

BROOKLIN CLIMATE RESPONSE COMMITTEE
Helping Brooklin, Maine Transition to Energy Efficiency and Climate Resilience

My name is Doug Hylan and I am chair of the Brooklin Climate Response Committee. I want to thank you for the chance to comment on this issue.

Our committee was set up last fall by our town's select board to help them enroll in the Community Resilience Partnership Program. Since then we have moved on with a program to help town residents increase the efficiency and comfort of their homes by taking advantage of renewable technologies supported by Efficiency Maine and the federal tax codes.

As part of our program, we have been assisting the select board and the school committee in planning for a solar array on our K-8 school. This would save the town money, reduce our carbon footprint, and show our school children that we care about their future. We also work with individual property owners to help them understand the possibilities for solar on their homes, churches and businesses.

Last Fall, my friend and neighbor, Mike Sealander, learned that the solar array recently installed on his barn had been refused a connection agreement by Versant Power. Inscrutable reasons were given, with no timeline for resolution. Mike is now involved in a prolonged dispute resolution process with the PUC, while his expensive solar array sits idle.

On April 27th, we were advised by Revision Energy that our school project had hit an interconnection dead end with Versant Power, and would have to be paused for the foreseeable future.

I don't know if the members of this committee are familiar with the process of building a small solar array with one of our Maine installers. First, the installation company makes a proposal, usually based on Google Earth images of your roof. If you want to proceed with this project, you are asked for a deposit, usually around one third of the estimated cost. This deposit goes toward completing the project design, applying for a connection agreement and starting to assemble the resources to build the array. If the utility refuses to grant a connection agreement, the installer will refund your deposit -- except for 1000 dollars to cover their efforts to that point.

You can imagine the reaction when our committee tells a Brooklin neighbor that they could stand to lose a thousand dollars if Versant refuses to grant permission to connect! Now, not only is our school roof project in limbo, a large segment of our committee's work has come to a halt as well. We can't even explain the problem to our neighbors, or offer any timeline for it's resolution.

A full understanding of the workings of our electrical grid is beyond the capabilities of our committee, but we know that this problem must be resolved if the residents of Brooklin are to take part in our distributed energy future and do their share to help mitigate climate change. We feel that the laws and regulations that govern our utilities should be rapidly changed to incentivize the building of a smart grid and the distributed energy resources we need for the future.

Thank you for your time.