interested in solar won’t be going it alone in the procurement process. We can also stipulate that local workforce involvement is built in to project development.

Will Appalachian Voices be lead applicant and administrator of funds? What is the relationship between the SWG and the facilities that receive solar installations? Somewhat dependent on PPA bill. AV could be the “fiscal agent” EDA grant would not supply project capital but funds would be spent to help drive down other costs and make projects more economic overall.

Other ways to advance specific Roadmap sites?

- Group will be made aware of upcoming calls to discuss grant options. People Inc/Mark feel very good about the direction we are moving to development. Concerns that due to passage of legislation that other projects/markets would create competition/distraction away from development of roadmap sites. Lou will pass along questions via email. There has been no real traction yet with Food City installations because of lack of communication.

- **Preparing for 2018 Economic Forum May 17th**

- How do we make the best use of the event for the Solar Workgroup?

Good opportunity to address the community education Workforce goal. Need for better location at the Forum for workshops, space for a meeting or breakout session. Energy may be addressed more broadly at the Forum as well.

- Solar Fair (need committee?)

- Forum has asked if we'd be interested in doing another fair the day before the forum. Would anyone be interested in helping out? How can we keep it fresh? Mark can help in the planning of the event. Suggestion for new themes or activities for the solar fair? Connection to agriculture? Or connection to the Forum theme of talent (workforce)? More opportunities for education and information.

- Connection to GO Virginia Energy and Minerals workgroup?

- Theme: Talent. How can we use this to help advance our workforce training goals?

The group concluded the call with a decision to have discussion about specific Workgroup action items as needed, with a next Workgroup call in the late winter or spring.