

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON
STAFF REPORT
PUBLIC MEETING DATE: April 15, 2014

REGULAR _____ CONSENT X EFFECTIVE DATE April 15, 2014

DATE: April 7, 2014

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: Adam Bless 

THROUGH: Jason Eisdorfer, Maury Galbraith, and Aster Adams  

SUBJECT: OREGON PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION STAFF: (Docket No. UM 1538) Request by Malheur County Fair Board for a waiver of the 12-month solar photovoltaic system installation requirement pursuant to OAR 860-084-0210(1).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

I recommend the Commission grant the request by Malheur County Fair Board (Fair Board) to extend the 12-month deadline to install three solar photovoltaic systems (SPV) under Idaho Power's solar incentive program by six months, to October 18, 2014.

DISCUSSION:

Issue

The Fair Board requests a waiver of the 12-month deadline for installation of three SPV systems at the Malheur County Fairgrounds, with a total capacity of 26 kilowatts. The installation is divided into three separate projects because the SPV systems will be connected to three separate meters. The projects were enrolled in the program in April 2013, with an installation deadline of April 18, 2014. The Fair Board requests an extension of six months, to October 18, 2014.

Rule

The applicable rule is OAR 860-084-0210(1), which states that a capacity reservation expires if the system has not been installed within 12 months of the reservation start date, unless a waiver is granted under OAR 860-084-0000(3). The evaluation criteria set forth in OAR 860-084-0000(3) for waiver of Division 84 rules is "good cause" shown. The Commission has discretion to determine what constitutes "good cause."

Analysis

The Fair Board explains that these projects were used as a student project in a class at Treasure Valley Community College. The students applied for grants to fund the projects, without success. The Fair Board is now working with a local contractor, Site Energy, which installed an SPV project for the City of Ontario. I contacted Idaho Power and they confirmed that Site Energy does have prior experience successfully installing SPV projects in their service territory. The Fair Board requests a six-month extension to allow enough time to complete the projects through this contractor.

In analyzing for “good cause,” I considered the applicant’s circumstances and the effect that this decision would have on Idaho Power. The Commission has previously granted six-month extensions, most recently in October 2013 for Solar Energy Solutions in Portland, Oregon. I considered the fact that these particular projects are part of an educational program at the local community college. I also considered the current contractor’s prior experience completing SPV installations in Idaho Power territory. The Fair Board states the contractor does have financing arranged and is ready to begin work if the waiver is granted.

If the Commission grants the waiver, there is a reasonable likelihood that the Fair Board will complete the projects. If the Commission denies the waiver, Idaho Power cannot offer this capacity in the April 2014 reservation window. Idaho Power’s option will be to offer this capacity in the “cleanup” window currently scheduled for April 2015. The pilot program will close in March 2016, which leaves little time for further cleanup windows.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Granting the waiver gives Idaho Power a chance to develop its capacity target with the least administrative burden. The current contractor has a prior track record of solar development in Idaho Power territory. I therefore recommend granting the new deadline of October 18, 2014.

PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:

The request by Malheur County Fair Board to waive the 12-month installation requirement for three SPV systems under Idaho Power’s solar incentive program be granted, and the deadline extended to October 18, 2014.