



**Local Solar Advisory Committee**  
**Thursday, October 11 from 6:30-9:15 PM**  
**Austin Energy, Town Lake Center Assembly Room 130**  
**721 Barton Springs Rd., Austin, Texas**

**APPROVED Regular Meeting Minutes**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Quorum Present as noted by Chairman Steve Wiese at 6:35 PM

Committee Members in Attendance: Monica DelaRosa (by conference call), Steve Wiese, Stan Pipkin, Colin Meehan, Tom Smitty Smith, Gary Bernie Bernfeld, Michael Kuhn, Sunshine Mathon, Roger Wood, John M Sutton, BJ Stanbery, Sal Mascorro Valdez.

Citizen Guests: Karen Hadden, Leslie Libby, Scott Jarman, Johnathan Johnson, Erik Engh, Michelle Garcia, Jon Sarno

Utility Staff: Leslie Libby, Shayna Lee, Scott Jarman, Michael Osborne

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion to approve the minutes from the October 4 meeting was made by Bernie Bernfeld and seconded by Michael Kuhn. An amendment proposed by Stan Pipkin was accepted by Bernie Bernfeld. The amendment called for changes to appropriately reflect the names of Wesley Cooper and Les Dawn attending the previous meeting as guests. The minutes, as amended, were approved by acclaim.

**2. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

The Chairman initiated this portion of the meeting with a discussion of the 1st half of draft, and said his intent was to limit discussion to 20 – 30 minutes, providing more time for discussion at this meeting regarding the second half of the draft. The Chairman then began the discussion with a Section by section discussion:

The Committee discussed the Vision for Solar section. The Chairman indicated that the main changes in this section target the nature of changing prices of solar in the future, and the proactiveness of responding to rapidly changes in market conditions. Smitty indicated that Chris suggested we take first paragraph (Solar Vision) and move it to the bottom of the page under the two fundamental questions; he said moving the paragraph would keep focus on solar. Stan indicated he would suggest changing the word “consistently” to something like “nominal.” Bernie said he would like clarification of “mere continuation” to another word to make it clearer to the reader.

The Chairman said that the Background section did not change. Smitty indicated that Chris would like an insertion (after the word “developments” ... we find significant evidence that potential for solar installation is not an impediment to growth of solar in Austin).

The Chairman said the title and wording of element #3 in the Key Themes section was changed to be more reflective of local solar. Smitty said the word “emphasize” in the title is of some concern, and could be misconstrued.

In the Scenarios section, the Chairman said most changes were in the second half of section. In the first half, he noted that terms regarding utility-owned versus customer-owned were clarified and used consistently. Colin expressed a concern that this section could be more specific in identifying the goals and requested actions of Council and Austin Energy.

The Chairman said the Residential section had been reorganized, and the table dropped to a footnote (illustrative of the possibility). He indicated that the writing group convened a lengthy discussion on the value of solar rate questions. Stan made a lot of the residential issues/points relative to transparency and trust. Stan indicated that feedback from an array of people reflected a misunderstanding of the reality of the value of solar. Moving forward certainty comes thru understanding – clarification of the issue. Steve indicated that offering “options” to value of solar calculation could create further misunderstanding to the customer. Colin indicated that in the section regarding establishment of a value of solar floor, the word “consider” should be stronger like “recommend.” Colin indicated that a floor would benefit the development of solar in Austin, even if it were low. Smitty discussed the consequences of using the language of consider versus recommend as it relates to City Council Action on the report and policies indicated. Bernie indicated that a floor value would make no difference in conventional lending. Sunshine urged caution of the use of a floor, given that it’s tied to natural gas. Steve indicated that net metering also does not guarantee a floor, though that is often misunderstood by customers and the industry. Colin said that risk you don’t understand is worse than risk you do.

Leslie Libby talked about an information letter and AE outreach on on tiered and value of solar fees and their intent to hold public education sessions. Steve called for more feedback/edits to the writing committee from members.

Steve indicated there was some rearrangement of bullets and points in the Commercial section. Rodger Wood questioned whether the commercial projections could be actually met, and by what types of commercial customers. A recent AE press release indicated the total commercial capacity under PBI program now stood at 1,389 kW, up 600% from a year ago. The Committee discussed the impact of these PBI commitments and their costs for the next 10 years.

John Sutton said there was still reluctance of commercial/industrial owners/investors to buy into the commercial program under the current payback periods. BJ said the projects announced today were a variety of both public and private solar developments. Roger indicated that “payback” is an issue for adoption, below three years is desirable. BJ commented on payback calculations of self financing vs 3rd party financing is distinct and more favorable than most people think.

Sunshine indicates his need to leave and asks if we need to vote on anything at this time. Steve indicates this meeting was a continuation of discussion as well as the following meeting, and that no votes are intended. He requested the Committee move to accept citizen communications before adjourning. Steve notes that a quorum would be lost on Sunshine’s departure.

### **3. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL**

Charlie Hemmeline – Open house announcement – invites all to a Solar Austin open house regarding this committee’s work 6 pm at the Spider House 29th street next week. Charlie recommended that the group highlight in the economic development section that it’s not economic

development from nothing, but rather a redirection of current spending on fuels to get a net increase in jobs.

Jon Sarno requested additional details on the commercial recommendations, particularly about the alignment of net metering with the PBI cutoffs, and requested front loading the PBI – 5 year for a faster payback. Stan commented that demand for commercial customers would be going down, so a straight net metering would be difficult. Sarno said the issue is especially important when there's low occupancy in buildings (i.e. schools/ public institutions).

AE staff comments on implementation of net metering – PBI / Value of solar does not apply to commercial.

#### **4. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

The members agreed the next meeting would be Thurs, Oct. 18, with written comments on the Plan requested by Monday, so that the writing working group can create an updated document and incorporate the comments from tonight's discussion.

#### **5. ADJOURNMENT – 7:45 pm**

Based on loss of quorum with Sunshine's departure, Steve called the formal meeting to a close at 7:45 pm.