



NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION FROM THE OFFICE OF DISTRICT 5 COMMISSIONER SANDY JONES

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Community solar farm could soon power low-income Dona Ana County homes

SANTA FE, NM – A plan to bridge the renewable accessibility gap and make solar power available to low-income Dona Ana County residents is on track despite protests by Santa Fe-based New Energy Economy and a handful of other intervenors.

El Paso Electric Company (EPE) is asking for Public Regulation Commission (PRC) approval to establish a voluntary community solar program aimed at households that have been cut out of the clean energy market.

According to the application, EPE would construct, own, and operate a two-megawatt solar facility which would supply energy to the program.

Opponents claim the plan is too expensive and should be dismissed. Instead, PRC Chairman Sandy Jones this week asked EPE to reissue a request for proposals to determine if any bidders could provide a lower overall cost for customers. He also called a hearing for Tuesday, November 27.

“Forty-two states have community solar programs on-line; New Mexico can’t keep kicking the can down the road,” said Chairman Jones. “The proposal shouldn’t be dismissed because of alleged cost issues. It is imperative that we hear the merits of the program and determine if it is in the best interest of the public.”

According to market analysis and advisory firm GTM Research, the nation’s community solar market could grow up to 80 times its current size by 2030, which equates to serving nearly nine million new solar customers, including four million low-to-moderate income households, and amounting to \$120 billion in capital investments.

The New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (PRC) regulates the utilities, telecommunications, and motor carrier industries to ensure fair and reasonable rates, and to assure reasonable and adequate services to the public as provided by law. The PRC promotes public safety through the offices of State Fire Marshal, the Firefighter Training Academy, Pipeline Safety Bureau, and Transportation Division.