

"An Act to Create the Pine Tree Power Company"

LD 1708 & H.P. 1269

George B. Terrien: Notes for Testimony

20 May 2021

Greetings

Senate Chair **Lawrence** and House Chair **Berry**

Members of the Committee, staff, public

Likely **unable to attend** this morning, I submit this written testimony in advance.

GBT, 222 Broadway, **Rockland**

Architect 50 years with substantial careers in **practice, practice standards, & education**, w/ focus on **energy**, and **social & environmental justice**.

Member of the Rockland Energy Advisory Committee (REAC)

Extending **LD 695** ("To Allow Municipal Utility Expansion" as I testified on May 6th), **passing** this bill before you today to create the Pine Tree Power Company **extremely important** to fulfill Maine's **Climate Action Plan**.

Rockland's **Council** created REAC to assist, recommend, and direct our City's mandate, including:

Rockland Climate Action Plan Goals

2025 Municipal electricity 100% renewable: **ACHIEVED** in 2020

2045 Rockland **ENTIRELY** carbon neutral: **ambitious, six steps:**

2. Develop **renewable power** "...to supply the entire community's electrical needs, for example via a municipal or regional utility."

Developing renewable power to meet **Maine's Climate Action Plan** will **depend heavily** upon a **Public** Utility to serve the interests of the **public** effectively and **exclusively**.

Strong arguments support this bill to "Create the Pine Tree Power Company." **Illustrating** them, **my difficulty** installing a simple, rooftop, grid-tied, solar system shows **why** Maine **requires** the **people's** utility to serve the **public** interest.

Knowing nothing of **boardroom policy** within CMP, or why **staff** was so unprepared or resistant to my project, I can only attest to **my difficulty** installing solar power, a simple system that **should** have been **routine**, deserving CMP's full support to reduce greenhouse gasses. But I do understand that CMP makes **more profit** by distributing **more power**.

"An Act to Create the Pine Tree Power Company"

LD 1708 & H.P. 1269

George B. Terrien: Notes for Testimony

20 May 2021

Two decades ago, my wife and I purchased an **older house** in Rockland, large enough to suit our home-based professions (artist and architect) and visits from children and grandchildren. Vacant for several years, taxes unpaid, and for many decades an obvious **energy hog**, our dowager had been due for **demolition**.

In that year of Y2K, many **experts** thought **buildings older** than Owen Corning's "Pink Panther" must be **torn down** to reduce the large fraction of energy wasted just in **housing**. But to **replace** these older buildings in cold climates, we would need the energy of a **second Prudhoe Bay** (already approaching depletion). While **weatherizing** low-income housing, though, our society largely **ignored** what could be **saved** through **deep energy conservation**.

Back to the **lesson** in our 1850 house: we renovated it **aggressively to test, confirm, and demonstrate** huge **savings** possible through prudent, **investment-driven** decisions **paid for** by net-present-value savings. I installed numerous data points, **proving** my confidence. For example, **100% geothermal heating** and cooling has provided us with seventeen, problem-free years independent from fossil fuels. Our house has been my **laboratory**, informing my practice.

Four years ago, we decided to install photoelectric **solar** panels, 63 covering every south-facing roof, intending to produce **more power than we required**. Prepared under highly skilled and experienced solar and electrical design and installation, application to CMP for **net metering** proposed a domestic system that was neither unusual nor complicated. After **numerous delays for CMP approval**—their claim of being short-staffed, but requesting no changes—and then our payment of **\$600** to reimburse utility cost to receive the power we would produce, **CMP assured me** that its grid was **ready** for our connection. **Not having seen any utility work** for which I had paid CMP (a larger transformer connecting us to the main power line on Route 1A on the pole in front of our house), **I requested confirmation** several times before hook up. Each time, **CMP specifically assured me** that my concern was wrong—their work **had been completed**, and that I should proceed.

Accordingly, **CMP connected its second meter** to measure and bill their charge to accept and credit our solar power, running it back through our original meter—the **same amount** we had been purchasing for more than a dozen years. The **solar system operated perfectly**, but CMP's still-undersized **transformer could not**

"An Act to Create the Pine Tree Power Company"

LD 1708 & H.P. 1269

George B. Terrien: Notes for Testimony

20 May 2021

accept mid-day solar power without choking. Our installer repeatedly requested completion by CMP, to no avail.

This **lack of capacity** at the pole **increased our domestic voltage** excessively, tripping and even burning out electronic equipment. To prevent extensive failure when the sun shone brightly, I had to **turn off the solar system**. **Despite repeated requests** over several months to increase the capacity of their connection, **CMP bluntly insisted that the problem was mine** to solve, ascribing the entire difficulty to our installation. There were **no such deficiencies**. Following careful and repeated review of the engineering, installation, and operation of our equipment, I finally **asked CMP's lineman** (who for many years had been responsible for maintaining our district of Rockland) about the work at the pole that CMP had repeatedly reported as performed and ready to accept our connection. He instantly assured me that (other than installation of the second meter) **no such work had been done** or requisitioned, that no one had asked him for confirmation, and that he would have known if anyone had upgraded even one transformer on the grid in his district. Following his glance at the **paperwork** that CMP's central office had provided to me, and then **measuring the voltage at CMP's transformer**, he told me that he would **immediately** procure and install the **necessary equipment**. He returned the next morning to upgrade the transformer and CMP's connection to the meter. **Since then**, there has been **no malfunction**, and voltages have remained within specification. All is **well**.

The **burning out** of my inverter, economizer, and two uninterruptible power supplies, and **continued purchase** of several megawatts of power CMP's system would not allow me to generate and use, have not dimmed my **enthusiasm** for rooftop solar power.

I have not pursued compensation. Frustration in dealing with the engineering and customer service sides of CMP, and delight with our system over these three trouble-free years, and 65 megawatt-hours (equivalent to carbon reduction of 50 tons, or 750 trees) dissuaded me from asking CMP for reimbursement. Life is too short.

I **am** happy. **But** my experience illustrates the **importance** of a **Public Utility** to meet our climate emergency. Without expert follow-through, I would have had to make do with power output of less than half of what our system provides.

"An Act to Create the Pine Tree Power Company"

LD 1708 & H.P. 1269

George B. Terrien: Notes for Testimony

20 May 2021

To meet our energy and climate crisis, **Maine** must invest **shareholder profit** to **public benefit**. Monopoly of distribution requires **consumer ownership**, to benefit **society widely** and to address **environmental need**.

A **public utility** would also greatly assist **Rockland** and the **Midcoast** to achieve our 2045 goal of making our “**entire community...carbon neutral.**” A Maine-owned utility would:

- **Join** interests for public benefit among **generation, distribution, and conservation** (better—not more);
- Combine **technological advances** for undiluted **public benefit** (Boothbay—not Hydro Quebec);
- Gain access to **opportunity financing** and support (DOE grants and incentives);
- **Innovate nimbly** (working for the public—not the shareholder);
- Restore **public confidence** in government.

To solve our climate emergency, we will need **much more** from our **electrical utility** than begrudging acceptance of even just simple solar systems on our roofs.

PLEASE recommend this bill for passage wholeheartedly!

We in Rockland are **ready** to engage its provisions.

Meeting our CLIMATE EMERGENCY **needs** this bill.

George Terrien
Rockland

Scheduled for the dentist during your hearing, I will not testify orally. I have attached my written testimony in strong support of the Bill to create the Pine Tree Power Company, assuring you that I would have shortened my presentation to three minutes were I to be present.