2009

East Bay Energy Consortium in partnership with Roger Williams University : Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

The East Bay Energy Consortium (EBEC) is a voluntary gathering of the cities and towns of the East Bay region of Rhode Island. Participating cities and towns, connected by geography and history, have an interest in reducing energy expenditures; reducing vulnerability to price increases for energy; reducing reliance on energy producing methods which may be harmful to the environment; and minimizing dependence on foreign energy sources.

Preliminarily, wind studies from the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources show that there are many sites onshore in the East Bay area that could support utility grade wind turbines economically. Together, the cities and towns of the East Bay region in partnership with Roger Williams University, wish to pursue a feasibility study which would address legal and technical issues, and would provide a snapshot of those sites in this geographic region which may hold promise for energy production.

Roger Williams University is providing logistical support to the cities and towns of the East Bay Energy Consortium, convening and hosting meetings, offering staff and faculty expertise, and assisting with applications.

City and town officials from the East Bay have identified a number of legal and technical issues to be explored in this feasibility study.

Among the legal Issues to be Explored

- In RIGL 39-26 Renewable Energy Standard- definitions of terms:" Eligible facility," "Owner," "Consortium."
- Restrictions imposed by RIGL 39-26-6 (g) (1) that limit net metered eligible energy systems to 2.25 MW or 3.5 MW name plate capacity.
- Restriction in RIGL39-26-6 (g) (1) "energy systems…located on city or town owned land."
- Restrictions of United States Internal Revenue Code Section 54 (j) (4) limiting "qualified issuer" to, among other entities, "a governmental body." (A consortium is not a governmental body.)
- Ownership issues as well as long- term site control.
- Ownership of Facility (facilities) - consideration of various legal/financial structures: advantages or disadvantages of given alternative structures.
- Operation of facility and responsibility of consortium.

Among the technical Issues to be Explored

- Obtain, and evaluate data on average annual wind speeds at various potential sites.
- Location and capacity of local distribution lines.
- Equipment size, cost, efficiency under various wind conditions.
- Consideration of key financial factors and development of financial models.
- Collecting the municipal electrical load data from the consortium members.

City and town officials have also given thought to possible sites that may hold promise for wind-driven energy generation, and would use this feasibility study to begin to bring potential sites into focus.

The legal and technical issues identified above will form the basis for a scope of work to be developed to invite consultants to bid for the right to conduct this study. A preliminary list of qualified consultants has already been developed. The participating cities and towns will provide cash and/or in-kind services, along with an estimate of valuable interaction and support from Roger Williams University, to complement the resources that will hopefully be awarded from the Renewable Energy Fund of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation.