

Community Shared Solar Brookline Working Group

Minutes

05/13/2015, 6:00 pm, room 408, Town Hall

Jenny Fariborz, David Lowe, Jack Spence Ernie Frey, David Lescohier

Action Items for Next Meeting, (on 2nd Wednesday) June 10th, 6:00 – 7:30 pm, Town Hall, Room 310.)

Tasks:

- Thomas Nutt-Powell – Contact Teen Center. Pending.
- Blake Cady – Explore availability and interest, Dexter School Rink. Rejected
- Willy Osborne, David Lescohier –Continue to identify commercial realtors, and explore sites on the 128 corridor. Ongoing
- Werner Lohe – Investigate Stop and Shop Supermarket as possible site. Pending.

Yeloha report

David Lowe made a presentation regarding the Yeloha (formerly known as Generaytor) progress. Yeloha is an Israeli-based entrepreneurial solar PV marketing company. The company chose Brookline as a pilot site for its business. The aim is to match roofs to panel user participants. The company is searching for property owners to host panels on their property. In return the property owner receives 25% of the solar PV plant's production (through net metering). The other 75% of the production is net metered to the user/participant for the panels. The panels can be purchased outright, financed, or the participant can subscribe to the production of the panels for an agreed term. This model is very flexible and has the potential for being attractive to a wide range of customers in diverse circumstances, and this model thereby lowers the bar to participation for Brookline residents who otherwise may be unable to benefit from solar PV and shift to this renewable energy resource.

David reported that Yeloha has already identified five roofs and expects to have completed installation early this summer and be able to begin linking customers to panels.

Yeloha is looking for more locations for panels. Hosts can be non-profit that own buildings, landlords, commercial establishments, and residences. There are currently 50 prospects in process. Of course, Yeloha welcomes leads and suggestions about possible locations. Ernest Frey said that there may be room on his condo for additional panels, and two neighboring

buildings with similar characteristics may be receptive. Ernie said he will make inquiries and make introductions. David Lescohier identified other condos in Brookline that may be similarly receptive.

<http://www.yeloha.com/>

Updates

Brookline Audi – David owe attempted contact. No success so far.

Center Street Lot – Town Meeting Members will be touring the site on May 16th.

Dexter School – Blake Cady says they are not interested.

128 buildings –

Willy Osborn and David Lescohier met with Paul Brickman, a property owner who Celinda Shannon suggested we contact. Mr. Brickman owns Bear Hill in Waltham. He also owns 20 acres in Braintree. It happens that the Braintree site already has some solar on it, but Mr. Brickman does not know how it got there. It came with the land and he hasn't paid attention to it. With respect to the Bear Hill land, he had a plan that fell apart as a result of the 2008 crash. Now he is working on another project and says that tens of millions of dollars is at stake. He wouldn't want any solar because it may interfere or diminish the potential of the site. Basically, the amount that a solar array would pay is not of interest to him. It is not enough money from his point of view to merit spending the time or attention.

We concluded that his view is probably quite typical and that in view of the value and scarcity of land in eastern Massachusetts, the chance of finding a developer who would engage is quite low.

Newton Solar Challenge –

Willy Osborn and David Lescohier met with John Tourtelotte, Managing director of Rivermoor Energy. Rivermoor has developed some large scale projects, but like Blue Wave doesn't have any sites in the pipeline currently that could be suitable for a partnering with a Brookline CSS. If there were sites available and he gained control of them, then there would be a possibility, as with blue Wave and Kearsage Energy, to collaborate, possibly as a coop with Coop Power as the EPC. However all of this is quite hypothetical.

However, Rivermoor has created Barn Raise Energy, a subsidiary, that is currently engaged in "Newton Solar Challenge", a follow on to Solarize marketing campaign. The Barn Raise Energy campaign is similar to Solarize, but better in important respects. The financing is by a local bank with very favorable terms. The participant has a choice of EPCs.

The question is, would Barn Raise Energy be interested in getting involved in a Brookline campaign or possibly a Brookline CSS?

Other discussion

Jenny Fariborz offered some thoughts. On Monday at the Climate Action Brookline meeting, Alex Pentland, a professor at MIT, spoke about his recently published book, *Social Physics*, the quantitative study of human society. By using newly available big data tools, the field offers more and more that may be relevant to devising social change strategies.

Here is a brief review:

“Pentland’s insights make human behavior less mysterious, but more amazing. Social Physics will make you see yourself and your world differently.” —Clay Shirky, author of *Cognitive Surplus* and *Here Comes Everybody*

“From one of the world’s leading data scientists, a landmark tour of the new science of idea flow, offering revolutionary insights into the mysteries of collective intelligence and social influence.

“If the Big Data revolution has a presiding genius, it is MIT’s Alex “Sandy” Pentland. Over years of groundbreaking experiments, he has distilled remarkable discoveries significant enough to become the bedrock of a whole new scientific field: social physics. Humans have more in common with bees than we like to admit: We’re social creatures first and foremost. Our most important habits of action—and most basic notions of common sense—are wired into us through our coordination in social groups. Social physics is about idea flow, the way human social networks spread ideas and transform those ideas into behaviors.

“Thanks to the millions of digital bread crumbs people leave behind via smartphones, GPS devices, and the Internet, the amount of new information we have about human activity is truly profound. Until now, sociologists have depended on limited data sets and surveys that tell us how people say they think and behave, rather than what they actually do. As a result, we’ve been stuck with the same stale social structures—classes, markets—and a focus on individual actors, data snapshots, and steady states. Pentland shows that, in fact, humans respond much more powerfully to social incentives that involve rewarding others and strengthening the ties that bind than incentives that involve only their own economic self-interest.

“Pentland and his teams have found that they can study patterns of information exchange in a social network without any knowledge of the actual content of the information and predict with stunning accuracy how productive and effective that network is, whether it’s a business or an entire city. We can maximize a group’s collective intelligence to improve performance and use social incentives to create new organizations and guide them through disruptive change in a way that maximizes the good. At every level of interaction, from small groups to large cities, social networks can be tuned to increase exploration and engagement, thus vastly improving idea flow.

“Social Physics will change the way we think about how we learn and how our social groups work—and can be made to work better, at every level of society. Pentland leads readers to the edge of the most important revolution in the study of social behavior in a generation, an entirely new way to look at life itself.”

At the end of the CSS meeting on May 13th we were discussing next steps in view of what we had learned by attending the CAB "Germinating Social Change" meeting. The take away that I took from that meeting was that social interchanges, especially high quality face to face exchanges, are more effective at producing action than trying to pose the "quality" argument of why someone "should" do what you're proposing.

<http://thepenguinpress.com/book/social-physics-how-ideas-turn-into-actions/>

http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/04/15/m-i-t-s-alex-pentland-measuring-idea-flows-to-accelerate-innovation/?_r=0

So far as a group we have focused on trying to secure a site for a large solar installation and have assumed that getting investors in line would be a follow on step. However, I want to propose that we do both simultaneously. If we all tap our social connections and identify a group of people who understand what the CSS group is trying to do then we will have increased our network of connections through which to find a site and we will have a more compelling argument to present to the owner of a site.

Maybe at the next meeting we can discuss what our "sales pitch" should be and what kind of help/information we would be asking people to share with us if they would be interested in investing in CSS down the road ?

Thanks,
Jenny Fariborz

- David Lescohier

The next meeting will be on 2nd Wednesday, June 10, 2015 at 6:00 – 7:30 PM in Town Hall, room 310. Group will review tasks identified under “Action Steps”.