Resolution No 87-2016

TOWN OF FALMOUTH

Resolution to Support a Market Based Approach to Expanding Opportunities for Municipal, Small Business, and Large Scale Solar Projects in Maine

Whereas, Maine has the lowest amount of solar electrical power generation capacity of any state in New England; and

Whereas, the price of solar photovoltaic panels declined 55% between 2002 and 2013, making solar a financially competitive option for many businesses, municipalities, and homes; and

Whereas, solar generation capacity peaks on long summer days when demand on the electrical transmission grid is highest, which makes localized solar generation a cost effective option both to minimize stress on the transmission grid and to minimize the cost of major grid expansion projects; and

Whereas, Maine's current regulations governing distributed sources of electrical power generation create significant barriers for municipalities and businesses to develop cost effective solar projects to offset their power consumption; and

Whereas, the type of community solar projects being developed in other states to provide renewable energy to multiple residents are constrained in Maine because current rules restrict the number of electrical meters that can be offset by a solar project to nine meters, in effect limiting large scale solar projects to serve nine homes or less; and

Whereas, there are currently over 1,800 acres of closed and capped municipal landfills in Maine for which there are few, if any, common reuse or redevelopment options; and

Whereas, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has determined that developing solar power projects on capped landfills and other brownfield sites represents the best reuse option for many of these sites; and

Whereas, redeveloping just 40% of the capped municipal landfill acreage in Maine with solar arrays would provide municipalities the equivalent of $30 to $40 million in annual revenue; and

Whereas, Maine's current regulations fail to allow a municipality to utilize solar to offset demand charges on its electricity bill, and also limits the size of the solar array that could be developed on the Woods Road Landfill to less than half of the site's full solar potential; and

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Whereas, last year the Legislature passed Resolve 2015 Chapter 37, directing the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to convene a stakeholder process to develop a market based approach to sustainable growth in all sectors of Maine's solar distributed generation market; and

Whereas, the PUC held seven stakeholder meetings at which municipalities including Rockland, Falmouth, and South Portland, environmental organizations, the Office of the Public Advocate, solar developers, utilities, legislators, as well as other interested parties reviewed options for expanding solar in Maine; and

Whereas, the market based concepts and reforms put forward by the Office of the Public Advocate and refined through this stakeholder process are intended to increase the amount of solar capacity that could be developed in Maine over the next six years by 250 megawatts; and

Whereas, the concepts put forward, if adopted in statute and rules, would remove many barriers limiting the development of cost effective municipal, large scale, and commercial solar projects.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FALMOUTH:

That the Council supports the proposed concepts and reforms to the regulations governing solar distributed generation in Maine and urges the Second Session of the 127th Legislature and the Public Utilities Commission to adopt these changes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council designates the Town Manager and the Energy and Sustainability Coordinator to communicate the Council's support to the Legislature's Energy and Utilities Committee, State Representatives and Senators, the Public Utilities Commission, and to other municipalities.

Approved this 8th day of February, 2016

Attest: _____ Date: _____
Ellen Planer, Town Clerk