



HEARING NOTES

Bill: 22-0106R

Investigational Hearing - Solar Farming

Committee: Economic and Community Development

Chaired By: Councilwoman Sharon Green Middleton

Hearing Date: October 11, 2022

Time (Beginning): 3:45 PM

Time (Ending): 5:35 PM

Location: Clarence "Du" Burns Council Chambers / Virtual WEBEX

Total Attendance: Approximately 50

Committee Members in Attendance:

John Bullock Ryan Dorsey Mark Conway Antonio Glover Robert Stokes Odette Ramos

Bill Synopsis in the file?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a
Attendance sheet in the file?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a
Agency reports read?.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a
Video or audio-digitally recorded?.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a
Certification of advertising/posting notices in the file?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a
Evidence of notification to property owners?.....	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a
Final vote taken at this hearing?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a

Motioned by:.....Councilmember Mark Conway

Seconded by:.....Councilmember Antonio Glover

Final Vote:.....Favorable

Major Speakers

(This is not an attendance record.)

- Councilmember Kristerfer Burnett, Sponsor
- Stephanie Bolton, Director of Consumer Affairs, Maryland Public Service Commission

- Lisa Smith, Legislative Affairs Director, Maryland Public Service Commission
- Amanda Best, Maryland Public Service Commission
- Kristal Hansley, owner, WeSolar
- Ava Richardson, Sustainability Director, Baltimore City Department of Planning
- Lynn Heller, Climate Access Fund
- Danielle Gooden, BGE
- Divesh Gupta, BGE
- S. Seltzer
- Kimberly Armstrong, Resident

Major Issues Discussed

1. Chairwoman Middleton opened the meeting, introduced committee members and City representatives and read the bill into the record.
2. Councilmember Burnett explained the purpose of the bill and provided general information about solar farming.
3. Agency reports were read into the record.
4. Stephanie Bolton and Amanda Best presented information about the Maryland Public Service Commission (MPSC) and solar farming policies and projects in the State and around Baltimore City. The committee has a handout of the presentation. The state mandated MPSC Community Solar Pilot project has been in operation for 7 years. The pilot program is due to end on December 31, 2024. There are certain eligibility requirements. Interested parties may apply to participate. MPSC reviews and approves private market, third party applications for participation. There are 3 types of solar programs: Rooftop Solar, Community Solar and the land intensive, Utility Scale Solar. Currently, there are 2 community solar projects in Baltimore (Fells Point and SE Baltimore). 13 community solar projects are expected to come on line.
5. Councilmember Ramos wanted to know where the proposed 13 pilot projects would be located so that she can share information with interested parties. BGE is working to identify the sites. Anne Best explained that the 13 projects will be located around the City. Councilmember Ramos would like information about the program to share with interested parties.
6. Councilmember Stokes wanted to know how sites and project participants are selected. He also wanted to know if there is community outreach effort before sites are selected. Anne Best explained that the private, third party applicants make selections. Councilmember Stokes emphasized the need for outreach before selection of sites.
7. Councilmember Burnett wanted to know about the marketing process. The projects are owned and operated by the private development companies which handle marketing inhouse or work in partnership with other companies that work in the energy retail space to market. Information should be on each utility's website.
8. Kimberly Hansley, owner of WeSolar a community solar farming firm, provided information about her company. The committee has a handout of the presentation. WeSolar services subscribers and has solar power generated from different sites. She emphasized savings for

the subscribers. She also emphasized the need to have Baltimore City to be a major participant in the pilot project.

9. Ava Richardson provided information about greenhouse gas emissions focusing primarily on emissions that come from transportation, buildings and waste. She presented a summary of the City's Climate Action Plan. The committee has handouts of the presentation. She also provided general information about the City's Community Resiliency Hubs Program which helps the City prepare for a natural disaster event. The Department of General Services collaborates with groups on solar-related initiatives.
10. Lynn Heller provided information about Climate Access Fund (CAF), a non-profit solar developer and green bank which leverages public and private resources and focuses on low- and middle-income households. The committee has a handout of the presentation. Climate Access Fund focuses on projects that many other developers do not consider. CAF is collaborating with the Henderson Hopkins school in east Baltimore. Community solar projects can provide jobs and wealth. She pointed out a number of challenges and recommendation which are outlined in a handout. The federal Reduction Act has set aside \$7 billion to States to support low- and middle- income families. CAF encourages Baltimore to participate by seeking low cost financing and grants. CAF is willing to work with owners of any rooftop that has 25,000 feet.
11. Divesh Gupta provided information about BGE's participation in solar projects. BGE works with third parties, who develop sites, like WeSolar. Third party developers have the responsibility of marketing. Subscribers do not have to be located in the same City in which the community solar energy is generated. The solar project just needs to be in the BGE territory. Subscribers can be anywhere in the BGE territory. There are an estimated 6,000 customers taking advantage of BGE's community solar projects. 1,000 of the 6,000 households are in Baltimore.
12. Councilmember Burnett wanted to know if the City is taking advantage of solar project grant opportunities. The Office of Sustainability has applied for some grants and will consider future opportunities. Access to land is a challenge.
13. Ms. S. Seltzer testified. She spoke about the need to have available land for solar projects. She spoke about use of public land. She asked about ballot issues.
14. Ms. Kimberly Armstrong, a City resident who has worked in the environmental sector, spoke about trends around the State. Montgomery County is very actively participating in the solar projects. She emphasized that community education is needed.
15. The committee voted to recommend the bill favorably.
16. The hearing was adjourned.

Further Study

Was further study requested?

Yes No

If yes, describe.

Committee Vote:

Sharon Green Middleton, Chair Yea
John Bullock: Yea
Mark Conway: Yea
Ryan Dorsey: Absent
Antonio Glover: Yea
Robert Stokes: Yea
Odette Ramos: Absent

Jennifer L. Coates, Committee Staff

Date: October 12, 2022

cc: Bill File
OCS Chrono File