



Laramie/Albany County Environmental Advisory Committee

November 5, 2020

RE: Position statement on proposed amendments to Wyoming's net-metering bill

Dear Laramie City Councilors and Albany County Commissioners,

Here, the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) shares our concerns about proposed amendments to decrease the payback of solar power production in [21LSO-0219](#) of Wyoming's net-metering statutes. We oppose the amendments, "The customer-generator shall pay the retail rate to the electric utility for all energy consumed from the electric utility during the billing period" and "The electric utility shall pay the customer-generator the electric utility's avoided cost rate for all energy produced by the customer-generator and delivered back to the electric utility during the billing period." Further, we oppose the amendment that net-metering only be allowed for "customer generated electricity systems made operational prior to July 1, 2021 and that have not changed ownership on or after July 1, 2021." The position statement here is an update of our 2019 statement, which was shared with Laramie City Council and the Albany County Commissions and read at the Joint Corporations, Elections, and Political Subdivisions Interim Committee meeting. We will read this updated position statement at the Legislative Interim Committee Meeting on Nov. 11 and encourage Laramie City Councilors and Albany County Commissioners to *once again* join our efforts in encouraging members of this Legislative Interim Committee to oppose these proposed amendments.

The currently proposed amendments would reduce incentives for investment in renewable energy by constraining the net-metering cap and eliminating incentives for systems installed after July 1, 2021. We instead advocate for maintaining or raising the current cap to encourage investments that would help Laramie become carbon neutral, provide long-term cost savings, and support job growth. This March, Laramie City Council unanimously passed a resolution establishing intent to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, and key to achieving this goal is the installation of solar energy systems on municipal buildings. Solar panels are currently being installed on the Rec Center and the Ice and Events Center thanks to a Rocky Mountain Power Blue Sky Award. Future solar installations will require financial backing from the city, which is much more likely with the guarantee of fair payback for excess energy produced. Private citizens also benefit from net-metering. For example, virtual net-metering would provide opportunities for low-income residents or residents that rent or live in an apartment to save money on power bills. Last, states surrounding Wyoming continue to see an increase of jobs for solar installers while Wyoming currently ranks 43rd for jobs within the solar industry. In times of an economic transition for Wyoming, we need to be doing everything we can to provide employment opportunities for future generations.

EAC exists to "analyze assigned issues, receive and analyze citizen concerns and complaints, formulate options, and advise the City Council and the Board of County Commissioners on environmental issues."¹

The proposed amendments fall within our mandate because decreasing dependence on fossil fuels and increasing use of renewable energy are essential to minimize climate change. In Albany County, we feel the effects of climate change on our water resources and on wildfire frequency and intensity. University of Wyoming climate scientists studied the North Platte River Basin and determined that spring precipitation and snow melt are steadily shifting to earlier in the year, meaning that there is less water later in the growing season, when it is so critical for agriculture. 2019 was a good example. Although we had a wet, cool spring, with greater than average snowfall and snowpack in our basin, Laramie's total yearly precipitation was well below average. Meeting the challenges of climate change demands urgent attention, primarily through seeking alternative sources of energy. Renewable energy offers an environmentally-sound alternative for meeting our current energy needs, but the proposed amendments would stifle the extent to which Albany County—and Wyoming more broadly—can do so.

Commented [EC1]: Is it worth including this? The paragraph above is the powerful one, but this paragraph previously served as our justification for EAC weighing in. If we do want to include mention of the Mullen fire, we might get rid of the 2019-specific data and add the following: This September, the Mullen Fire decimated over 175,000 acres in our beloved Snowy Mountains and threatened Cheyenne's water supply. Air quality in Albany was terrible for weeks as the fire burned.

We appreciate the attention to renewable energy and thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

The Laramie/Albany County Environmental Advisory Committee

¹<https://www.cityofaramie.org/217/Environmental-Advisory-Committee>