

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**November 27, 2007**  
**Subcommittee on Community Wind Meeting**

**I. Introductory Matters**

Meeting focus. Representative Bruce MacDonald welcomed those in attendance and opened the meeting by outlining its goals and focus (see meeting agenda).

**I. Discussion of feasibility issue**

George Baker (representing Swan's Island) discussed their project, which is in the pre-construction planning phase (both in terms of financing and project planning). He indicated that the biggest impediment to community wind, based on this experience, is the feasibility analysis. Along these lines, Suzanne Sayer reported on her investigation into the location of cell phone towers as a consideration for co-locating meteorological towers, and suggested that some entity should be a clearinghouse for data from meteorological studies; this entity could also serve as a consultant to review and analyze wind data to assist in feasibility studies. Representative MacDonald noted that there is currently no such technical assistance in Maine. The group then agreed that a recommendation from the subcommittee should be to develop a forum for such technical assistance, for example by reaching out to the UMaine system to generate discussion. *(Note: following the meeting, Mitch Tannenbaum of the PUC reported that through a Department of Energy grant, the PUC is working with the University of Maine on managing two meteorological towers that the PUC has acquired. This could be a logical place to start such a discussion.)*

At a later point in the meeting, the group also discussed a different aspect of the feasibility portion of projects related to the need for hook-up studies with utilities, particularly for larger projects. There was some feeling that a standardized agreement or standard set of rules with the utilities would be useful, since the current set of standards used by utilities can be overwhelming. Jeff Braggs from Kleinschmidt provided an overview of how the utilities approach hook-up requests, noting that such requests require studies of the existing and proposed systems which vary in terms of complexity and cost. The group discussed asking the PUC to look at different ways of improving this system, such as requiring utilities to respond within a certain timeframe and/or to pay for the hook-up studies above a certain amount.

**II. Discussion with Mitch Tannenbaum, PUC**

Mitch Tannenbaum provided a history of the state's net-metering rules, which have been around since 1983 and was looked at again in the late 1990s. Mitch explained that originally net metering was conceived of as a way to reduce metering costs for very small projects; there is some resistance to the idea of expanding the net metering limits because it is a subsidy from other rate-payers; additionally, net metering customers receive retail price (of which approximately half is due to electricity production costs and half is due to wire and other infrastructure) as credit even though other generators are paid wholesale. Approximately 150 customers in Maine currently are applying net-metering. George Baker noted that in part because of the subsidization issue, net metering could actually harm small island co-ops, and that as a result they are looking at increasing the fixed cost-portion of charges (while reducing the rates related to usage)—that would also reduce the benefits from net metering. Mitch said that others

have also looked at that issue, and that there is also an existing rule that allows a generator to be paid for excess generation but at a rate lower than resale (i.e. market rates for energy production costs).

The group also discussed the concept of allowing people to collectively net-meter (e.g., 6-10 homeowners getting together to purchase a turbine and net meter). While a small utility such as an island co-op would be negatively impacted by this, there have been other instances where the PUC has looked at the issue. If the group of homeowners had group ownership of the electricity generating infrastructure, under current PUC rules it is not clear if this would be permitted (it would not be permitted if the group did not have ownership of the infrastructure); legislative direction might be useful to the PUC to determine how to clarify that rule.

Mitch then briefly discussed the proximity rule, saying that this was based on historical precedent, and the PUC could change the rule (e.g. to ensure that the generation and user were within the same utility service area).