



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

Rhode Island Division of
Public Utilities and Carriers
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Warwick RI 02888
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January 11, 2019

Luly Massaro, Commission Clerk
Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission
89 Jefferson Blvd.
Warwick, RI 02888

In Re: Docket 4892 – Renewable Energy Growth Program for 2019

Dear Luly,

Please find the State of Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities and Carriers, (the “Division”) Memorandum relating to the Renewable Energy Growth Program for 2019 for filing with the Public Utilities Commission’s in the above captioned docket.

I appreciate your anticipated cooperation in this matter.

Very truly yours,

Jon G. Hagopian
Deputy Chief Legal Counsel

Memorandum

To: PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

FROM: JONATHAN SCHRAG, DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR

DATE: 01/11/19

RE: **DOCKET 4892. 2019 RENEWABLE ENERGY GROWTH PROGRAM FOR 2019**

This memo summarizes the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers review of the ceiling prices filed by the Rhode Island Distributed Generation Board (“Board”) on October 19, 2018.

The Rhode Island General Assembly enacted the REG Program (Section 26.6 of Title 39) in June 2014. The REG Program replaced the DGSC program and covers the period from 2015 through 2019. The REG Program has a target to install 160 MW of renewable energy according to a five-year schedule:

- 25 MW in 2015;
- 40 MW in 2016;
- 40 MW in 2017;
- 40 MW in 2018; and
- Remainder to reach 160 MW target in 2019.

In June 2017, Senate Bill 112 extended the program for an additional 10 years. This bill set a target of 40 MW per year during the 2020-2029 time frame.

The Division supports the over-arching goal of the Renewable Energy Growth Program, “to facilitate and promote installation of grid-connected generation of renewable-energy; support and encourage development of distributed renewable energy generation systems; reduce environmental impacts; reduce carbon emissions that contribute to climate change by encouraging the siting of renewable energy projects in the load zone of the electric distribution company; diversify the energy generation sources within the load zone of the electric distribution company; stimulate economic development; improve distribution system resilience and reliability within the load zone of the electric distribution company; and reduce distribution system costs.” See R.I. Gen. Laws § 39-26.6-1.

The ceiling prices proposed for the 2019 program year represent reductions from the 2018 program year and the allocation among renewable energy classes are in general conformity

with previous Renewable Energy Growth Program Plans approved by the Public Utilities Commission.

The 2019 Program proposes two new renewable energy classes: commercial solar carport and large solar carport. The Division supports the creation of these categories which are forecast to allow for the development of between six and 12 solar canopy projects. The Division interprets the creation of these categories as an attempt by the DG Board to encourage renewable development in the built environment with least impact on other land uses.

The Division agrees with the opinion expressed by a coalition of stakeholders that it is important to consider the siting of renewable energy projects in least-conflict areas, including commercial and industrial zoned land or already developed land. However, the Division believes that in addition to land-use issues, the relative costs and benefits to the electric distribution system should also be considered in deployment of renewable energy resources across the state. To advance the optimal integration of renewable energy resources across Rhode Island, the Division is continuing to work with National Grid to develop and enhance the System data portal as a tool for developers and regulators to evaluate distribution system capacity, constraints, and relative hosting capacity. The Division believes the System Data Portal is a vital cross-program tool that merits continued investment and development.

In addition, the Division is observing initiatives in other states, including New York, to review the compensation framework for distributed energy resources. In Rhode Island, the key parameters of the Renewable Energy Growth and Net-Metering programs are defined in statute. However, the Division looks forward to engaging with stakeholders, including the DG Board, to understand what changes are underway in other jurisdictions and what, if any, changes may be appropriate.

The Division recommends approval of the proposed plan for the 2019 year.
