Broward County-Solar Nexus Meeting

June 25, 2014

1:00 p.m.

Minutes

*Chair: Kay Sommers, Go Solar Florida Project Manager*

Attendees:

* Jeff Halsey, Go Solar Florida Project Director
* Icilda Humes, Go Solar Florida Team
* Michael Huneke, Go Solar Florida Team
* Andrea Bousquet, Go Solar Florida Team
* Stephen Barkaszi, Florida Solar Energy Center (FSEC) Program Director
* Keith Showalter, FSEC
* Michael Palmquist, Co-founder of Solar Nexus and Project Lead for the SunShot grant
* Jennifer Alfsen, Mechanical Engineer and Project Manager

**Introductions and Overview of organizations**

* Kay Sommers gave an overview of Broward County Pollution Prevention Division and Michael Palmquist shared an overview of Solar Nexus.
* Solar Nexus is a software company providing a system for solar contractors to do customer relations management. The company was instrumental in creating a public data model which covers most aspects of project development (PV, thermal, energy efficiency, and combinations thereof). They are now leveraging data standards into production implementation.
* Solar Nexus was awarded a DOE SunShot Initiative grant as a part of the SunShot Incubator Program. The company will use the award to build and demonstrate an integrated ecosystem of applications for the solar industry using a common data exchange format to tie together different software tools used by solar contractors and others. Solar Nexus will sell the software application that contractors can use to generate code compliant artifacts for use in permitting.

**Solar Program Overview**

* Kay shared background information on Go Solar Florida, highlighting how Broward County became involved in the initiative (Go Solar Broward), the evolution of Go Solar Florida and the adoption of Resolution 2014-054.

**Go Solar Florida Vision and Solar Plans Systems**

* Jeff Halsey shared the Go Solar Florida’s vision of a single solar permitting experience in Florida. He added that the vision also includes the Go Solar Florida website being a one-stop shop with a suite of optional services.
* Michael Huneke and Stephen Barkaszi shared some of the challenges with the plans approval and permitting components of the project. This includes the issue of signing and sealing plans and securing approval from Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ).
* The group was informed that two teams have recently been formed: Plans Approval Team and Industry Team. FSEC is responsible for creating the “plans engine” and are presently working on a prototype. The Industry Team will provide input and will test out the system.

**Challenges and Lessons Learned**

* Icilda Humes gave a brief overview of the present situation of the inter-local agreements with grant partners. At the end of quarter 3, only one contract has been executed. The team has learned that the initial time allocated to contract drafting, vetting, and execution was not realistic. The lack of executed agreements with partners has limited their abilities to actively participate in the grant.
* Michael Huneke and Stephen Barkaszi discussed the challenges with respect to the plans machine. One challenge is that many partners already have permitting systems in place. Another challenge is that of getting certification and acceptance of liability whether via legislation or otherwise. The team has learned that perhaps it would be prudent to look at one system that all partners can live with and thereafter get partners to come on board.
* Solar Nexus shared some of its challenges including their quest to develop something that will be acceptable to a significant portion of the market. They are not endeavoring to force any jurisdictions to use their product. They are presently working with 27 jurisdictions across 8 states and the feedback received thus far on the data system is that the information is complete and consistent.
* Solar Nexus informed the group that California is not forcing any AHJ to take on a certain standard; however, the California Solar Permitting Guidebook has been developed as an optional tool to help guide the permitting process.

**Synergies, brainstorming and possible partnerships**

The group identified some opportunities for collaboration:

* Suggestion 1: Plans machine built by agency for fee and approved by government authority—the FSEC system would “talk” to Solar Nexus’s system.
* Suggestion 2: FSEC will build the plans machine in a way that it will be able to accept IEP model as an input to the system.
* Suggestion 3: Both parties agreed that DOE would like to see Go Solar Florida and Solar Nexus working together and marketing the idea of a statewide model. Broward County could perhaps adopt Solar Nexus’s data model as theirs and an MOU would be signed in this regard.
* The California Solar Permitting Guidebook could perhaps be adapted by Broward County as permitting guidelines that could be used by partners in Florida. Both parties agreed to have an ongoing relationship to keep each other apprised of what is progressing.

**Path forward**

* Solar Nexus would like Building Officials to vet its system. Jeff Halsey offered to make an attempt at getting Building Officials in his jurisdiction to provide feedback.
* Solar Nexus agreed to forward a copy of the first version of the Guidebook.
* The group was also informed that the Solar Nexus webpage has a recorded webinar and PDF of its presentation on their product, outputs, and survey for feedback from electrical or structural building officials or whoever else is involved in approving PV permits.
* Solar Nexus advised that there is no way to get jurisdictions to adapt to you. Rather, they advised that Go Solar Florida should give jurisdictions the flexibility of adopting its solution to theirs. This is primarily because each AHJ has different requirements and each AHJ is at a different place technologically. It is suggested that something that is standardized and optional be developed.