

Western Massachusetts Solar Forum – Part II

6/4/24

Transcript

(Note - the transcript timestamps are divided into two sections:

First Section: 00:33:02.000 - 05:11:40.000

Second Section: 00:00:00.000 - 00:45:04.000)

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Alright, good morning everybody. We will get started in a moment. Welcome to the Western Massachusetts Solar Forum part 2.

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June 4, th 2024. Let me just pause a few seconds for, final people to join us and then we'll get started.

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Okay, very good. Thank you everybody for joining us today. I'm Dwayne Breger.

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I'm the director of the Clean Energy Extension at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

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We're very excited to have you all join us today, panelists attendees, facilitators.

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Elected officials, and everybody. In part one of the western Massachusetts solar forum spanning 4 sessions in September and December of last year we heard and learned a great deal about the issues around the business of solar development.

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Land use, and equity and heard perspectives across the breadth of stakeholders. The motivation for our Western Massachusetts Solar Forum Part 2.

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Is driven in part by continued progress at the state level in driving our clean energy transition. And our continued interest in challenges in Western Massachusetts to carefully and proactively embrace solar that make sense for our communities.

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The timing of this forum is aligned with the important work and recommendations of the commission. On energy infrastructure, sighting and permitting.

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Which was which recommendations were released in April 2024 in which we will hear more about shortly. And the ongoing work of our state legislature on considering these recommendations and other policies to encourage a successful clean energy transition.

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The form part 2 is meant to hear and discuss issues around this ongoing work. And provide Massachusetts the opportunity to add their voice to the process.

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And lend an ear to listen to the policy process and ability to offer further input to the local and state leaders.

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Months of the legislative session. We are all proud of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts being a national leader in solar and clean energy.

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And the Commonwealth has set ambitious goals for additional development to meet renewable energy targets by 2030 and by 2050.

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Increasing solar capacity is necessary to meet our renewable energy targets. And our climate goals. And has the potential to provide significant economic benefits to state.

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Residents. However, solar development and installation can conflict with other state and local goals, including land preservation, wildlife conservation, local food production, and environmental and social equity.

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We are here to unequivocally support any and all solar development, nor can we constrain the solar we need, but to understand and help find common ground to thoughtfully and embrace solar development that meets our climate goals.

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Supports our communities, takes care of our natural resources and provides affordable energy and benefits across all our demographics.

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With this, we are delighted to have you all join us today and let's get started. 1st I'd like to quickly go over the few logistics for the Zoom Webinar form today.

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So the next slide.

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This. Forum is in the zoom. Webinar mode. In this mode only panelists are visible on screen when their video is on.

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All others are muted. Throughout the form except. During the community voice portion after lunch. The chat feature is not available to attendees.

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The forum will be recorded and is being recorded. And made and the recording will be made available to the public on our website.

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Please use the Q&A button to offer questions and brief comments. Comments maybe the comments that you provide may be used to steer.

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The direction of the panel discussions. But we are also eager to hear your comments. And to compile those comments which will be shared on the forum website.

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We will have limited time to directly address. Questions but still compiling those questions and comments through QA.

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Would be we would encourage you to offer those comments. Due to the limitations of the Zoom Webinar capabilities, we unfortunately were not are not able to offer the breakout rooms that were originally on the agenda for the after lunch session.

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So our after our 1st session after lunch, has their, been redesigned as a plenary plenary.

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We will stay together as a plenary, but with the opportunity for community voices to be heard and we'll get to that after lunch.

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For those that are interested, American Sign Language, English transcript, and transcript translation into other languages.

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Of this webinar, is available using the interpretation or show captions, zoom buttons at typically at the bottom of your screen.

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Great. So this form is the outcome of a lot of work across the past couple months by my colleagues here at the Clean Energy Extension, particularly River Strong, Mary Kraus, Zara Dowling.

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And in wonderful collaboration and visioning from our local state delegation, Senator Jo Comerford and Representative Mindy Domb, along with their excellent staff.

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Thank you for this partnership and I'd like to invite Senator Comerford and then Representative Domb.

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To provide you all with a short welcome. So if you can both come onto the screen, send it a comeer for you 1st and then representative Domb.

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Thank you very much.

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Thanks, Dwayne, and good morning, everyone. And I will be very brief because I like you, the attendees on this.

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Zoom Webinar really want to listen and learn deeply about this really important topic. So I'll add my thanks to the clean energy extension for convening a second forum to go even deeper than the 1st one.

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And I'm happy to join Rep Domb and our Western Mass. Colleagues. So House and Senate members are also co-sponsoring this.

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Because we like you believe it is one of the most important topics facing our. And we need to both listen and learn.

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And get as expert and hear as many diverse voices as possible. My thanks to Undersecretary Judge for being here and the Healey Driscoll Administration.

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Thanks, of course, to Chair Barrett and Chair Roy. And I want to say especially from my perspective in the Senate, deep gratitude to Senator Barrett for his willingness to really grapple with equity when it comes to solar policy.

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Regional equity and citing equity. And especially I want to thank the attendees, all of you who are on today or will and there are many of you or who will look at the zoom recording because it is again our job as a collective body.

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I represent 25 communities in Western Mass. And you are the people I work for. And so together we will go forward, into this.

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New future as Dwayne said that we have to build together. So thank you so much, Dwayne, for this opportunity.

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Thank you all.

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Good morning everybody. I'm Mindy Domb, State Representative for the 3rd Hampshire District, which includes the towns of Amherst and half of Granby as well as the Umass Amherst campus.

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I want to also express my appreciation to my colleagues in the Western Mass state delegation who have enthusiastically supported this forum, both parts one in today's part 2 and special appreciation always to my legislative partner, Senator Comerford for her fierce leadership on this and so many issues.

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I also want to add my gratitude to everyone at Umass's Clean Energy Extension for being such terrific community partners and for their tireless commitment to supporting our community to develop the knowledge and skills.

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For effective participation in these policy discussions and decisions. I also want to thank my colleague, the gentleman from Franklin, State Representative Jeff Roy as chair of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy, or TUE for his participation in today's forum and in part one, and for always being available to offer his expertise.

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And contribute to community skill building on these important matters. And lastly, again, thank you to each of you for joining us and thank you in advance for completing your evaluations for today to let us know.

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How today's discussion has impacted your understanding and engagement. Thank you. Thank you, Dwayne.

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Thank you so much. We couldn't ask for a better delegation from Western Massachusetts and partnership in helping to develop this forum.

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Thank you so much. And, and to Mindy's point as well. Thank you, to, the other state legislators who have co-sponsored.

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This forum. Thank you to Senator Comerford. Thank you to Representative Domb for working with those, state legislators to bring them in, in their interest and, and support for this form.

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Thank you all, co sponsors for your, support of this forum. You are all listed here.

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And lastly, Yes, please. Yes, please.

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Dwayne, Dwayne, we have a question asking how many people are attending currently and so we can say there are 116 people currently on the webinar with more expected.

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So I just wanted to make sure we answered that as quickly as possible. Thank you.

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Awesome. Yeah, excellent. Thank you. And we'll, maybe we can update that periodically through the day is that is likely to change.

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So perfect. And thank you. I haven't quite looked at that yet or the QA, but I will keep track of that as well.

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Okay, very good. And also, just I wanted to acknowledge and thank the numerous state. I mean, municipal officials who have joined us today.

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And, certainly our 1st group of state officials and elected officials who will kick off the webinar shortly and I'll get to that in a moment.

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Let me just, briefly go through the agenda and a glance for the day. So people know that what's in front of us for the day.

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We will start off the morning shortly, right after this, with a kick off, and setting the stage, with regard to the, citing commission recommendations, with, under Secretary Mike Judge for, from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and our 2 co-chairs for the joint legislative committee on telecommunications utilities and energy.

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We will spend the second, session, in the morning, on 2 panels that will be discussing the implications of the sighting commission recommendations for Western Massachusetts communities.

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We'll have a short lunch break. When we convene after lunch. We will have an afternoon 1st session, which will be this opportunity for hearing community voices over, directed towards 4 different topic areas will essentially have about 15 min to hear voices from each of the on each of these topics and each of those topics will have a.

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Separate facilitator to help us. Through that process. And then we'll close, the forum with an afternoon second session, looking at really how to balance trying to, hear from panelists.

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And some discussion among those panelists, with regard to balancing the trade offs.

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This is why this is so hard, because we have multiple things that we want to balance at the same time.

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We want to address climate. We want solar. We also want community economic development. We also want to protect our natural working lands and we also want equitable outcomes and affordable energy.

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So we'll have it discussion of about that balancing act. So with that, I do want to thank in advance.

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I'll thank everybody as well at the end, but thank all our panelists. The facilitators and the community voice facilitators.

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Thank you in advance for the form. And also, there is a full agenda with the panelists names.

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I'll have slides to introduce them when the panels come on, but if you want to look at it in advance, you can find that at our forum, but if you want to look at it in advance, you can find that at our forum web page.

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Okay.

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Alright.

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Great. So, let me start off, the 1st morning session, which is setting the stage.

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We are delighted and honored to be joined by 3 state officials who are in the center of driving this process forward.

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It's with great pleasure that, I introduce Michael Judge, the Undersecretary of Energy for the Executive Office of Energy Environmental Affairs, he will offer us some remarks specifically on the citing commission and their recommendations.

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And then we'll hear from our critical co-chairs of the joint legislative committee on telecommunications utilities and energy 1st representative Jeff Roy and then.

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Michael Barrett and I'll introduce them after Mike but at this point let me turn the floor over to Mike Judge and Mike if you are able to put your video on and then you can share your screen.

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And override my sharing is the way this would work the best.

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All right, one second here. Let me just, bring this over. Make sure I'm doing it right.

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Perfect. We, well, we see your entire desktop. So. Okay.

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There we go. Did folks see that? Prostitution. How about this?

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Yeah, if you put in presentation mode, that's probably gonna be better, but yeah.

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Okay. Great. Do you still associate the presentation?

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Yes, but it's still. Not in presentation mode, if you know what I mean.

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Just while you're getting going.

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It moved onto the other screen. Give me one second here. I'm just gonna stop share and just fix it so that it because it's when I when I put it into presentation mode it moved it to the other screen.

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Yeah, gotcha. Yeah. I also like to point out and when I welcome Mike to point out he's a esteemed S.

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Graduate. Alumni in the honors college. And so it's always wonderful to welcome.

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Mike Beck.

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Thank you to me. One second here. Think now it should do this does it work now Okay, great.

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Perfect. Yeah, that looks great. Thank you.

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All right. Well, thank you. Thanks for having me here today. This is a great opportunity to talk about this.

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Doing a little bit of a road show in the last few weeks, as you might imagine, speaking in a bunch of different forms on this topic.

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But excited to be here with everyone today. So I'm going to start a little bit by highlighting some of the energy, the clean energy needs and challenges that the clean energy needs and challenges that Massachusetts faces right now.

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They've, Okay.

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The background of commission and the specific recommendations that have been made. So just a level set, folks are probably generally aware of our global warming solutions act requirements and the clean energy and climate plans.

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But for those who may not be familiar, we have some pretty significant greenhouse gas reduction requirements that the state needs to meet in the next in the next several years in coming decades so for focusing on sort of the medium term objectives right now for 2030 in particular we are required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% relative to 1,990 levels.

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Between 2025 and 2,030 that is the steepest reduction on the entire curve of the of our global warming solutions Act mandates that the sharpest reduction on the entire curve of the, of our global warming solutions act mandates that the sharpest reductions have to occur in that 5 year period.

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And that's going to require a lot of progress to be made in the transportation and building decarbonization sectors but really the linchpin of all of this is the power sector.

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If the electricity that we are consuming is not clean, then all of the additional transition to heat pumps and electric vehicles will not be clean either.

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So we really need to focus our efforts on deploying as much clean energy as we as we can in a very quick manner.

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So as far as what that means for 2030, 2,030 in our clean energy and climate plan, there's some modeled targets.

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So these are not the BL and all of what needs to happen. But 1st of all, that there's it's an assumption that the Northeast Clean Energy transmission line is online and operating.

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That is still not constructed, but we are it will be and but there in addition to that we need 3,650 megawatts of wind according to that we need 3,650 megawatts of wind according to the CCP and 8,360 megawatts of wind, 3,650 megawatts of wind according to the CCP and 8,360

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megawatts of wind according to the CUCP and 8,360 megawatts of solar by 2,030.

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And we're pretty far off both those targets just to be clear with people and I'll go through a little bit of the breakdown on each of those but that's also going to require a lot of energy storage and we don't have a specific target for 2030 for energy storage but we do know that it's going to be in the thousands of megawatts.

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If there's there's a lot of there's a lot of storage that's going to be required to integrate all of these renewable sources into the system and help keep peak demand low and keep the load shape of the electric grid relatively flat so that we don't have to maintain all of these peak resources to meet system peaks.

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So going to each technology, the, in the wind space, that 3,650 megawatts of wind that the CCP models we need by 2,000 33,200 megawatts of that is offshore wind and as many people may be aware the offshore wind industry does currently face a bunch of significant challenges, currently face a bunch of significant challenges, particularly in a bunch of significant challenges, particularly in

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the of significant challenges, particularly in the areas of supply chain issues, particularly in the areas of supply chain issues, particularly in the areas of supply chain issues, inflation and other macroeconomic, in the areas of supply chain issues, inflation and other macroeconomic challenges that they're facing as well as workforce.

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So we're trying to build a sustainable industry here, but this is a lot of steps that go into that and having a stable pipeline of projects is definitely something that's really, go into that and having a stable pipeline of projects is definitely something that's really critically important.

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So right now we do have a stable pipeline of projects is definitely something that's really critically important.

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So right now we do have a procurement out of projects is definitely something that's really critically important.

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So right now we do have a procurement out, it's our 4th offshore wind solicitation.

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We are soliciting up to 3,600 megawatts of offshore wind as Massachusetts alone, but we've also partnered with Connecticut and Rhode Island and are trying to leverage our collective resources to hopefully continue to have a pipeline of offshore wind projects that that's coming online.

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We do have the vineyard wind project that is operating and is under construction that is now the largest operating offshore wind farm in the United States.

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But that's not going to get us to where we need to go. 4 times that the size of that project built by 2,030 to achieve the CCP targets which is going to be very difficult if not impossible to achieve.

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But then going beyond that, achieving 2035 targets and beyond can require more than one gigawatt of offshore wind deployed annually from 2,030 to 2050 so very significant amount of capacity deployed every year.

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So supply chain development is going to be really key to success, but the sighting of onshore transmission infrastructure to deliver this power to load centers is also going to be critical.

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So citing those . Sure pieces of infrastructure to actually connect this to the grid is a really critical piece of all this.

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And then as far as onshore wind, in Massachusetts, it's an extremely challenging proposition. There has not been any onshore wind resources developed in Massachusetts since 2,016.

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There's not a lot on the horizon. I think there's some potentially some onshore resources that we could develop outside of Massachusetts.

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But developing any new onshore research is going to be very difficult. On the solar front. We're currently pretty far off from tart reaching our long term and solar installation goals as well.

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We have a lot of interconnection challenges on the grid at the moment. A lot of hosting capacity challenges.

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There's a lot of concerns about land use, but to reach our 2030 goals in the CECF it's going to require us to deploy an average of 600 megawatts per year which is pretty far above the current pace of installations.

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You can see here on this chart from SIA, Massachusetts has only achieved that threshold 2 times. So we're gonna have to achieve that every year going forward through 2,030 in order to meet that CCP model target value.

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To be on that if you're going to reach 2,050 targets that we've modeled, you're going to need to deploy, probably double that or maybe more than double that every year between 2,030 and 2,050 to achieve our CCP targets.

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As I mentioned before, move into a grid that's really heavily reliant on intermittent renewables is going to require a lot of energy storage.

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That's going to require different types of energy storage, some of which are not as commercially available today, but it's gonna require short term, medium term, multi-day storage.

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The exact quantities are hard to estimate because it's dependent on a lot of factors such as the types of resources that we have and the types of storage resources that you're talking about, and the types of storage resources that you're talking about.

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But we do know that there's going to need to be a lot of it. There's an unclear value proposition for some of this in the wholesale markets right now we're trying to create proper financial incentives and in value streams to properly value these resources.

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Interconnection is a challenge, but also citing and permitting is a big challenge as well.

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Certainty as to how these facilities are permitted in Massachusetts that I think the Commission is definitely trying to help address.

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And then lastly, I'll just note the the connective tissue for all of this, the thing that enables us to interconnect these resources to move this power around to the customers that need it to serve customers that are adopting electrification measures like heat pumps and electric vehicles.

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All of that requires transmission and distribution infrastructure. So the electric grid itself needs to be dramatically expanded to the electric grid itself needs to be dramatically expanded to meet the electric grid itself needs to be dramatically expanded to meet the moment that we're in, the electric grid itself needs to be dramatically expanded to meet the moment that we're in.

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And so that's going to require significant investment and there's a lot of different proceedings going on right now related to this at the Department of Public Utilities, most notably the, ever, the electric sector modernization plans that have been filed by every source national grid in Unitil.

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Just a couple highlights in terms of the these these are graphics from those plans, but just a couple highlights for every source by 2,035 they're estimating the need 17 new substations and to upgrade 26 existing substations for national grid they're estimating they need 28 new substations and to upgrade 17 additional substations existing substations.

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So a lot of investment and kind of unprecedented levels of investment in a very short amount of time and unprecedented levels of construction that's going to be required in a very short amount of time if we want to stay on track for meeting our climate reduction requirements.

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So with all that in mind, I wanted to kind of start getting into some of the challenges with the current process.

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So to date, permanent processes are lengthy, unpredictable, sometimes duplicative.

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You see timelines that vary considerably that are indefinite there's no there's no set timelines or deadlines for any permitting, pretty much any part of the permitting process today.

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And historically, if you're looking at larger pieces of infrastructure that have to go through the energy facility sighting board, it takes between one and 4 years for the energy facility setting board to issue and approval to construct only after which projects can actually go seek out other permits.

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So they can only apply for local state permits after obtaining the approval to construct. There's an opportunity for appeals of every single permit that needs to be issued.

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In some cases, projects need up to 15 different permits at the state and local level. And so if each one of these can be permitted, it can really amount to years of delays.

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Or each one of these can be appeals that each one, can amount to years of delays.

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But also, you know, this isn't just an issue on the length of time for the product development side of things.

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I think communities often feel they don't have sufficient input or impactful input into the sighting of these projects and that they may not have the resources to fully engage in the permanent process.

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So not only is the process not working for developers, it's not working for communities. And it's very much the administration's view that we will not meet our greenhouse gas reduction limits without some significant reform.

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In the citing and permitting space. So with that in mind, the commission on energy infrastructure setting and permitting was established by the governor via executive order 620.

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It was required to advise the governor on 3 different things. So accelerating the responsible deployment of clean energy infrastructure through setting and permanent reform, facilitating community input into the citing and permitting process and ensuring that the benefits of the clean energy transition are being shared equitably among all residents.

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So the the task force was supported by an interagency citing and permitting task force so that was comprised of about 15 or so state agencies that have different roles and responsibilities in the sighting of clean energy infrastructure or just infrastructure in general.

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It was also supported by a sighting practitioner advisory group, which is a group of 12 attorneys with significant experience in the citing and permitting of energy infrastructure.

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The commission held 15 meetings over 8 months. There was 2 public listening sessions held and over 1,500 public comments received on a document that was put out outlining some of the discussions the commission had to date up until that point in time.

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And, recommendations were sent to date up until that point in time. And recommendations were sent to the governor on March, the 29.th

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And recommendations were sent to the governor on March, the 29, th 2,020. And recommendations were sent to the governor on March, the 29, th 2,024 and are available on the commission's website which I can write a link to folks for folks if they need it.

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As far as the commission members itself, it had approximately 25 or so. I can't remember the exact number of stop my head members with a wide diverse group of interests and perspectives represented.

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So there was state agencies, municipalities or municipal representatives. Environmental justice organizations, climate environmental land use advocates, electric utilities, agricultural interests, the energy practitioners as I mentioned, clean energy industry representatives, housing and real estate, labor, and the 2 chairs of the TV committee who you'll hear from later, where all members of the commission and sat through all of the meetings that we had and it was a

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very robust discussion in process I can assure you. As far as the recommendations that were made, these are some of the highlights.

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I'll go through each of them in a little bit more detail in a minute here, but the one of the kind of foundational pieces of this was to define clean energy infrastructure.

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So it was defined as solar wind and anaerobic digestion energy storage facilities and transmission and distribution infrastructure.

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And so part of the reason that we landed on these is solar wind and nerd digestion are all technologies that are specifically called out in the CCP and for which the state and municipalities have a significant permanent role in Massachusetts.

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They're also the pretty much the only types of facilities that have been developed in any kind of significant volume in the last decade, decade and a half in Massachusetts.

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It's not to say these are the only types of resources out there, but this is where the commission focused its attention was on permitting these types of generation, clean energy sources, so mostly battery storage facilities, and transmission and distribution infrastructure.

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Generally, the commission recommended that permitting be consolidated at both the state and local levels and what what's meant by that is combining different permanent processes into one proceeding.

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So rather than having a bunch of disparate proceedings or disparate approvals trying to combine those permitting processes.

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Into one final decision and I'll get with that into what that means at the local level because it doesn't necessarily mean restructuring, municipal government.

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It just means sort of combining some of those decisions that are issued by different boards of authorities and local local entities that have permanent authority combining their decisions into a single decision but not necessarily combining their process.

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But in in consolidating another, outropping effect of that is that you streamline the appeals process.

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If there are less permits and less proceedings, there's less avenues for appeals and you really sort of, Martin, everyone marshals all their resources into that proceeding and attention is focused in that one permitting process.

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Additionally, there was, among the recommendations was to set mandatory timeframes for making permit decisions.

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So across the board, there's some slightly different timelines depending on types of projects and different permitting processes but more or less their projects are going to be expected to be through the permit process in about 12 to 15 months from the point at which their application is deemed complete by the permit authority that has jurisdiction.

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There is also an effort in the recommendations to establish some pretty strong community engagement requirements for developers. So, some pretty strong community engagement requirements for developers.

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So making it very strong community engagement requirements for developers. So making it very clear how the how projects are to engage with communities as they are moving through the permitting process, creating clear avenues and steps that they need to engage with the community.

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And really trying to improve that process to ensure that community input is heard and is meaningful. Among the recommendations was to a lot of recommendations to provide support to municipalities and other organizations to better engage in permanent processes.

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So that includes things like intervene or financial support at the Energy Facility Siting Board, which I can get into it a little bit.

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But it also includes guidance and other these organizations better understand these technologies and some of the permitting requirements for each.

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And then lastly, I'll just mention there's also a recommendation to establish guidance on the suitability of sites for future energy infrastructure development development.

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So this is primarily looking at site selection through and environmental and land use perspective and helping to identify sites that are preferable from a setting perspective versus those that are that should potentially be avoided.

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Is the state permitting process, the recommendations from the commission were to consolidate all state, regional, and local permits for larger projects into one consolidated permit issued by the energy So today, the way this works is that products, that are, are, are, to the energy facility setting board submit an application or petition to the energy facility setting board for an approval to construct.

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The EFSB conducts an extensive adjudicatory proceeding and then either issues that approval or does not.

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Once that approval is issued, then the project goes and seeks out all these other permits. But then it has to obtain those permits individually and they can actually, a project can go back to the EFSB to seek a certificate that can, in which case the EFSB can issue the permits that the municipality might otherwise issue or the state might otherwise issue.

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So the EFSB today has the ability to issue almost any permit that a municipality or a state entity would issue, but only after a project has gone through that approval of the construct process and has faced obstacles obtaining the permits at this from the state agency or the local permanent agency.

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So this can be an extremely long drawn-out process that in some cases takes 8, 9, 10 years for a project to get through from start to finish at the state level.

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So under this, under the commission's recommendations, all state and local agencies that would otherwise have a permanent role can automatically intervene in an EFS in the FSB proceeding and would participate in that proceeding by issuing statements of recommended permit conditions.

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So a transmission facility going through a municipality. The municipality would participate as an intervenor in this proceeding and would say if we were issuing the permit ourselves these are the permanent conditions that we would impose and then that would be given a lot of weight by the energy facility setting board in their final decision and they may very well adopt those conditions exactly as proposed.

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By which the EFSB would adjudicate positions of parties if there was differences of opinion and how the permanent conditions needed to be applied.

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And then those permits would then be issued in less than 15 months from the determination of application completeness and those decisions would be appealed directly to the Supreme Judicial Court as they are today.

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So this really cuts down on the number of permits that a product needs to obtain. It reduces the timeline dramatically and it reduces the avenues for appeals significantly as well.

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But really tries to make sure that all communities and parties that have an interest in the permitting of the product have an opportunity to participate in that adjudicatory proceeding at the EFSP.

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This applies to facilities that are larger than 25 megawatts. So clean energy, generation facilities, large and 25 megawatts.

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It also applies to energy storage facilities larger than 100 megawatt hours and large new transmission projects.

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So that is projects over, I'm a push you that the limits. It's large, it's large, I'm gonna push you the limits.

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It's large translation projects over one mile in length and then kind of more medium will sized medium voltage transmission projects over, I can't remember the specific kilovolt level in length, but that those are 10 miles in length.

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So there's a bunch of different transmission facilities and there's it's sort of a tops the existing thresholds for EFSB review that transmission facilities have today, which I can't remember at the top my head.

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I apologize. The last thing I'll say about this though is that this is modeled off of what a lot of other states do.

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This is not a radical idea that it hasn't been tried elsewhere in the country. Rhode Island has a process that looks like this.

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New York has a process that looks like this. The Connecticut process is somewhat like this as well.

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So there was a lot of lessons learned and drawn from neighboring jurisdictions as to how they conduct their permit processes for large infrastructure.

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Moving on to the local side of things. The commission's recommendations were that local governments generally retain all permanent authority for projects that are not subject to review by the Energy Facility Setting Board.

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So this is I think actually nearly a hundred percent of all projects that are not EFSB jurisdictional today would still be not EFSB jurisdictional, or at least projects that have been built to date.

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So projects that are going through the local permitting process today that don't have to go to the FSB at all will still go through the local process.

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And they, Local governments can, as I mentioned before, can continue to run separate approval processes concurrently.

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So you could have wetlands review occurring concurrently with zoning review and those would not have to be merged or combined together into a single process.

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The municipality doesn't have to change in any kind of significant way. It's internal procedures.

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They would just have to be what would be asked of them though is that at the end of the 12 month period that they would be required to issue a single permit decision that includes any necessary approvals for the clean energy infrastructure or denials.

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For that matter. But it'd be one decision rather than 3, 4 decisions, that could be separately appealed.

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So in our view, this, this helps both the projects, but it also may help municipality because if there was a situation where multiple things were getting appealed, now you're cutting that down and you're reducing costs.

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For the municipality, but you're not taking away their authority to issue these permits, nor are you taking away the or asking them to change the inner workings of municipal government.

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Local governments can refer permitting review directly to the energy facility setting board if they don't have sufficient resources.

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So if they don't want, if they don't think they can permit the project or in the timeline allotted or have concerns about their ability to manage the process, they can kick it to the state.

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Permit applications can also be reviewed by the energy. Cities setting board following a local government's final decision.

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If a review is requested by the parties and then that can be appealed directly to the Supreme Judicial Court.

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And then lastly, as part of this process, D.R would create a standard municipal permit application in a uniform set of baseline health safety environmental standards to be used by local decision makers.

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So DER would be coming in and establishing a new division of citing and permanent that would be tasked with assisting municipalities in this process.

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I mean, navigating through process municipalities, community organizations, developers, all of them. Their goal would be to help facilitate and answer questions and help people navigate some of these requirements that are established.

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But the parameters that D.R would establish would could be used by municipalities to do a whole bunch of things.

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And one example I want to highlight is I know this is a concern particularly in a lot of the Western mass communities.

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People may be familiar with the Dover amendment, but the Dover amendment in Chapter 40 A, section 3 says that you, no municipality can, reasonably regulate or restrict solar or technologies that collect solar except for the.

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Except for the purpose of maintaining public health safety or welfare. So that is led to a lot of municipal bylaws being struck down, a lot of court challenges and a lot of ambiguity into where that line actually existed in terms of what is reasonable or regulation.

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And these rules that DERR establishes could allow municipalities to push back a bit on that. I give this is just an example.

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This is I want to prejudge how these regulations would be developed through this legislation passed. But let's say that a municipality has been host to 50 megawatts of solar facilities that have involved that have resulted in land clearing.

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Perhaps if DERR has a threshold and its regulations that says after 50 megawatts or after X amount of acres of land clearing, the municipality can say no more or they can put limits on that.

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That would be that that is not allowed today under current state law but it could be allowed under this framework so this could actually empower municipalities to actually have more.

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Control over some of the environmental conditions that they place on project citing.

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And just a few more slides here. And, this, this is a graphic that we put together to really show how this process is changing.

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And so this is available on our website. We do have an infographic with some other materials that we can provide but on the left you see the current process and you see the process for small products and large projects.

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And for small projects you see they have to go through all these individual permitting processes and that each one of those state and local and each one of those can be permitted.

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Or peeled separately and there's no deadlines for action by any of the parties permanent authorities in any of these processes for the most part.

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So these permit processes can take as long as they take. On the large project side, they have to go seek approval to construct from the FSB.

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Then they can go out and get all these permits, but again, an indefinite timeline. On the right side you see what we're proposing moving towards and for both small and large projects you see that the whole process has to be completed within 12 to 15 months.

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And there's that dotted line there that that allows certain small projects to apply for our consolidated state permit.

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So if they have multiple state permits, they can seek for that still have to go through the local process and utility infrastructure can opt into the Energy Facility Siting Board for good cause under the framework that we've proposed for smaller projects that would not otherwise be jurisdictions.

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But generally speaking, there's timelines and there's clear for appeals that are much more expedited.

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And today. As far as the community, engagement piece of this, a few items to highlight that the commission recommended were the formal establishment of the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity.

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So this is an office that sits with an EEA today. It is headed by my colleague, Under Secretary Power.

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This, but this would formally establish it in statute with a specific mandate to develop guidance regarding community benefits agreements and cumulative impact analyses which will be required by of all projects.

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Going forward under the proposed draft that we have. It would create a new, actually division of public participation at the Energy Facility Siting Board to assist communities and project applicants with engagement.

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Process questions for state level permitting. As I mentioned before, it creates a new division of setting and permitting at DAR to assist communities and applicants with the engagement process and process questions in local permitting.

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And then it establishes the recommendations. It's also establish a whole bunch of 1st ever mandatory community engagement requirements.

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Require out concluding things like requiring posting project information on a publicly accessible website, at least 15 days prior to a public meeting, specificity on the number and types of meetings that need to occur prior to filing with the FSB, a 60 day written comment period prior to filing with the FSB and then the documentation of efforts to involve community organizations and develop community benefits agreements.

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So really kind of making developers do a lot of pre-filing consultation and engagement to ensure that the community is not caught unaware of this project and has the opportunity to shape the project prior to it being submitted to any permanent authority.

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Lastly, just a couple more things here. So some additional recommendations. One of the recommendations of the, of the commission was to create an explicit seat for municipal interest on the Energy Facility Siting Board, which is reflected in the draft.

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There's also a recommendation to conduct a management study to identify the staffing requirements and what kind of funding resources, EFSB needs going forward to meet its new charge here.

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Creating this site suitability methodology and guidance to inform state and local permanent processes. So this would be looking at the suitability of sites from an environmental land use perspective and helping developers a full way to minimize and mitigate environmental impact from projects.

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Before they're even fully cited or permitted. And then a whole bunch of additional complementary reforms to ensure more efficient permitting processes, public education, and incentivized responsible development.

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So that includes things like extensions for projects delayed by interconnection, clarification on appeals processes, allowing large storage projects to apply for an EFSB certificate in the interim period before these new rules are in place.

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Currently they cannot do that. Review of a state noise policy. Particularly pertaining to battery storage projects.

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And then just some statewide education, guidance and technical assistance materials. And then lastly, some recommendations to expand incentives and requirements for projects in the built environment, particularly things like solar canopies.

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So the last thing I want to touch on is just some some things that the administration weighed in on.

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I say that the draft bill that has been developed has very closely aligns with the commission's recommendations.

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But there were a few areas where the commission could not come to agreement on certain things or where the administration needed to weigh in on a particular matter.

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So there's a few proposals that are included in the draft bill that come from us. One thing is that one thing that got a lot of discussion was the role of MEPA.

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Particularly for state level, or FSB jurisdictional projects for these larger projects. So the the language would exempt projects that are EFSB jurisdictional from MEPA and would embed sort of the environmental review requirements of MEPA into the energy facility citing board process.

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So the FSB would be responsible for subsuming a lot of the functions of MEPA under this.

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But it would also, in the sort of a bit of a trade-off there for exempting Meepa, all products now have to go through a cumulative impact analysis.

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So we're not removing any kind of any of the requirements of the climate roadmap law with respect to cumulative impact analysis that these products would have to undergo at Meepa.

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We're just embedding that now into the energy facility setting work process to ensure that any existing environmental and public health burdens are considered in the existing environmental and public health burdens are considered in the setting and permanent process by the FSB.

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Issues that I think we tried to find a compromise position on between different parties. And so far, it seems like we may have struck a decent balance from some of the feedback we got at least from commission members.

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These regulations that EFSB and DRYR need to establish would have to be promulgated by March 1, st 2026.

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So we are, that, you know, it may sound like a long time, but I assure you that's pretty quick for some of the, for the lift that needs to be taken here.

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This is, this is a lot of work that's going to be required to adopt all these rules.

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For just sort of consistency, there's a lot of, DPU, legacy sighting authority that predates the existence of the energy facility setting board, things like eminent domain for transmission and pipelines and a whole bunch of other provisions.

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Those would be transferred over to the FSB, so the FSB would truly be the state agency responsible for all sighting related matters and that there wouldn't be this split jurisdiction between DPU and the FSB.

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For the last thing that has not been seen by many yet is a proposal for providing interviewer funding support in both DPU and EFSP proceedings.

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Just yesterday we reached agreement with the attorney general's office on providing interviewer funding support in both DPU and EFSP proceedings.

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Just yesterday we reached agreement with the attorney general's office on both DPU and EFSB proceedings.

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Just yesterday we reached agreement with the attorney general's office on the structure of this proposal. And we'll be sharing that with, But, this would, provide financial support to parties that are under resource.

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And in particular, I think I want to highlight it would provide financial support to municipalities. That a particularly smaller municipalities.

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We've proposed a threshold of any municipality that has a population of 7,500 or less would be automatically eligible to access this funding.

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If they were an intervenor in an EFSB proceeding. So really trying to ensure that municipalities that are now being required to participate in any FSB adjudication or what would like to participate in one have access to financial resources necessary to pay for expert witnesses and legal representation in those proceedings because we recognize these are expensive and unusual endeavors that communities are not engaging in every day.

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So, more details on that if people have questions but that's an exciting part of this proposal.

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Last thing I'll just say is as far as next steps are concerned, as I mentioned, the administration has been working on drafting language.

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We've been in contact with, legislature on this in contact with commission members. We've gotten feedback from them on an initial draft.

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We've made revisions to that draft. We are going to be providing an updated draft to chairs Bard and Roy this week is the goal and so we're trying to move this process along and we we've been there's been a lot of work trying to to incorporate feedback from.

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Commission members and members of legislature and and others that are familiar with this process. So, excited about the prospect of getting something done this legislative session and, with that I'll close my presentation and, turn it over, turn it back over to Dwayne.

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Okay.

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Alright, thank you so much, Mike. That was a great, overview and and depth of the of the citing.

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Commission recommendations. And framework. And, and the work ahead. So thank you, Michael.

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For that. Let me, Let me as we make this transition to. Sorry, that, with.

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As we make the transition to our co chairs at the telecommunications, utilities and energy commit, committee legislative committee.

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Let me just take care of a couple housekeeping things that came up in the in the QA.

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1st is that, for, we will make available only after asking for. All our speakers for their contact information for attendees to, reach out to speakers, for attendees to, reach out to speakers, but only after we obtain permission from attendees to, reach out to speakers, but only after we obtain permission from the speakers.

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The full transcript of the QA, which we're encouraging you to offer comments. Questions and comments will be shared with all the speakers and the panelists and, and the public on our website.

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So please keep those Q&A's, questions or more so comments, coming forward and appropriate as well as useful comments for the panelists and the state leaders to consider.

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We will not be able to get to all the questions in that but I do also encourage panelists who do have access to looking at the Q&A to scroll through the Q&A to see if there's any questions there that might reflect on the comments they want to make later in the program.

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So again, thank you, Mike. that, that was a wonderful kickoff.

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And I should have mentioned also obviously I think it was self apparent that Mike was the chair of the commission of energy infrastructure, citing and permitting commission.

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And we now have and will turn to our 2 co-chairs of the Joint Legislative Committee on Telecommunications Utilities and Energy.

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As Mike mentioned, they also set on the citing commission as non voting members, which is appropriate for the legislature.

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And so we are honored to have both representative Jeff Roy and Senator Michael Barrett. To join us today, we will start off with representative Roy representative Roy.

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Represents the 10th Norfolk district and is the co chair of the TUE committee. So over to you Jeff, Representative Roy.

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Really appreciate you being with us. If you do have slides, that you want to share, please share your screen and override, my screen.

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Great. Thank you so much, Dwayne and, Thank you, Mike Judge for doing an amazing, summary of, that, work on the commission.

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Excited to be a part of it and I'm excited to be a part of this today. Let me go and attempt to share my screen.

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So bear with me.

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Alright, how did I do?

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Wonderfully. Thank you. Looks great.

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Excellent. So again, it's great to be here for this part 2 of your, program and, I was delighted to be part of the one in the fall and I'm looking forward to more discussions like this.

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To come. I want to thank Representative Domb and Senator Comerford for being such a strong advocates for your communities and ensuring that the particular issues that you're region faces are brought to the attention of myself and my co-chair and the legislature as a whole.

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These issues have certainly been at the forefront of the permitting and citing commission's work as you just heard under secretary Judge convey the key issues with solar growth, deployment, and land use that we're grappling with as a 2,050 net 0 limit looms even closer.

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Now, you know, I was asked to share my thoughts on the commission's recommendations and how the members in the house are, are considering the commission's work.

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And when I think back over the journey of permitting and citing commission. It's to where it is now I'm amazed at how much ground has actually been covered in the in the 1st months of the session which began in 2,023 I had filed a permitting reform bill.

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32 15 that I hoped would start a conversation on this crucial step of the clean energy transition. Permitting and citing on the most exciting parts of the green energy transition, but they are nonetheless vitally important to us success.

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And we've come a long way since that 1st month in January, 2,023. Stakeholder engagement began to pick up as the State House news service held a permanent reform event in April, 2023 and I sat on that panel with utilities, environmental and frontline community, environmental and frontline community groups and municipal interests.

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And, H 32 15 went through the public hearing process in June, 2023 and further dialogue.

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Continued as we received supportive testimony from 15 different stakeholder groups. And in September of 2023 as as under secretary Judge said the commission was set up to accelerate citing in permitting clean infrastructure and I was happy to participate.

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Along with Senator Barrett in this this program which I don't think you got a gist of it but It was masterfully led by and the secretary Judge.

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I think you saw that through his presentation, but navigating 15 meetings, 3 h apiece with the broad range of folks on there.

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I have to give a great credit to him for maintaining a sense of patience and getting, keeping us all on task.

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On the legislative front as the joint rule 10 deadline on February 7th 2024 approached the TUE committee sent a redrafted version of that original permitting bill.

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It's now known as H. 4,501 signaling signaling the legislatures continuing commitment to to advancing a solution.

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And as you heard, there were a number of listening sessions held in February and March and through this, this whole iterative process, the, conversation continued to unfold.

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I often say that, I have one mouth and 2 ears and, through the bill, which kicks out of the conversation, hope to do a lot of listening over the last couple of months so that we could put something together with the benefit of some really really expert commission members and the lived experience of frontline EJ and role communities who were well represented.

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On that commission. And when we were abacking on the redrafting process, we heard about the importance of including additional safeguards for environmental justice communities.

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And, we, you know, upon the commission's work being shared with the public, the commissioners heard overwhelmingly the residents and local officials wanted to ensure local control was preserved.

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Even as the state overhauled the permitting process. I can also say from my own office and also from my colleagues, representative Domb and others that we have also really heard about the particular challenges that Western mass municipalities have experienced with hosting a large amount of clean energy in proportion to other areas of the state.

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We've also heard about how towns are under resourced and how they'll need help to adhere to the new timelines proposed through the commission and I will say through all of this process.

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I'm very patented that the legislature and the Healey Driscoll administration working together have been key voices in this process and administration working together have been key voices in this process and I'm thankful for the way that, administration working together have been key voices in this process and I'm thankful for the way that, facilitated, stakeholder engagement.

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Has proceeded. I'm also thankful, from my co chair, Senator Barrett's contributions to the conversations I will say, Senator Barrett has sought to ensure that we ground these ambitious reforms within the practical realities of the current labor market and the challenge of fund finding and retaining expert individuals to staff.

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And agencies who will be carrying out these new directives. He also has emphasized the importance of transparency and tracking the progress of our reforms given the large volume of clean energy projects in infrastructure expected.

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While I still anticipate that we will use age 45 0 1 as a as a vehicle to move forward the draft that's on the secretary.

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Judge talked about I know that the conversation has evolved and it will continue to evolve and I heard him mentioned that we should see the latest draft by this week.

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I hope that we will stay true to that timetable given that the legislative session ends in about 7 to 8 weeks and we really need to get moving all this time table, given that the legislative session ends in about 7 to 8 weeks and we really need to get moving all this.

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But it's been So I would also just like to take a moment. to let you know that citing and permitting is not all that we have on store.

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For this particular legislative session and we hope to get a lot more done in a climate bill that we are putting forward and I will begin by saying that we did put forward some significant bills on clean energy.

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One is H. 45 0 3 and also some transportation and building electrification and decarbonization in H.

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45 0 2 and I know that Senator Barrett and his colleagues vetting a number of policies as well to add to the discussion.

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Let me, start with.

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H. 45 0 2 which provides the necessary steps for increasing electrification for all sectors, including buildings and transportation.

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I begin it requires DOER and mass.to work with stakeholders to forecast electric vehicle charging demand through 2,045 along highways and other mode.

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Major roadways and service plaza and to identify sites to create a statewide network of fast charging hubs.

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I've been a long time, electric vehicle driver and I am all too familiar with the difficulty in finding a reliable and quick charge if you want to read about some of those experiences.

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I even started a blog a few months ago called Range Anxieties. Calm that's anxieties in the plural because it's not just one anxiety that that hampers an EV driver but you can read about some of those experiences in our attempts to make things better for the residents of But the bottom line is we need to build out a robust EV charging infrastructure to really spur widespread

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rights spread adoption of electric vehicles. This legislation also establishes a statewide goal to decarbonize public schools, public universities, and community colleges by mandating and facilitating energy audits and energy efficiency upgrades.

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And solar power installations with priority for EJ communities. Also authorizes DOE to update appliance energy efficiency standards to ensure they keep pace with technological.

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Improvements. There are some other pieces in there, but let me move on now to, H.

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45, point 3, which is an act relative to clean energy generation. Calls for a new procurement of 9.4 5 million megawatt hours.

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Of clean energy resources and authorizes additional procurements if the DPU determines them necessary to achieve a statewide emissions reductions goals.

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You've heard the under secretary say that we have a long way to go and we're hoping that through this bill we can help kickstart and and get us back on path.

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It also sets a 10,000 megawatt solar target by 2030 and a 4,500 megawatt near term target for energy storage which will be crucial.

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To intimate and renewable resources. As CIA has tracked, the Commonwealth has 5,070 megawatts of solar installed, the 10th highest in the nation.

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And the, see a further projects that absent policy changes. Massachusetts is on track to have 6 gigawatts of solar by 2028 which is far below the target of 1010 gigawatts in the same timeframe.

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We also have some, measures in there that include, mechanisms to steer resources to the built environment.

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Including solar reforms to incentivize deployment on parking lots and remove barriers to solar access for low rate, low income rate payers.

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And this particular section came from H. 31 44, which is an act promoting solar energy canopies on large packing lots which were co-sponsored by representative Domb and senator Comerford come and the bill was originally filed by representative Blaze and this is an example how effective advocacy from the Western Mass legislators is really shaping energy and climate policy this session.

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I also wanted to share with you, just last week I was, out in, Copenhagen, visiting a number of sites and the site that you see on the screen here is, an industrial sized.

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Heat pump in Massachusetts is going to get one of these heat pumps next year and it'll be online by 2,028 and it's going to help decay.

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250 million square feet of buildings and Boston and Cambridge. It's an incredible step forward, but, looking forward to seeing that up in operation.

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So I'm looking forward to the rest of this forum to be useful to the legislature and so many areas of the energy and climate legislation and look forward to your input.

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And as we come to the closing months of the legislative session, it's not too late to speak up.

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And I welcome your feedback as, these bills move forward. So thank you very much for your time and attention and, I look forward to, hearing from my colleague, Senator Barrett.

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Great. Thank you so much, representative and co chair Roy. I really appreciate those remarks. And, yes, let me, then introduce, Senator Michael Barrett.

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Michael Barrett is the who represents the 3rd district 3rd Middlesex district. He's also the assistant majority leader for the Senate, and he also co-chairs, from the Senate side that committee on telecommunications utilities and energy so senator Barrett we're honored and pleased to have you with us today thank you so much for your for your remarks and

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I'll turn it over to you if you do have slides to share please just override the screen share at this point.

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Thank you, Dwayne. And I don't have slides. But I very much appreciate being here.

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I want to apologize just as you were introducing me. A lawn care company showed up in an adjoining.

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Home and the manage to turn on some very noisy bowers. I hope we can. Survive nevertheless.

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I wanna thank Michael Judge and Jeff Roy. I echo Jeff's observations about Mike's incredible chairing of this extremely diverse and at times quite provocative commission.

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He's done just a brilliant job. And Chair Roy brings to the table all kinds of ideas of his own.

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And does so very effectively. I might also add that I am a Reader, a devoted reader of his blog, range anxieties.

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Dot com. Reading it makes me anxious. I will say that is an effective, and vivid describer of The difficulties right now we have with the shortage of infrastructure.

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I finally wanna thank the Western Mass delegation and especially Senator Comerford. I think all of you know.

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That Jo is an extremely nice human being who is incredibly persistent. And does not let you off the hook although no one is nicer about keeping you on task and thinking about her constituents priorities than Jo, she's got.

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She's a natural politician. She'll probably, not wanna own up to being a natural politician, but my definition of natural is somebody who genuinely likes people who respects them.

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And who appreciates that there are lots of. Different points of view that need to be reconciled.

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So thank you, Jo, for being an exemplar. I want to talk about a couple of things that haven't been raised so far.

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I've been reading the Q&A. In the chat this morning. Questions and comments that people from Western Mass have posed.

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I feel I know the area relatively well. My daughter is a graduate of Umass Amherst Honors College, more or less at the same time as Mike Judge.

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And we spend a lot of time out in western mass and return censor graduation about 10 years ago just because I don't need to tell you guys because it's a wonderful place to be.

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An extension of all of the concerns that are being articulated in the chat and in the QA this morning, have to do, for example, I translate them as a fear.

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Of potential over building. A significant amount of money when they build out the grid. They're a regulated utility.

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They don't have free But they make their revenue roughly about 9 and a half percent. On every construction project.

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So my concern has been to protect concerns. Small communities. To.

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Be very concerned about preservation of open space whenever it can be preserved. To make sure that people are not burdened by construction.

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And to make certain that we rate payers statewide don't wind up. Paying any more than we need to.

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Michael Judge is absolutely right. This is Not only, and the a intrusive proposition of necessity.

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It's also an expensive one. Intrusiveness and expense kind of go hand in hand here. I think, this commission has heard, my concerns and Chair Roy's concerns about both expensiveness and intrusiveness.

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And I again, I want to thank. At Senator Comerford, Representative Domb, the Western Mass allegation for making sure that we remain.

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Fixated on those. Responsibilities and on those concerns. So some additional things. One doesn't want to go over the ground covered by Chair Roy and, by under secretary Judge.

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I do want to point out that in addition to everything that they've called for and as additional protection for small town.

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SA and there are layers of protection here right because you're going to have technical assistance you're gonna have intervene or funding, you're gonna have cumulative impact analysis.

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We also need continuing legislative and public oversight. We need some means of making certain that.

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We're only doing the things we absolutely must do and that we're doing them at the proper scale.

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And so I notice, for example, in the QA, that there is a, a concern about constructive approvals.

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This has been a worry of mine. The way this works is that we've got these 12 to 15 months.

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Timelines. Up to process our consideration of our project. If the state entity, which now has to represent the local.

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Concerns as well as the concerns across the Commonwealth involved with these things doesn't reach a decision within 12 or 15 months.

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Constructive approval kicks in. The project, in other words, is okay to anyhow. Of necessity if you didn't have this nothing would happen in many cases so I appreciate that the language has to be there.

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Still, I am concerned that the state step up to make sure the constructive approval, if possible, never happens.

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We want a thorough vetting of each project. Reflective of all the local priorities as well as the statements.

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We don't want anything short-circuited such that the construction begins without that oversight really having been exercised at all.

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We're going to need to track. Constructive approvals very carefully, right? Just in order to build and maintain faith in the process itself.

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So I hope that the legislature introduces into this process and I've discussed this with Senator Comerford.

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Strong oversight. It could come, for example, in both of 2 ways. It could, Require a.

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A construction of a of a dashboard. A dashboard which displays and time as real time oriented as possible.

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The way this process is working in the real world and affecting your communities and you. I would hope that the dashboard would explicitly, for example, Describe a very frequently, much more frequently than once a year, even more frequently if I have my preference than quarterly.

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Which projects are at what stage and whether any constructive approvals without review, effectively, have happened because of too many constructive approvals were to occur it would tell us an important something.

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And that would be that despite its best effort, state government hadn't maintained or hadn't been able to hire.

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The kind of professional staff it needs in the numbers we need. To make sure that the reviews of every project affecting Western mass, eastern mass, central mass is extremely thorough.

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And really does it here to the fine print of these protections that impressively compiled in these, draft documents.

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So I'd like to see a, a dashboard created that was a model for its kind nationwide.

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I would like that dashboard to reflect that the environmental impacts, the impacts on communities and the impacts on potentially on rate pairs.

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Because, let me tell you how this whole process. Breaks down if it does break down. The, an important but somewhat under emphasized term so far this morning has been investment.

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Mike Judge mentioned that building out the solar and the offshore wind and the battery. Capability that we need will require a lot of investment and that is certainly true.

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The people who develop these things go to the bank effectively and look for financing in advance. Of their being paid by the rate payers to do any of this.

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The bank has to be willing to. Loan them that money or provide that financing. But then the developer ultimately turns around to you and to me and to all our friends, neighbors and constituents and says, okay.

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Pay up in the form of Well, your monthly electric bills. We have to make certain those monthly bills remain in check to the degree that we can keep them in check, right?

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Because I can tell you, and many of you know this because I know this is a smart group.

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Worldwide, nationwide, and within Massachusetts.

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There are already protests heard whenever the electric bills go up. So we've got to make sure that 2 things happen that we keep the increases if they occur in check and 2 that we offset them perhaps with decrees on the natural gas side of the ledger.

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We can't really ask people to finance the expansion of both electricity and natural gas. At one and the same time.

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Electricity is going to get our emphasis and our dollars. Somehow we need to constrain the gas system.

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At one and the same time to give people some sense the balance is being maintained. The, The other thing I'd like to see and I'm glad I'm a partner in Chair Roy.

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Is that there needs to be legislative oversight hearings with very broad public participation throughout this process. The dashboard will give us data.

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The hearings will give you your continuing voices because You're right. Being heard now, you're going to be heard today, but really you need to be heard throughout the actual execution of the strategy.

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To make sure that we don't ignore. Or somehow slight the promises that we're making to you in this actually quite impressive.

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Piece of legislation looks very good on paper. I have faith that it will be true. That it will be a equally impressive in.

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Performance and execution but we have to make sure that that's the case. I'm going to, stop there, but I just I want to folks to know that the commission itself was the vehicle through which a lot of the concerns that Western mass is expressed.

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Have been heard. And there was a lot of discussion. There was a certain amount of dissension. There was a lot of interrogation.

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No premises were left on examined. I think, again, looking at the Q&A here, there's some very tough questions being posed.

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They were posed during the process of coming up. With these compromises, we both need to get the stuff done.

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And we need to leave people with a feeling. That they're not being. Just bulldozed.

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I think the compromise, I think the balance can be struck here, but only. If we continue to scrutinize the process.

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At every chart. And with that I want to turn back to. This forum, I do want to apologize in advance.

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I've got a a another engagement I have to leave. Where I physically am now for a 1215 appointment so I won't be able to stay too much longer.

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Then. 1130, but I'm extremely happy to have been with you all. Thank you.

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And thank you, Senator Barrett, for those remarks. I really appreciate you being with us. I would very much appreciate if.

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Senator Barrett, Roy, and Under Secretary Judge, if you are still available to get back on video.

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Not only do I wanna thank you, but I think maybe one, follow up question, if you are so inclined to comment on it.

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And let me just also, provide to the all the attendees and also to, you 3 is that we have a robust set of questions slash comments in our QA.

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So you can hear, the voices of Western Massachusetts. I wanna assure the attendees, that we are.

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Gonna have a transcript of all these comments questions and provide those comments and questions to all of us publicly but also directly to our state leaders so that they can also consider the comments here that are important from from Western Massachusetts.

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So keep those comments coming. Again, they're both comments as are probably more important than specific questions.

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Which we won't be able to get to many of those specific questions, which we won't be able to get too many of those specific questions, which we won't be able to get to many of those specific questions.

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But I do have, maybe one question. We have 5 min, and, just one question that sort of was a theme of some of the comments and questions that have come forward is in the case of solar, we're really talking about the lesson 25 megawatt.

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Situation in the, in the commission's recommendations. As, under secretary judge noted, we have tremendous additional capacity of solar that's needed to be built out.

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Year by year, year after year, for the Commonwealth to meet our clean, clean energy and climate plan, goals.

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And so while there is effort to put a good effort to put, projects on rooftops on parking lot canopies and so forth.

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It seems inevitable that some, of this solar build out and capacity needs to be ground mounted.

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That's where we get most of our megawatts today. I'm wondering if you could comment on on that as well as both the the need to do that both in terms of just where the capacity goes as well as the affordability of solar at scale, where the capacity goes as well as the affordability, of solar at scale.

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And then also what does the, sighting commission recommendations as well as potential some of this legislation, in terms of how solar sighting will be.

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Incentivized to be directed towards ground-mounted arrays that are less impactful on our natural environments.

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Thanks.

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I can start if you want. Okay, so yeah, I think, I mean, I don't have the numbers right now, but I mean, but in.

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Was either the the 2050 roadmap or the to see 2030 ccp. And in Der's technical potential for solar study in all these different.

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For, where the state sort of open. You know, technical potential and availability of. It's gonna be knowledge that we can't get there just in the built environment alone.

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So I think what that means is we need to be more strategic and thoughtful about where you know, what types of other lands we're using.

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We have been largely very strategic in many ways. Massachusetts has led the country by leaps and mouths in terms of citing projects on landfills and brown fields.

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We were the 1st state in the country to really promote these types of efforts. We were the 1st state to include specific incentives for building in certain built environment and on blighted more, you know, blighted lands, but lands that have, other like limited other potential reuse.

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I think at some point we just recently even in terms of EPA's tracking of redeveloped landfills in Brownfield, Massachusetts was 40% of all of them in the country were in Massachusetts.

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So we've picked over a lot of those sites just being honest with folks. I do think there's a lot of potential still remaining on rooftops and canopies and we will certainly be pursuing that.

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The smart program regulations, the straw proposal for some changes to those will be coming out very soon. And I think that will reflect sort of the state's policy priorities in terms of establishing incentives in those areas.

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But in terms of this process, I think we run want to be very intentional and thoughtful about. What areas we identify as suitable for solar.

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We have the work of DER in the technical potential solar city and other organizations that have done some analysis into this in this space.

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To build upon, but it's, I think, an inescapable truth that we cannot.

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Get to the solar deployment numbers that we've modeled are necessary in the clean energy and climate plan without some additional ground that it's sold.

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So I think we just want to be really thoughtful about where that goes. And that's very much built in too.

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This whole framework that's been established.

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Thank you, Under Secretary. Any, follow up. Thoughts on that from our legislature. Say towards.

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Well, I, yeah, I just wanna. Say that this idea of site suitability criteria. Was conceived over the course of the Commission's deliberations that it will give people an appreciation, I hope.

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For the flavor of the discussions that occurred at some point during the commissions deliberations. Advocates for open space.

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Representative, I might add up a lot of Western mass sentiment among, but really statewide said, look, We know that there needs to be a lot of ground mounted development.

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But we wanna make an attempt. To those ground mounted solar developments and battery storage developments.

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Where they, are best situated. I just, the discussion about how to do that. About our need to move beyond rooftops.

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And canopies was very nuanced. It took a lot of time to suss out. Exactly how an a compromise could be struck.

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And I only mention it because I sense that the the discussions that people here might like to have. We're echoed in the Commission's deliberations as well.

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Great. Thank you very much. We are at time, for the, for this kickoff, panel.

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And, let me just express, tremendous appreciation, for your time. Under secretary Judge, Senator Barrett, Representative Roy.

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And for your undertaking, on behalf of the Commonwealth, these very difficult issues.

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I'll just. Quote one comment that came in. Thank you, Undersecretary, Senator, representative, terrific to know the level of engagement and discussion.

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Okay.

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Great to know that our commonwealth is engaged in these issues and working working hard on all of our behalf.

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So thank you very much. Again, we will share the comments, questions and comments that we've received, with you also.

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You have the broader voice of the, of Western Massachusetts as you continue to deliberate over the next, 7, 8 months.

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I believe you said. So very much. Appreciate you, you being with us this morning.

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Okay. Alright. Perfect.

02:03:43.000 --> 02:03:45.000

Okay. Awesome. We are right on time, so I'm really happy, happy that that has all worked out.

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And let me move on to the morning second session. This is really to follow up on what we heard from the under secretary and the legislators on the implications of the recommendations of the commission of energy infrastructure citing and permitting for Western Massachusetts communities.

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So the panel, the 1st panel will have 30 min and then we'll have a second panel for 30 min.

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This 1st panel is, really focused on this question of how do commission recommendations affect the local process for solar planning, citing and permitting.

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What is helpful, what is concerning. So let me ask, Steve Long, you're here.

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Allison Gage, you're here. If Claire Chang can join us as well, on your video.

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And you can unmute as well. And John Mangiaratti. I'm gonna introduce each of you, and on the slide here is the order that I would.

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Appreciate you speaking you can all, we'd like to make this, simulate a panel as much as possible.

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So, if you're able, please keep your video on, throughout. The other speakers, you can mute yourself while you're not speaking to reduce background noise, but then get ready to unmute for your own remarks as well as for the discussion.

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To follow. So the format here will be, to have about 4 to 5 min of remarks from each of the panelists.

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We will hope to have, then about 8 to 10 min for some follow up questions and discussion.

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So feel free again to keep those questions, comments coming in from the attendees. Again, unlikely we can get to all the, questions, but again, these questions and more so comments will be shared with everybody at the end of the form as well.

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So if you have a voice you want to be heard, please feel free to put that into the QA.

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So let me introduce the 3 sorry the 4 panelists in order that I'd like them to remark, 1st is Stephen Long.

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Steve is the director of government relations at the Nature Conservancy. He also served as a member of the Commission on Energy Infrastructure Siting and Permitting.

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Next would be Claire Chang. She is a partner of Greenfield Solar. A solar development company in Greenfield.

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Next would be Alison Gage. Allison is the senior land use and natural resources planner for the Franklin County Council of Governments.

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Or FRCOG. And And then last in the panel will be John Mangiaratti.

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But John is the town manager for the town of Acton, Massachusetts and is also serves as the 1st vice president for the mass municipal association.

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John was also a member of the Commission on Energy Infrastructure. John was also a member of the Commission on Energy Infrastructure Siting and Permitting.

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So wonderful to have you all join us. Thank you so much for being with us this morning.

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And let me pass it over to you, Steve, for your remarks.

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Terrific. Thank you, Dwayne. I really appreciate the opportunity to provide some remarks.

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And I also want to thank the administration, my fellow commissioners, and the legislators who served on the commission and the legislators who are currently paying attention.

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And I see a lot of familiar names in the Q&A. I served, Jo Comerford's predecessor, Stan Rosenberg, for 6 years back in the early ninetys.

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So have a great affinity for Western Mass myself. And the nature conservancy, our mission is to conserve the lands on which, in which all life depends.

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And relative to renewable energy, we know due to the climate crisis, we need to decarbonize.

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So we want to see renewable energy and infrastructure rapidly deployed, but avoid impacts on people in nature.

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You And, in addition to serving in the commission, I also served on the Der's technical potential solar study and have helped shape the smart program.

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So as a lot of folks have said, we have a big paradigm change happening right now. Land use pressures or coming from energy infrastructure, housing, economic development, and also the need for conserving natural working lands for carbon sequestration and storage.

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And, also resiliency and adaptation. In my remarks, I want to focus on the commission's recommendations relative to legislation.

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What we should retain, what we can improve. And where the gaps are where the commission did not speak in the legislature should speak.

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So 1st I was really heartened to see that the commission said that we need to ensure to ring retain robust laws and policies.

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And we need to make sure that the substance for requirements of existing laws, especially those that relate to the avoidance of mitigation or harm are not compromised.

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Also I think the commission spoke to addressing new laws that developed developed since citing and permitting laws were last revised, things like the roadmap next generation law that includes carbon sequestration.

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The biodiversity executive order that will require goals, the resilient mass plan on adaptation and the environmental justice law.

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Also think an improvement would be providing for adaptive management of science and technology and policy that comes down the pike.

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I think also one of the things the commission emphasize was there needs to be earlier pre-filing processes to inform site suitability, design, and operation of solar facilities and infrastructure.

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That includes the science of a spatial mapping for site suitability informed by local ground truth thing.

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Maps are great, but they're not perfect. Community engagement, for informed by people's experiences.

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And historical knowledge and site suitability needs to be guidance, not just regulations. We need to we've together lived experience in science to inform citing.

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I think we also realize in the commission that there's going to be a groundswell of permitting and citing coming to municipalities.

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So as folks mentioned, there's a recommendation to create a new division. Excuse me, within Department of Energy resources on starting and permitting, and then also support for under resourced communities.

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And it's great to have. Like the clean energy extension. The regional planning agencies and mass clean energy center.

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One gap that I saw was insight suitability. There needs, there, there was a call for mitigation, but that needs to be spelled out more clearly.

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We need to clear out there's a mitigation hierarchy. First, st you avoid what you can't avoid, you minimize, what you can't minimize, you mitigate.

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And we need to have very robust mitigation standards. And specify that mitigation applies to biodiversity, carbon, sturgeon sequestration, climate resiliency, and environmental justice.

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So there were a lot of other minor pieces that I would like to see retained or improved, but I just wanted to focus on on the larger ones.

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One that someone else might address is we did the commission did not agree on community benefits agreements and I think we need that.

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So I'd encourage you to work with your legislators, to either retain enhance or augment the commission's recommendations to either retain enhance or augment the commission's recommendations.

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Thanks. And I look forward to hearing from the

02:12:18.000 --> 02:12:24.000

Fantastic. Thank you, Steve, for that. Let me pass it over to Claire.

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Right, thank you very much. So I'm with Greenfield Solar, a small company that does residential and small commercial installations since 2,005.

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Basically, we all know we're in kind of a pickle here with greenhouse gas emissions and we need to reduce them as soon as possible.

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Unfortunately, the electric sector modernization plan drafts ESMPs from the utilities which outlined their grid infrastructure and modernization plans do not actually include that much solar.

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It's only about 300 megawatts a year. We actually need about one gigawatt a year.

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Every year till 2030. It switches getting closer and closer. So we need to really speed up this whole process in order to get meet any of those goals and citing permitting and also interconnection applications have been woefully bogged down for the last 3 to 5 years.

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Even residential size systems are seeing transformer upgrade costs in the thousands of dollars. So this is a very large conundrum for everyone to tackle.

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And we need everyone to pitch in. To figure out how this works. And I think everyone can agree that certainly in the built environment we want to put solar there first.st

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However, costs for solar installations on rooftops, canopies, and trackers are much higher at least 2 to 4 times higher than a groundnuttet array.

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So those costs need to be paid by somebody. And unfortunately, the utilities are very focused on their mantra of the lowest cost.

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Possible for renewable energy. They don't want to pay any more than they absolutely need to.

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And so it's the need to part that we need to focus on. And I think DOER is in a situation in a.

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Timeline right now because the smart incentive is being reevaluated and crafted that we have an opportunity to increase the adders for building canopy and tracker mounted systems in the built environment to expand the definition of canopies to include not just parking areas, but any paved surface, sidewalks, picnic areas, recreation areas, and also non paved surfaces.

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So lawns, gardens. And that would greatly in, expand the horizon for where canopies could be installed in the built environment.

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Canopies also provide shade and they we could also tie them in with EV chargers. So there's many opportunities to make all of this work together.

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So the the smart incentive that we're we're waiting on 3 point. I'm hoping will include some of these other definitions.

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And then those opportunities in the built environment could be a larger percentage of our solar installations in Massachusetts. Unfortunately, because of how much decarbonization we're going to need in the transportation and heating sectors, we're going to double our electric demand.

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Even with really good concert and energy efficiency, we're still going to double our electric loads. And we need to make sure that this is done equitably across all households.

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And so rates electric I'm not going to go into how they're developed and everything. But most of your electric rate is actually based on the peak.

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Load. It's not all day long that you're using electricity. It's that you're using electricity at the peak load time period, which is probably between 5 and 7 p.

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M. Varies a little bit from day to day. But that's where your most expensive electricity is.

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And so if we can reduce that peak that load. Then our electricity rates will go down. And then we can afford to pay a little bit more to put solar in the built environment.

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Where we can actually generate electricity to offset part of that peak demand. So I, I think that covers the incentive part.

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Oh, the last piece about the incentive, the solar for all award that we got, which is fabulous.

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However, we got reduced amount of what we had asked for. I think because that is federal monies, we need to consider adding a 30% loan support for low-income households.

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So who are not able to use the federal tax credit to be able to equitably also participate in the renewable energy generation.

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We have many out here in Western Mass, low income households with nice big barns, nice big.

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Rooftops who would love to put solar on but it can't afford to because they don't get that 30% federal tax credit And I think that that's the last thing I'll come in on.

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And pass it to the next person. Thank you very much.

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Great, thank you, Clear. Let me pass it on then to, to Allison.

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Yep. Good morning. All thanks so much for having me on this panel. I'm speaking on behalf of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, which is the regional planning agency that serves all of Franklin County.

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As a regional planner on the energy side of things, I have worked with towns on zoning updates related to large-scale solar and battery energy storage systems and help towns make headway on their energy reduction plans as a part of the Green Communities program.

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Because my roles at the regional level, I reviewed the commission's recommendations with an eye towards thinking about land use, site suitability, and the capacity of small rural communities.

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The Commission's report recommends for the EA to coordinate and convene a stakeholder process for the creation of a site suitability methodology for clean energy facilities to help reconcile competing land use interests.

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In writing, that sounds great, but in practice I'm concerned that the not yet determined stakeholder process.

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We'll be done in a way that does not consider regional equity or cumulative impacts. We know for mass Audubons and Harvard forestrowing Solar, Protecting Nature Report, and the DOERs technical potential of solar study that there are plenty of suitable sites that would not burden communities in the environment.

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I'm sure many of you are aware of the proposed large-scale battery energy storage facility in Wendell that has led to regional outcry against the project because it would require cutting down 11 acres of forest land and would sit on top.

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On top of an aquifer that could be a water supply for the town. If site suitability was considered for that project, it probably would not have been proposed.

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Communities in Franklin County are not rejecting clean energy development. We've just seen how these conflicts can cause the needs of people in nature.

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No, and in the future to not be prioritized. I do hope that the suitable citing process incorporates local needs and perspectives.

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A handful of accounts in our region have already begun to take a hard look at their available resources. 3, is community planning for solar toolkit.

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Responses to surveys completed as a part of those plans show that community members are indeed supportive of the clean energy transition and hosting some of their required infrastructure, but not at the cost of our valuable farmlands and forests that provide our food, clean our drinking water, sink carbon and provide habitat for wildlife.

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That information along with community needs assessed or meaningful and equitable engagement should be considered in any stakeholder process focused on site suitability.

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The report mentions that EA will develop guidance to inform pre-filing permitting processes related to the level of scrutiny and requirements for developers needed to mitigate impacts on the environment of people.

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So this seems like it could be helpful for rural communities if we are able to take a holistic look.

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The other recommendation from the report I wanted to briefly touch on is related to providing regional coordinators to help minutes of meetings with community engagement processes, environmental justice issues, and legal expertise in zoning and permitting.

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In Franklin County, we certainly have a capacity issue, our planning boards, and other important roles in the permitting process are staffed by dedicated volunteers.

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I think having a regional coordinator house within the GER would be very beneficial to our communities. As we've seen with the Green Communities Program, having a dedicated staffer makes all the difference in getting projects off the ground.

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Increasing capacity, especially if we want to expedite timelines to meet the Commonwealth climate goals and the urgent demands of climate change will be critical.

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If the creation of a single consolidated permit at the local level becomes a requirement, a coordinator would be beneficial to help steer communities through that process.

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As it stands, there's not a process for local consolidated permitting so this could strain volunteer boards especially considering the threat of constructive approval.

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Overall, the report provides some encouraging recommendations for meeting the Commonwealth's ambitious climate goals.

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We have the FIRCOC will continue to advocate for the protection of our farmland and forest land and siting processes that consider cumulative impacts on communities.

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And I'll turn it over to John.

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Hey, go ahead, John. Thank you. Thank you, Alison.

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Okay. Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to be here.

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As mentioned, I'm John Manji and the town manager and acting, which, if you don't know it's off of route 2 or it's on route 2 in between, Concord and Littleton and Boxborough.

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But I'm here today representing MMA. Mma is a nonprofit association made up of cities and towns.

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We work together to support strong healthy communities and and promote good government on behalf of everyone. This, past year I was excited and honored to be pointed to work on this commission led by Undersecretary Judge and the steam panel, some of which you heard from today.

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I was the only person there, in the room that worked for local government, at least at the present time.

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And so I I felt it was important to to do my best to provide it you know our perspective. What permitting is actually like at the local level and some of the challenges that we face in my community we've had a few energy projects that we had challenges working through.

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So I was most concerned with sharing with the commission. That what we really need at the local level was more support. We need technical assistance.

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We need guidance. Our local processes and our technical resources have not necessarily kept up with. With this rapidly changing technology.

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That we're being asked to to review and consider and permit. And so I'm pleased that the commission, did include some recommendations, to support.

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Technical assistance and support. Communities as part of, the overall recommendations from the so the other things that the commission recommended.

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One of the most critical for communities is that it mandates a single standard application for projects that meet the threshold.

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Basically instead of having a project go from board to board. And maybe back to another board into a commission it would be a single application that all of those boards and commissions could contribute to but in the end it's required that the community would use that single application to make a decision on the project.

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That's something that I think it would be helpful in some ways, but it's also, trace challenges in other ways.

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And, you know, as part of our contribution to the commission and then they had hoped that this would be an opt in.

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Standard application. And we still think that's a good idea, but the also the recommendation was it for it to be a mandatory standard application.

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So we'll work with that. There are several pre-filing requirements and other things that developers would need to do before an application is considered complete.

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But once that happens, the community would have 12 months to make a decision. Or constructive approval would come into play in the current recommendations.

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So I think that overall, I know work is still going on with DR, to lay out rules and regulations and guidance.

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And we're watching closely the legislation. Bye, Chair is Roy and Barrett.

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So I think. Overall, this is created more capacity at the state level. Which is a good thing for cities and towns.

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And made things a little clearer and providing some resources for us. But we do have, we do hope that we have more input into overall what happens in the end with.

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How it impacts communities with the permanent processes. So, I just wanted to quickly provide that input.

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I'm happy to answer any questions. I did see a few in the the comments. That I'm happy to try to address.

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But it was an honor to be part of this group. But. There's some really strong advocates in this in the state for the work that we're doing here and I I got a chance to work with some of them.

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And it, it was, it was an honor to do so. So thank you for having me here today.

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I look forward to answering any questions.

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Alright, perfect. Thank you, John, and thank you to all 4 of you for those. Useful and valuable perspectives and and remarks. So thank you for that.

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We do have about 5 min before we have to jump to the next panel. So let me, Ask.

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You know, looking at the Q&A and truthfully, John, if you wanted to comment on any particular question or comment, that would be, that would be great.

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But I will, Ask both I guess 1st Steve and and John is commission members. There and with regard to citing projects and particularly looking at western Massachusetts this issue of how to go about citing projects in our and and and with with what's referred to in one of the comments is the mitigation hierarchy of trying to reduce harm as much as possible.

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Can you maybe, comment briefly on the commission recommendations and the discussions within the committee of of how that concept, I guess, has been born out in the, in the recommendations and the thought process of, of the commission.

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And then maybe hear from the local folks from, Alison and, clear as a solar developer, about how that really impacts, and can be implemented at the local level.

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John, I'm happy to jump in and then differ to you. Does that with you?

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That higher easier, specialty.

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Okay. So, I think 1st of all, The, members had a very robust discussion about.

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Impact on both people in nature and We looked at a number of different options to help avoid those impacts and then compensate.

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For impacts that could not be avoided. And I think site suitability and community engagement are the 2 major factors that will help.

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Guide to better decisions about the siting. And operation and design of facilities, particularly since the commission wants to see both of those happen early.

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So a project won't just be revealed to a community that a community will have a voice and what a project looks like.

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Where it will go and how it's operated. So I think we were considering things like. Biodiversity, natural and working of lands, carbon.

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Water supply protection land and environmental justice to siting a few, that were brought up at the, at the commission level.

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So I, I think a lot of that language got woven in among the recommendations. And, there was a light, you know, we didn't come to consensus on everything and we didn't, we had only a certain amount of time to deal with things.

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So I think. In Chairman Roy's bill, House, 45, one, he calls for in lieu mitigation.

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And I think that would be a nice. Complementary policy to add to the Commission's recommendations taking taking the in lieu mitigation which is basically the mitigation hierarchy of way to minimize mitigate, but then compensating.

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For what needs to be mitigated. And, and the way that looks is there may be a ratio of land that's converted to land that's protected.

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And there are programs like that already exist. In federal law and in Massachusetts programs. I hope that answers the question.

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Yeah, perfect. Thanks, Steve. Any other comments? We have a minute to go.

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Any other comments from, Clair John Allison on that on that issue, or generally how you, reflect on what other people what other your panelists have said.

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Please.

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It's like if I could just address a question I heard come up regarding the shared application. So that's something that the commission recommended.

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And then the deal we are, we'll figure out exactly what it looks like and how it goes, but.

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To answer a question about it's not that it's not that every board and commission has to get in one room and make a decision at a single time.

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It's that it my understanding is that each of the boys and commissions would make their They're normal approvals and submit them into that standard application.

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It just said what it really does is just set a timeline that doesn't exist today. The major difference is that there's a now now a mandated timeline and then a mandate form of application which is yet to be developed.

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Oh, that's how I think it would play out. If it comes through being the final way this goes forward.

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Okay, yeah, go ahead, Claire.

02:31:45.000 --> 02:31:56.000

So, Being a member of a small town, board, it's extremely difficult for volunteers basically who meet once a month.

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To consider these applications that are monstrous and it's technically unfeasible and also time wise, unfeasible for a lot of these small towns to take on these.

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Evaluations. So the technical and expertise that's per her, proposed to be provided. Will be certainly fabulous.

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And also the funding for intervenor sadness. However, having participated in some of these DPU proceedings.

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That is a whole nother level of legal expertise that is certainly none of the towns out here in Western Massachusetts are able to even consider Participating in at any level.

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And so the whole process, it has become extremely burdensome and overwhelming. So much so that I think a lot of towns are just shutting down and just saying we don't want to deal with this and that's why a lot of these solar bylaws are coming through that.

02:33:05.000 --> 02:33:24.000

Per our sending up moratoriums or temporary. Holds on permissions because the capacity for towns to Understand, digest, and then make a reasonable determination is really.

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Beyond them to take into account. I mean, we have towns as small as a hundred 50 people.

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And it's just. Way. And it's very unfortunate because we do have the land area out here.

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So. And there are certainly surfaces or land areas that are more suitable than others. However, a lot of it is private ownership.

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So how do you convince somebody that they have? Something that's valuable to all of the Commonwealth, but they want to keep it in whatever use they have it in now, which is their prerogative.

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Where somebody else says go ahead and cut all the trees. I don't care But it's it's really difficult to balance these the private marketplace, the free marketplace, the monopoly utilities and the greater good.

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Those are all issues that we all have to tackle with every day. But thank you.

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Thank you, Claire. And that actually is a good segue to some of our later said, panel, later in the, in the afternoon on, balancing these issues.

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So we were at time with this panel. So let me thank, thank all of you, Steve, Allison, Claire, John, for your remarks and discussion, really helped really helpful, and to add to their voices and conversation.

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So let me, we do have, a very quick poll. That to get some feedback, from our attendees.

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This is the question that we have here and this can be reflective of both the panel we just had, but also the morning kickoff session with the state officials.

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This regards the commission recommendations how clear is your understanding of the commission recommendations and how they relate to local site solar planning.

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So in a moment a zoom call will appear. And please take the opportunity to click on your, your answer, that.

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Most closely. And there it goes. Your choices are very clear, somewhat clear, not so clear.

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Not at all clear. So please take a moment to do that. While we do that. Please, let me.

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Ask the, the panelists that we just finished to. Turn their video off. And then we can go forward and if the next panel panelists can, put their video on and be prepared for the next panel, which will start momentarily.

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And this would be Ken Komia, John Abe, Samantha Hamilton and Sanjana Paul. If you can all get your videos ready to go.

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We will transition to the next panel. But I think the,

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I guess I have to answer the poll here too. Okay, to get rid of that. Okay, and here the.

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Here are our results. Now what I would, would have really like to see as a, before and after, this poll before we started the whole forum.

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But at this point, it seems like the community is, it's either quite clear or somewhat clear.

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On the commission recommendations and I suspect that's reflective of well one very engaged community members but also the remarks and presentations from our panel this morning so great to see that level of engagement and understanding and clearly for those that are still.

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In the in the dark here a bit and need more clarity. Answering some, submitting some comments, some questions, to in this in the Q&A will help to get some of that concerns.

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Over to the state officials and other panelists. So, yep, that's closed. And let me move on to introducing the next panel.

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And this will be the second panel. That is focused on the implications of the recommendations of the. Citing commission for Western mass communities.

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This one will panel 2 will focus more on effective public engagement, good community benefit agreements. That was, talked about by the state officials.

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What technical support to communities need, and what is the state's responsibility to help communities prepare.

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So let me introduce. Our panelists for the next 30 min. And this will be the order that I think would be helpful for you to offer your remarks.

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1st up will be Ken Comia. Ken is the director, sorry, the deputy director for land use and environment.

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Of the, of the land use and environmental department at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. John Abe is the CEO and founder of Sunwealth the Solar Development and Finance company in Massachusetts.

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Samantha Hamilton is the director of coalition building and community engagement at the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts and Live Well Springfield and Sanjana Paul joins us from the MIT Renewable Energy Clinic.

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So me all, offer you each. In that order, turn to offer your remarks and then we will.

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I have a short discussion, a poll. And then a lunch break. So over to you, Ken.

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Thank you.

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Thank you, Dwayne, and thank you, for putting on this great forum.

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I participated in the first, st solar forum back in the fall. And, you know, that was, I was able to share a lot of.

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My experience is working, as a practitioner. At the planning commission.

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So with that said, I am can company, deputy director of land use environment at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

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And there, I often work a lot with, planning boards of all various types of that, have all various types of knowledge and know-how and they're all volunteers and don't often have any support, capacity at, a staffing level.

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And, and I am that support. Previously, I was the town planner for the town of Southbridge in a town planner and conservation agent for the town of Southbridge in Worcester County.

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And what I like to say is I think what ends up happening a lot with our particular volunteer boards is that as it's been pointed out both, by the previous panelists and I think throughout the course of

working here in Western Mass is that our volunteer boards don't have that capacity to oversee these.

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Or don't have the capacity to understand. How involved, especially with this, these particular recommendations, how involved this will be.

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My work doesn't always deal with solar siding and solar projects, although I would like to say in the past year, I feel like I've seen more solar projects than any other type of development.

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But, seeing how you can apply approvals for other types of development, I think is is a good tool.

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And mechanism to follow. I believe there were in one of the conversations and something that i've picked up is Looking in particular to these community benefits agreements and how to engage with that.

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Looking at. The if if your community has cannabis facilities and when you have community meetings. And typically there's conversation around community benefits agreements or host community agreements.

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I could foresee using that as a model for a planning board that may not have that planner capacity.

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That's how I would probably, work with my planning board to understand what I would be expecting from that public process.

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So I think that I'll be interested to see as it has been pointed out earlier this morning.

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What some of the non legislative reform is particular to community education and to what there what kind of guidance there may be regarding these community.

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Meetings and benefit agreements during these large. Projects. With that said 2. You know in the past as we have navigated at both the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and I think planning boards in general.

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When they're tasked to work on zoning bylaws or ordinances particular if it's a new concept i again i go back to cannabis and to some extent what we're seeing with battery energy.

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Is that there is a model right and so You know this particular recommendations suggest that DOER, YEAH, there'll be some sort of model that hopefully will either, address the what towns are currently doing for their solar and how to engage and how to include these new processes that will employ that.

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Still, I think there's going to be a lot of capacity issues for our volunteer boards. I think there was mention of the need for some sort of regional person at the state offices.

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And I think that could be very helpful. I think the regional planning, agencies, can be of a resource to some of our communities.

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If they choose to do that, but. I think for the most part, having this universal permitting, is helpful in that it will allow those that are doing the practicing and providing support to those communities and to the larger, the smaller communities, a particular process on how to, move forward.

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So, those are some of my initial comments, Dwayne. Thank you.

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And thank you for those, Kenya. Thank you very much. Let me turn it over to, to John.

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Thank you for joining us. It's a pleasure to see you.

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Thank you, Dwayne and everyone. It is a pleasure to be here. Just by way of quick background.

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Sunwealth, we co develop and invest and manage. Impactful solar and solar storage projects. Typically in and around the bill environment.

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Our projects generally range from 25 kilowatts to 2 megawatts. We have over 650 operational projects.

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With a hundred 50 of those. In Massachusetts where we're also headquartered. I think that the Citing and permitting recommendations is a very good collaborative effort to help begin to streamline setting a permitting.

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It's an excellent. Starting point, especially for larger projects. But I wanna build on some of the things that.

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Can't. Standardization and having a model is excellent. But if you look at this citing a permanent recommendations.

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It's simplifies projects into. Everything over 25 megawatts and everything under 1025 megawatts.

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And so I think we can all agree that. Between 0. Kilowatts and 25 megawatts there's a huge diversity of projects that range from relatively easy to permit, the very complex.

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So as we build these models, there should be multiple models. No one that addressed relatively Easy to permit projects, you know, projects are typically by right or maybe need very simple special permits and then those projects.

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That are. Much more complicated. So the reform process should not be a reason to slow down.

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Built environment projects, for example, a 1 megawatt solar car port project that basically is a by right permits.

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So we urge the administration legislature to both put more context around this. By emphasizing the importance and the need to go through with the simpler solar projects as well as to move quickly on the models.

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For not only streamlining. Simple projects, but also for the larger projects as well. When we think about good community benefits package.

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Deals, you know, we think, well, you know, this is a home real state, so there's going to be to each their own.

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But in general, Communities should be a for larger projects. Maybe somewhere 5 megawatts to 25 megawatts would be the range where they get technical support that has kind of standardized.

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Technical support based on conforming or confirming that projects can form with whatever by right and address whatever special permits.

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Are needed on the projects. Again, I don't want to be prescriptive, but what we've done on some of our projects both larger and smaller.

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Is when we work with communities, we make sure that 1st and foremost, as many of the speakers have said, We are picking good sites and we are permitting those projects responsibility.

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We have good construction management plans that we comply with. We have operations in maintenance plants that we comply with.

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We negotiate and work on a pilot, payment aloof taxes or similar construct in good faith. We also do, a low income community solar plan with the communities.

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And just the nature of the business we do, we always work with local contractors that pay a living wage.

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Other elements of that could be, an educational component as well. We see is every fuller project as a visual testament of our ability to live in harmony with nature and as a very good education tools for local community.

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We believe electricians are going to save the world and anything we can do to, change hearts and minds of a young child or kid and point them in the direction of a clean energy or climate change job, we're off for.

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Thank you, Dwayne. That's concludes my remarks.

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Fantastic. Thanks, John, for that. Great. Let me turn it over to, Samantha and thank you for joining us.

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Thank you so much for having me. So hello everyone. My name is, Samantha Hamilton.

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I am the director of coalition building. And community engagement at the public health institute, also known as PHI.

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At PHI will lead coalition convening research. And evaluation. Efforts across Western masks.

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And I'm primarily responsible for the Liveville Springfield Coalition. Deliver a call in, you nice 30 community organizations that to foster and sustain a culture of health in Springfield.

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Our collective efforts focus on comprehensive approach to health, which includes health equity. Climate justice, advocacy.

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Active living and best. The built environment economic opportunities, housing and education. The initiatives that we currently lead are age friendly cities, climate change and health equity, which I'll share more about.

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Transforming communities initiative which is focus focus on housing and clean slate advocacy which focus on Cory reform.

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Our climate change and health equity initiative was funded by Trinity Foundation and over the past years we've partnered with community-based organizations and residents to advocate for policy and systems change in Springfield.

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Notably, our advocacy has led to the promotion of community trace energy. And the development of a race and health equity impact tool for the city.

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We've seen significant progress with the city identifying an aggregator and completing a public comment process most recently.

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So community choice energy is well on its way in the city of Springfield. In terms of community engagement.

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Based on the commission's recommendation. And also the work that we've been doing. I've learned a great deal from the work in Springfield.

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And again, commend the commission. For prioritizing committee and engagement. It's crucial to involve the folks most impacted by climate issues in the decision making process.

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Making this a mandatory requirement. It ensures that community residents are informed and empowered to contribute their perspective.

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Make the, and make the progress more accessible and inclusive. There are many, there much to learn about how residents across the state and across the state are addressing climate change.

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Community engagement is a key driver. For early adoption when residents buy into the vision of clean energy, It accelerates our progress and their input helps us identify successful strategies.

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And barriers to participate. And it clarifies, any confusing messaging at the local level. That's community.

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I'll advocate for more inclusion around the 90 day public comment period. It's essential to consider.

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When working residents could participate in listening sessions and provide input. I found that afternoons after a long work day are particularly the best time to reach to reach to community members.

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We should explore ways to reduce participation barriers to multiple engagement options. Flexible. Sessions, flexible session times and translation of materials and information.

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It's worth the extra effort to collaborate with trust based community partners. Who helped this who could have disseminate information collecting community input is just one part of the engagement process.

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You must also intentionally incorporate feedback into the plan. True engagement means acting on the voices, we hear.

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I also want to commend the commission for implementing measures to expedite the permitting process.

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I am too, am a solar owner. I have panels on my roof and if I knew how long it took at all I'm I'm a messenger for others to be mindful that this process is more than just a 3 month commitment.

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It's actually a 70 to 90 month commitment. So in doing so having the opportunity to expedite the process then allows more folks to tap into clean energy solution at a faster rate.

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While the commission recommends community benefits agreement. I will argue that a community benefits ordinance would be much more equitable impact.

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Our coalition has been working on community benefits ordinance. As an approach for large developers in our city. Kind of found, that with an ordinance you can hold developers more accountable.

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And that the community are more invested or more a part of the process of development. Oh, that to say, that we commend the work of the commission to put these efforts forward to address community engagement.

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At this at the highest level, making sure community voices are heard. And I'm excited to, be a part of the advocacy to ensure that community voice and participation is at the forefront of this work.

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Thank you.

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Thank you so much, Samantha. Let me turn over to, Sanjana and then we can, have a little bit short discussion.

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Thank you.

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Yeah, thank you so much for inviting me to participate. So everyone, my name is Sanjana Paul.

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I'm a graduate student at MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning where my graduate research focuses on energy policy.

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Specifically, my work focuses on conflict in the energy transition, and even more specifically, conflicts in renewable energy facility siting.

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So this work really came about because, you know, while renewable energy is becoming more cost-effective, there are still a lot of challenges related to actual deployment that we've heard about today and a key one which is mentioned in you know Princeton University's Netzero America project and a lot of local journalism is local opposition.

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So many communities have been sidelined or excluded in environmental decision-making both historically and in the present day.

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And there's a question of participatory justice and self-determination and in creating a space for the public to actionably have a say about when, where, and how renewable energy facilities are built as a key part of the process.

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So to engage with this issue, our team created the MIT Renewable Energy Clinic, which is led by Professor Larry Susskind and Dr.

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Jun Chun at MIT. And the clinic is a practicum class taught at MIT. We also have the class lecture content freely available to the public anywhere in the world through the MITx platform.

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And of course, title resolving renewable energy siting disputes. So in our work, we focus on facilitating adjust transition to renewable energy through our primary objective of mediating conflicts, conflicts that arise in very specific renewable energy facilities siting disputes.

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So this involves kind of working through disputes amongst different stakeholders in a way that works to ensure fairness and efficiency and really try to provide a neutral space where stakeholders can deliberate outside of the public eye.

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So we're increasingly focusing on service in the Commonwealth and we're very closely following and engaging with relevant progress here at home, including of course the Commission on Energy and Infrastructure Setting and Permitting.

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So the report is really significant. You know, it's a huge step and actually starting to engage with some of these citing and permitting challenges that we're facing as the energy transition accelerates.

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But you know, the report also underscores the difficulty in our current approach to renewable energy citing and specifically the difficulty our approach has with meaningfully addressing what community engagement is and what public participation is starting with helpfully defining what this terms mean and what methods we should engage to actually go through these processes to build energy infrastructure.

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In a way that just works for more people. So one of the key issues that we see in the current process as scholars is the lack of early and transparent engagement.

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You know, all too often public engagement starts too late. This is really critical opportunities for meaningful community involvement to kind of guide the process.

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To build trust and to achieve equitable outcomes, we really think that we have to start engaging stakeholders as soon as a project idea is taken to a physical place.

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This means really figuring out what does it mean to move beyond checkbox exercises and really foster an environment of joint fact finding and collaborative problem solving.

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So we have a few specific recommendations or points for effective community engagement, that we're really interested in engaging with at the clinic and would welcome further discussion on.

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We think that firstly, you know, there should be an early disclosure of proposed facilities to the public to ensure meaningful engagement to the outset and kind of defining a timeline around that.

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Second, we think that transparent sharing of information is really essential. And this should be coupled with joint fact finding kind of a grading on this is what's happening.

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This is what we think is happening. This is what we perceive is happening. You know, at every step of the way.

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3, rd we think the scope of public engagement must also be expanded to include consideration of alternative technologies, locations, to include consideration of alternative technologies, locations, and mitigation plans to ensure that potential options are thoroughly.

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4, th we think consensus building technique should be employed to reconcile competing views and competing interests among stakeholders and really try to push for decisions that have brought support.

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5, th we are huge fans of community benefits agreements and we really recommend that requiring CBAs in some way, shape or form when it's contextually appropriate, you know, will help.

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Ensure that appropriate benefits are provided to the communities hosting these facilities. And finally, that the process doesn't stop there, that there should be ongoing monitoring and established clear mechanisms for resolving disputes.

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Through the signing process, to maintain and to continue to build that trust and address any issues that rise in a proactive way.

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Things up. I want to emphasize that from our research findings and our practice we strongly advocate for embracing collaborative problem solving and consensus building methods to facilitate adjust transition to renewable energy.

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We really think that the state, you know, has responsibility to provide the necessary resources and support to communities to engage effectively in setting process and highly encourage, you know, additional engagement with our group at the renewable energy setting clinic for support, collaboration, and discussion.

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So thank you again.

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Fantastic. Thank you, Sanjana, and thank you to to the 4 panelists. We have a minute.

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So let me just pose one comment or question and see if there's any response and that does get to this issue of community benefits and community benefit agreements in the work of the Clean Energy Extension in surveys of many towns and rural Massachusetts in their solar planning.

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We've, we've, pretty universally gotten feedback that if solar, if communities can benefit.

03:00:06.000 --> 03:00:14.000

Practically and particularly economically from the solar development projects more. They're going to be more willing to them in their communities.

03:00:14.000 --> 03:00:18.000

I'm wondering, John, you've been pointed out in some of the comments or QA as an exemplary firm.

03:00:18.000 --> 03:00:31.000

In working on, ethical approaches for solar. It's, cited in the QA.

03:00:31.000 --> 03:00:43.000

I'm wondering if maybe you can, provide some, more information about the work that Sun wealth does to really assure that communities are benefiting and how they benefit from solar development and you like to see a community benefit from solar development.

03:00:43.000 --> 03:00:53.000

And you like to see a community benefit from solar development and then see if anybody else has some communities benefit from solar development and then see if anybody else has some comments on that.

03:00:53.000 --> 03:01:00.000

Thank you. Very kind. We can always do better. So again, it comes on the 4 things.

03:01:00.000 --> 03:01:11.000

It's responsible citing and permitting. Like really conforming to if it's by right, the existing permitting laws and special permit.

03:01:11.000 --> 03:01:18.000

The developer putting the time in to responsible sighting and permitting. The second thing is the pilot payments.

03:01:18.000 --> 03:01:36.000

Or payment of taxes, you know, getting those upfront, working with community, making those transparent. The other component is almost every large project we do, is a Loan come to me solar project.

03:01:36.000 --> 03:01:47.000

So working with the community and focusing on. That town, 1st in terms of making sure A, we have a very good low income community solar product.

03:01:47.000 --> 03:01:56.000

That provides as much savings as we can. We like to try to do 25% savings with a simple 3 page contract.

03:01:56.000 --> 03:02:04.000

And so making sure that they benefit from the economic savings of the project. And then 4 is jobs. We work with a local.

03:02:04.000 --> 03:02:13.000

In installer, sometimes the developer, sometimes engineers as well on the project. So, and then the last component is education.

03:02:13.000 --> 03:02:16.000

We're not perfect on every project, but we try to focus. On those 5 things. You know, whether there's a requirement or not, it doesn't add a lot of cost to the project.

03:02:16.000 --> 03:02:33.000

It's kind of walking in between bubble gum is develop and finance of projects. So, you know, we're not being prescriptive, but we encourage folks to.

03:02:33.000 --> 03:02:40.000

Other developers to approach community benefit agreements with a. Open harm.

03:02:40.000 --> 03:02:48.000

Thanks, John. Any follow up on that? If so, just very quickly, and then we need to keep things going.

03:02:48.000 --> 03:02:54.000

If not, that's fine. Alright, perfect. Thank you, panelists. Thank you, son John.

03:02:54.000 --> 03:03:01.000

I thank you, Samantha, Ken, John, for your participation, your good words today.

03:03:01.000 --> 03:03:11.000

Let me, also finish this, this with a, a poll question. To close out our second panel this morning.

03:03:11.000 --> 03:03:24.000

And this whole question will be about public engagement and do you feel your community has enough technical expertise to develop a community benefits agreement.

03:03:24.000 --> 03:03:36.000

And so if you, the poll has popped up. If you. Can think in terms of your own community, whether you're a constituent or an official in that community.

03:03:36.000 --> 03:03:44.000

And do your best to answer this poll question. And then we can quickly see the results. As we, move towards that.

03:03:44.000 --> 03:03:57.000

Those results showing let me do a little bit of housekeeping the 1st thing is that we will as I mentioned at the, at the very top.

03:03:57.000 --> 03:04:07.000

As we at the Clean Energy Extension, learn more about the Zoom Webinar format. Over the past couple weeks.

03:04:07.000 --> 03:04:23.000

We learned that technically the Zoom Webinar format cannot accommodate breakout rooms. And for that reason, we have had to redesign the session that will be following lunch.

03:04:23.000 --> 03:04:31.000

As a public as a community voice. Session, where we will still address the 4 topic areas that were laid out in the original agenda.

03:04:31.000 --> 03:04:45.000

But unfortunately, we won't have be able to have small interactive discussions in sub meetings. We're going to have to do this in a plenary plenary.

03:04:45.000 --> 03:05:03.000

And dedicate 15 min. To each of the discussion questions and when we reconvene as a plenary at the, at the top at one o'clock, I will go through the logistics of how attendees can offer.

03:05:03.000 --> 03:05:11.000

Comments. The full results come out to hear the poll results. And in this case, there's work to be done.

03:05:11.000 --> 03:05:21.000

In terms of, providing, or getting and providing enough technical expertise to our communities.

03:05:21.000 --> 03:05:42.000

And I think that is reflective of, of some of the comments we heard, today in the panel, as well as, in the recommendations of the citing commission to provide a new division of DOER to provide regional technical assistance resources to our communities.

03:05:42.000 --> 03:05:56.000

And so that is important. take back to the legislators that such technical assistance is indeed needed.

03:05:56.000 --> 03:06:03.000

Okay. Let me, go to the next slide. Which is our lunch break.

03:06:03.000 --> 03:06:09.000

So we will start again promptly at one o'clock. Sorry, we lost 5 min of the quick lunch break.

03:06:09.000 --> 03:06:21.000

Well, we. Recommend is that you just keep your zoom on. And that way it won't be a very long break
Keep your zoom on so you can basically hear us.

03:06:21.000 --> 03:06:29.000

When we reconvene and you'll be ready to go. So again, thank you all for joining us this morning and we look forward to.

03:06:29.000 --> 03:06:30.000

Continuing this conversation. More input from the community voices, when we reconvene at one o'clock.

03:06:30.000 --> 03:07:00.000

So see you then.

03:30:55.000 --> 03:31:05.000

It's 1 o'clock, everybody. So welcome back from lunch. I will give us another minute, to for everybody to get back and then we'll get started.

03:31:05.000 --> 03:31:35.000

With the next session. Thank you.

03:31:42.000 --> 03:31:50.000

Okay, let's get started. Again, thank you everybody for hanging with us. I hope you had a good short break.

03:31:50.000 --> 03:32:01.000

And welcome back to the afternoon sessions of the Western Massachusetts. Solar forum part 2.
We're excited for you all to be with us.

03:32:01.000 --> 03:32:07.000

Here we do. At this point have, just under 90 participants, with us.

03:32:07.000 --> 03:32:09.000

So thank you again. For hanging with us and I hope you all enjoyed the morning and let's move on to the afternoon.

03:32:09.000 --> 03:32:22.000

Sessions. The 1st afternoon session, is gonna be, the session that we are now.

03:32:22.000 --> 03:32:31.000

Referring to as community voices.

03:32:31.000 --> 03:32:43.000

And as I mentioned before. Through this Zoom Webinar format we are unable to do breakout rooms technically it is not, technically allowed.

03:32:43.000 --> 03:32:53.000

And so instead we have developed this, session as community voices. To open the microphone if you will.

03:32:53.000 --> 03:33:10.000

To community members attendees who would like to. Bye. 15 min allotted for each topic area.

03:33:10.000 --> 03:33:23.000

For attendees, if you would like to make a comment, please virtually raise your hand on the zoom, in the zoom toll we.

03:33:23.000 --> 03:33:33.000

We will call on attendees in the order that they raise their hand. Each, commenter will then be granted permission by the post.

03:33:33.000 --> 03:33:43.000

To speak and please unmute yourself unmute your microphone when you were prompted to do so by zoom please introduce yourself.

03:33:43.000 --> 03:33:51.000

And limit your comments to 1 min unless we provide additional time. We are trying to get as many voices heard.

03:33:51.000 --> 03:33:59.000

As we can on each of these topics. If you do, if you do have your hand raised, but you feel like others that.

03:33:59.000 --> 03:34:13.000

Spoke before you. Have articulated the gist of your comment. Please lower your hand if you if you want or we encourage so that you can allow for other perspectives to have an opportunity.

03:34:13.000 --> 03:34:21.000

Now depending on the number of hands that are raised, we may be able to increase that 1 min timeframe, to a bit more than a minute.

03:34:21.000 --> 03:34:22.000

But, if we do have ample hands, we wanna limit those comments to 1 min.

03:34:22.000 --> 03:34:34.000

So try to be as concise as possible. I am really pleased to welcome our 4 facilitators.

03:34:34.000 --> 03:34:40.000

For these topic areas. Lynn Benander will cover the 1st topic. Steve Roof will cover, this, from Hampshire College.

03:34:40.000 --> 03:35:01.000

We'll top cover the second topic. The 3rd topic will be facilitated by Scott Jackson, from the Umass Department of Environmental Conservation and the 4th topic, will be facilitated by Stephanie Ciccarello from the town of Amherst.

03:35:01.000 --> 03:35:08.000

So if I can at this point ask Lynn to unmute herself and provide her camera.

03:35:08.000 --> 03:35:18.000

She can take it away in terms of facilitating the 1st question topic which is now up on the screen.

03:35:18.000 --> 03:35:23.000

And I will jump in, Lynn, when we get close to that 15 min time frame for the 1st topic.

03:35:23.000 --> 03:35:31.000

So thank you for joining us. Lynn is the president of the co-OP power. Thank you, Lynn.

03:35:31.000 --> 03:35:45.000

Thank you so much, Dwayne. Good to be here with you all. So community benefits agreements have had quite a bit of the conversation here and our question on the table is how can the process and outcomes be enhanced?

03:35:45.000 --> 03:35:58.000

Like to ask. You to raise your hand if you're interested in making a comment so that our team here can assess if a 1-minute timeline would be good.

03:35:58.000 --> 03:36:06.000

And ask you when you start speaking to say your name, your town, and any affiliation you might have.

03:36:06.000 --> 03:36:10.000

And are we ready to go, Dwayne?

03:36:10.000 --> 03:36:16.000

Sorry, yes, we are. We have, we have one hand up.

03:36:16.000 --> 03:36:17.000

Okay, so Michael. Yes.

03:36:17.000 --> 03:36:28.000

So, the 1st speaker, and Lynn, can you see this? Can, yeah, you can see that you can see that so you can, introduce them as, as they appear.

03:36:28.000 --> 03:36:29.000

Yeah.

03:36:29.000 --> 03:36:30.000

And at this point, Michael, we'll give you a little bit more than a minute. Yeah.

03:36:30.000 --> 03:36:33.000

Thank you. So I'm Michael Piciera. I'm from the township spray.

03:36:33.000 --> 03:36:40.000

I'm a planning board member and the chair of the Energy and Climate Action Committee. I love the idea of community benefits agreements.

03:36:40.000 --> 03:36:51.000

I think the model which I did suggest to the commission during their open comment period was using the marijuana post agreement as was mentioned earlier as a model.

03:36:51.000 --> 03:37:01.000

I think the things in particular I would say, what's great about them in the marijuana was that their agreement is required pre-application.

03:37:01.000 --> 03:37:07.000

So project can apply to any state permanent body until there is actually a signed agreement between the host, community.

03:37:07.000 --> 03:37:16.000

The other thing which I think always gets missed and I've just recently done more research by speaking personal experience.

03:37:16.000 --> 03:37:30.000

The pilot that always gets put forth as a benefit to a municipality is only based on real and personal property basis, which means the cost of the panels and the steel in the case of solar and not in relation to revenue.

03:37:30.000 --> 03:37:39.000

Marijuana law allows up to 3% of actual revenue. And so that would be transformative and I would say that for clean energy.

03:37:39.000 --> 03:37:44.000

Basis of that 3% if that's you know up to that 3% would be both for any cost of mitigation of community but also forward thinking.

03:37:44.000 --> 03:38:02.000

So climate adaptation, mitigation efforts, understanding the climate change is going to require more costs at the municipal level and possibly building a municipal clean infrastructure on its own, whether it's solarizing heat pumps, etc.

03:38:02.000 --> 03:38:12.000

But really using that as a fund for not only having input in terms of making sure that the project is all cited and appropriate for the community by creating.

03:38:12.000 --> 03:38:18.000

A way to fund what's necessary with limited state coffers. So thank you for the opportunity.

03:38:18.000 --> 03:38:26.000

Great. Thank you, Michael. And the floor is open for other comments. Or questions.

03:38:26.000 --> 03:38:32.000

Al, Norman, how about you come on next?

03:38:32.000 --> 03:38:36.000

And again, if you could start with your name, your town, and your affiliation. Okay, yes, thank you.

03:38:36.000 --> 03:38:45.000

Can you hear me? Let, and thank you. I just wanted a comment on what Michael just said.

03:38:45.000 --> 03:38:58.000

One of the, one of the Terrific problems facing small towns any town really. And I'll use the example of window is that there's a developer that wants to, build a hundred 5 megawatt.

03:38:58.000 --> 03:39:11.000

Battery system there on mostly forested land and the pathetic reality of that is that all the power will be pulled out to the grid and set to eastern mass.

03:39:11.000 --> 03:39:16.000

So the community benefit, the most obvious thing is that there should be some, remainder or some significant amount of power that actually stays in the local community where it's generated.

03:39:16.000 --> 03:39:32.000

One way to do that is through municipal aggregation, which a term I haven't heard today at all and probably don't expect to hear, but there are 168 communities.

03:39:32.000 --> 03:39:41.000

That our aggregators including Wendell that could be buying power clean power and using it locally. So I don't we don't need more plants to just suck power from us and send it someplace else.

03:39:41.000 --> 03:39:51.000

That that's the most significant community benefit. That I can imagine for these projects. Thanks.

03:39:51.000 --> 03:40:00.000

Perfect. Thank you, Al. John, Pepe, you are up next. And again, if you could start with your name, town, and any affiliation you have.

03:40:00.000 --> 03:40:06.000

Yes, hi, John Pepi. I'm work with the East Hampton, Mayors Energy Advisory Committee.

03:40:06.000 --> 03:40:14.000

Live, I guess, I raised this in the question and answer written question answers before, but I'll say it again is.

03:40:14.000 --> 03:40:26.000

I think maybe the framework is a little backwards outside of the case of environmental justice communities. Why should there be community benefit agreements which drive up the cost of even slow?

03:40:26.000 --> 03:40:38.000

The progress of renewable energy supplied to the grid. Why isn't this framed? What can my community do to finally take responsibility like say offset our own energy consumption?

03:40:38.000 --> 03:40:50.000

Unless in the impact on those currently bearing that burden. Many communities don't need community benefits. Maybe they need intervene or funding support that's promised by these commission.

03:40:50.000 --> 03:41:00.000

The commission recommendations and. Butters, maybe another matter, somebody who's. Whose view shed has been dramatically changed or their noise impacts or whatever it is.

03:41:00.000 --> 03:41:08.000

There's no longer trees behind them. Butter. Impacts is one thing to provide benefits for, but but for the whole committee why it's backwards.

03:41:08.000 --> 03:41:23.000

Great, thank you very much for sharing your ideas here. And Kathy, I think you're up next for your minute with name, town, and affiliation.

03:41:23.000 --> 03:41:43.000

Hi, Kathy Orlando in Sheffield and I had a question that about the enforceability of the community benefit agreement since that was brought up by one of the speakers about whether that was a strong enough enforceability versus some other mechanism and wanted to ask about how to ensure that they last.

03:41:43.000 --> 03:41:55.000

Because if something is a decision is made based upon what is in there. That's really crucial for longevity.

03:41:55.000 --> 03:41:57.000

And it's very easy, especially in rural areas and where you've got volunteer boards and small communities for those kinds of things to get lost in the shuffle.

03:41:57.000 --> 03:42:12.000

So that's 1 of the questions. And the other is But is. Is that there are Definitely.

03:42:12.000 --> 03:42:24.000

And this is kind of in response to the prior speaker where there are. Crucial elements even in small communities where perhaps you don't need all the energy that's being produced.

03:42:24.000 --> 03:42:40.000

But where you're losing something and needing to make sure that, you know, whether it's the ability to produce food, or the ability for the clean water or whatever is going on.

03:42:40.000 --> 03:42:50.000

Okay. Impact not just financially but to the quality of life and the long-term sustainability of the community.

03:42:50.000 --> 03:42:53.000

Really does get, get included because one of the speakers had mentioned that the low the lowest cost is what everybody uses.

03:42:53.000 --> 03:43:10.000

As the judge and that that shouldn't be what is the guide and I would have to agree that you really need be looking at, you know, if your ability to provide food is lost.

03:43:10.000 --> 03:43:19.000

You know, that is gone forever as opposed to, okay, how do we find money to be able to help?

03:43:19.000 --> 03:43:27.000

Make it more viable to put that solar infrastructure on the built environment where it can be done.

03:43:27.000 --> 03:43:31.000

So just those 2 kind of balancing elements.

03:43:31.000 --> 03:43:42.000

Thank you, Kathy. Next is Glenn. And then John, if you have another question, you're off on the list still, if you forgot to take your hand out just to note that that would be helpful.

03:43:42.000 --> 03:43:44.000

Okay.

03:43:44.000 --> 03:43:47.000

And Glenn, please, you're up for your minute.

03:43:47.000 --> 03:43:55.000

Yeah. Hi, Glenn Ayres, Greenfield and I'm a member of Elders Climate Action.

03:43:55.000 --> 03:44:21.000

Massachusetts chapter and my question has to do with the planning process leading up to these community benefit. Agreements or analysis and that is About 25 years ago, the Commonwealth did a Exercise with all of the communities in doing a full, but analysis based on existing zoning.

03:44:21.000 --> 03:44:30.000

To see what the potential was. For the developable land to be developed. And I think we're missing the point.

03:44:30.000 --> 03:44:38.000

If the state is not conducting a similar analysis right now of what the future looks like with a full.

03:44:38.000 --> 03:44:51.000

Out. Of the energy proposed energy infrastructure and solar and everything else that we're looking at. We're not seeing the picture.

03:44:51.000 --> 03:45:00.000

We're only seeing tiny little pieces. And that does not allow us to actually. Analyze what the community benefits are.

03:45:00.000 --> 03:45:21.000

We should be doing an analysis of what are the actual energy needs. For a town of a hundred 50 or 200 or 800 like we have in western mass and why should we be Yes, disproportionately supplying, storing, generating all the energy for the eastern part of the state.

03:45:21.000 --> 03:45:36.000

We need to do that. Analysis of the energy system before we can consider entering into community benefit agreements. Thank you.

03:45:36.000 --> 03:45:42.000

Thank you, Glen. And, I think Li, Al Blake, would you like to speak next?

03:45:42.000 --> 03:45:48.000

Yup, and that's, and that will be the last, commenter on this question.

03:45:48.000 --> 03:45:49.000

Thank you so much.

03:45:49.000 --> 03:45:50.000

Then we'll move to the next comment. Thank you.

03:45:50.000 --> 03:45:59.000

Thank you. My name is Al Blake from Beckett in the Berkshire and I'm a member of the playing board zoning board and energy committee.

03:45:59.000 --> 03:46:12.000

2 questions. One is regarding community owned solar. You are many people in western Massachusetts in the Berkshires that do not have the capability of putting solar on their roof or their ground.

03:46:12.000 --> 03:46:23.000

But they could participate in community owned so and not shared so, but community owned solar. Where people can buy X amount of panels to offset their use.

03:46:23.000 --> 03:46:29.000

The other question is from a municipal standpoint, we have one, we had one of the largest silver arrays.

03:46:29.000 --> 03:46:38.000

In Western Massachusetts and we did get a nice pilot agreement but we didn't not have the opportunity to offset our municipal usage.

03:46:38.000 --> 03:46:47.000

From that solar, solar array and I was wondering if that is in the mix as well. Thank you.

03:46:47.000 --> 03:46:54.000

Thank you, Al, and thank you, Dwayne.

03:46:54.000 --> 03:47:02.000

And thank you, Lynn. That was great. Lynn, thank you for that facilitation and for those comments.

03:47:02.000 --> 03:47:09.000

Move to topic number 2. And I'll call Steve Ruth who I see has come.

03:47:09.000 --> 03:47:15.000

So thank you, Steve, for, being prepared. Steve Roof is professor at the Hampshire College.

03:47:15.000 --> 03:47:24.000

And the second topic question is how do we define equitable solar planning for our community so thank you Steve take it away.

03:47:24.000 --> 03:47:30.000

Thank you very much, Dwayne. Hope everybody's having a great afternoon, not too sleepy after lunch.

03:47:30.000 --> 03:47:36.000

And the part of the framing of this question is, I don't see any hands yet. Part of the framing is this.

03:47:36.000 --> 03:47:46.000

How do we define equitable solar development and the previous comment kind of directed? To this a little bit. What does a fair share in our community?

03:47:46.000 --> 03:47:52.000

Should cities and towns be expected to host solar within their border? If so, how much should they expect to host?

03:47:52.000 --> 03:48:01.000

And if not, How should these communities plan to acquire the clean energy their citizens need? So Michael, I see you.

03:48:01.000 --> 03:48:07.000

Go ahead and come on in. And please just remind us of your name, town, and any affiliation.

03:48:07.000 --> 03:48:08.000

Sure, Michael Dick here. She's great. Planning board and energy climate action. I think the 2 things I would say one.

03:48:08.000 --> 03:48:23.000

Just I've told you this directly to you, but in this context, I don't think, having a formula is based on population as a communities.

03:48:23.000 --> 03:48:37.000

Fair share is your perfect way to go. I you know my sense is that Out here we've got land, we've got, you know, space that is not necessarily available in Eastern Mass, although the usages of the Easter.

03:48:37.000 --> 03:48:44.000

And so looking as I think Glenn had talked about at a statewide perspective of how do we what we can do within reason.

03:48:44.000 --> 03:48:51.000

I think everyone should be doing something because we have a climate crisis. And then the other part which I just wanted to note, I think It's in H.

03:48:51.000 --> 03:49:03.000

45 a 1, but. Relative to out here. There's a lot of codifying in the legislation about EJ communities, which there should be, definitely.

03:49:03.000 --> 03:49:12.000

But I think what is missing is a rural perspective. So in some of this they have a EJ.

03:49:12.000 --> 03:49:22.000

Advocate that's created and there's really great lot requirements for community impact. And cumulative impact studies in relation to 5 miles.

03:49:22.000 --> 03:49:40.000

From any jade community but there's no mention of rural and so equity is sort of say we should add those as well not it's not an either or it's an and both for sure but figuring out how How do we do that and just sort of expanding the lens would be helpful?

03:49:40.000 --> 03:49:43.000

Thank you, Michael.

03:49:43.000 --> 03:49:51.000

Anybody else like to comment? On how we can define? Go ahead, Al. Al Norman.

03:49:51.000 --> 03:49:57.000

Please introduce yourself. Your name, your town and affiliation. And mute yourself once you've been invited in, please.

03:49:57.000 --> 03:49:58.000

And Steve, just so you know, if you look at the participants list and under attendees, if you scroll down a little bit, there are 3.

03:49:58.000 --> 03:50:05.000

Additional hands raised.

03:50:05.000 --> 03:50:11.000

Oh, okay, I thought they rise to the top. All I.

03:50:11.000 --> 03:50:12.000

Okay.

03:50:12.000 --> 03:50:15.000

Well, they do they're supposed to, but there's some, I think the people already spoke remain up there for some reason.

03:50:15.000 --> 03:50:17.000

Okay, I'm just seeing Al Norman. I think, go ahead.

03:50:17.000 --> 03:50:20.000

If you scroll a little bit down, you'll see some others.

03:50:20.000 --> 03:50:21.000

Oh, now I see, Blake. Okay, go ahead, Al Norman.

03:50:21.000 --> 03:50:25.000

Oh, thank you, Albeit. Well. I'll be brief. I'll be brief.

03:50:25.000 --> 03:50:35.000

The, Al Norman of Greenfield working with folks in Wendell, the first, st comment is that you have to 1st do sites, suitability, mapping across the state before you determine.

03:50:35.000 --> 03:50:42.000

Where these projects should go. It should not be a formula based on 20% of your land area or whatever.

03:50:42.000 --> 03:50:48.000

Some communities are very land rich, some are are not. But the ones that are land rich, You know, it has to be on suitable sites.

03:50:48.000 --> 03:51:01.000

That's what we're doing right now. We're spinning our wheels on a ridiculous project that's totally unsuitable for use because the state has not intervened at all and said no no that's not a desirable site.

03:51:01.000 --> 03:51:07.000

So starting with the mapping is critical. That's that tells me how much is needed in a given municipality.

03:51:07.000 --> 03:51:15.000

But the second thing is that there should be some requirement for a share of electricity stored or generated to be retained locally.

03:51:15.000 --> 03:51:17.000

Otherwise, it's simply the same kind of exploitation we see in the Quabin where all the all the water went to to eastern Massachusetts.

03:51:17.000 --> 03:51:28.000

We don't want to keep making that mistake again. Thank you.

03:51:28.000 --> 03:51:31.000

Thank you. Al.

03:51:31.000 --> 03:51:36.000

And.

03:51:36.000 --> 03:51:40.000

Dwayne, I am not seeing other hands on my list of participants when I scroll up and down.

03:51:40.000 --> 03:51:41.000

If you see any others, go ahead and

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Yep, no worries. I can, Ask a Judith Eisman, your next up.

03:51:48.000 --> 03:51:50.000

Thank you.

03:51:50.000 --> 03:52:02.000

Yes, I'm Judy Osman from Calum. I chair the. Planning board. I tend to agree with the comments that have made both under this question on the on the other one that the most important thing we can do is avoid impacts and people on people in nature.

03:52:02.000 --> 03:52:26.000

But I think a grave mistake is being made by not somehow engaging more of the public. In working to reduce energy use and in challenging people to help themselves in their communities, just not enough effort.

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In trying to reduce rather than. Protected projected expectations. So that that's 1 of the things that concerned me.

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I may have other things but I will let it go for now. Thank you.

03:52:39.000 --> 03:52:43.000

Thank you. Judy. And I see John Pepe. Has his hand raised.

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Go ahead and Bring John in and unmute yourself, Done. And then.

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Yes, I guess it's in response to the comment that. Norman Blake is it from?

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Greenfield mentioned about all the power other people have mentioned all the power going to western mass eastern Massachusetts from facilities that are being developed out here I would say that unless your community is self-sufficient already in energy production, That power is going into a grid.

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The electrons don't recognize municipal boundaries. They're in the grid. It's greening the grid.

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You're using the grid. And, you know, that's not the way to look at it.

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That's all.

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Thank you, John.

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Right, next up is, Arland.

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I'm sorry, take my hand down.

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Thank you, God. Ireland, yes, they are. Go ahead, Arland.

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Sorry.

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Hi, I'm Arley. That's what people call me. I'm an anorist.

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I'm just a resident. No, I think. What I'm hearing is sort of this need for a more holistic sort of approach and I realize this is the solar development.

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But I was I participated in forum number one also and there they were talking about this forest versus solar. You know, people cutting down trees to make solar and that was a big thing in Amherst, a big debate.

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And then I thought their study came out that said, well, we don't need to do that anymore.

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We don't have to pit these things, you know, against each other. So I'm just, I don't know, I was disheartened to hear that this is still going on.

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But anyway, I also think to not worry about whether the power is going somewhere else. I mean, We have enough water here and we give it to Boston or whatever.

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You know. It's more to make sure that it doesn't impact here too much. You know, and my feeling was I thought you know, if it's rich farmland, if it's forested land.

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You know, don't put yours. Solar arrays there if it's Terrible land or brown fields or landfills put your solar arrays there that you know I thought we were sort of moving in that direction.

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So. I hope we can continue. So thank you.

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Thank you. And it looks like I see Lin. Lynn has a comment. And then introduce yourself again.

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Thank you. Lynn, I live in Shelvin Falls and I'm with Co-OP Power.

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I think this is a really important question that we're asking both from the, urban relationship as well as from the environmental justice perspective.

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Hey, I think that a lot of the issues have been touched on, but I think Who gets there?

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I've worked on projects. Nationally where You know, on a native reservation where a lot of people didn't have electricity.

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A huge corporation was coming in and putting up. Hundreds of megawatts of solar. But the preservation, the people living there still weren't going to have electricity and it's, it's so who gets the power matters, especially if, the people who are in that host community are paying high rates for a electricity.

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They there should be local benefit. There should be local jobs. There should be.

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Listening to, John Abe. I also work with Sunwell. And his the way that Sunwell thinks about.

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Mutual benefit and making sure that what's important to a community is addressed in the sighting.

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I put up a document that I helped write with Emerald Cities on what It's advice for solar developers going into communities.

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What kind of questions are good to ask and how to build that collaborative relationship. We can do whatever legislation and regulation that we want to do, but if we can built more of a collaborative.

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Relationship between developers and installers and communities will go way farther. So just, really asking the question, how can we make sure that local communities are not disadvantaged by the location of these solar arrays.

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But that jobs and energy and savings and wealth building is shared with that local community without increasing the cost of solar because we have to keep that down.

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I think these are both end questions that if we're asking them and really. With an open heart coming into that conversation will make a lot of progress.

03:58:08.000 --> 03:58:12.000

Great, thank you, Lynn. We have just a couple of minutes left and it looks like at least 4 people in the queue.

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So if each of you could be quick for the next couple of minutes. Martha, please come on board Martha and tell us your thoughts.

03:58:19.000 --> 03:58:25.000

Thank you, Martha Hanna. I'm Amherst President and I was part of the Solar Bylaw Working Group.

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A big picture. I think fair share is a value judgment and we have to consider what's our fair share in all senses, our fair share and energy conservation in conversion to electric buses and less driving and then for rural Massachusetts part of our fair share is our provision of local food from farmland and the benefits that forests have both in terms of carbon sequestration and also then in this extreme climate environments of, water storage from

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floods and and so on so that when we consider fair share of solar it's 1 aspect of the whole thing that has to be balanced in terms of how we conserve our forests, our farmland and so on, which are also important.

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But you know solar has obviously has a place and has to be looked at from this larger perspective. Thank you.

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Great, thank you. Don, please come on board and introduce yourself.

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Yes, we can.

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Can you hear me see? Okay, I'm Don Ogden for the viral show broadcasting out of Florence Mass.

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Oh.

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I raised this point in the Q&A earlier, but I don't think, it was addressed.

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So I just, given the needs of the global warming solutions that in Massachusetts, I believe it's self totally self-defeating to move to deforestation for solar.

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Given the critical natural carbon capture forest. Provided by our forests, Professor Muma at all have done the science on this.

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Deforestation for solar is Obviously, the wrong way to go and I just don't understand.

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Why that thinking remains. You know, just because it's a little cheaper. To strip all the woods.

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And put in solar panels. We're just it's self-defeating because you're taking out natural carbon capture.

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So thanks for this opportunity.

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Thank you, Don. And Lenore, we have time. Dwayne for at least one more.

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Come on board, Lenore.

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Thanks, Steve.

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Sorry, yeah, let's go with, Lenore, and then the last one I mentioned to you as well, Laura, please.

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Okay, Laurie, you'll be next.

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Yeah.

04:00:57.000 --> 04:01:04.000

Okay, thanks guys. Lenore Brick, Amherst, Climate Action Now. I wanna echo what Martha Hanna and Don Ogden said.

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I was going to speak about expanding the definition of fair share also because in Western mass that is our greatest contribution to the climate crisis and biodiversity collapse is the Greenland that we have.

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And we cannot look at solar as this. Isolated. Solution because we wouldn't even be looking at this situation if it wasn't for our disconnect from nature, from our colonial extractive, all to fulfill all our wants.

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So I think we need to zoom out a little bit and and zoom in and think about why aren't we 1st building on all of the other landscapes that are not crucial for not just carbon sequestration, but water cycles.

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All of the ECO services, basically we depend on the land. We will never replace the forest that we.

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Destroy and so How about do no harm 1st build on everything that we that we know is built landscape and all the expands.

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Definitions that people have. Outlined before today and then look at using the land and and the other thing that I have an objection to is We're always lumping natural and working lands.

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And the working is the working for our particular. Society that we've created not working as in yes it works for all of us.

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Okay, I'll leave it at that. Thank you so much.

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Okay, thank you there, Lenore. And now, Laura, please.

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Thank you very much. Thank you, Steve. Thank you, Dwayne. This is a great opportunity to put our concerns on this and I agree with all of my friends.

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For the friends here. I am Laura. I am Laura Mcleod, South Sanders resident and member of Sierra Club Executive Committee, 3 for a public good and other organization.

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And I just wanted to say that I just presented at the Futures Conference, 2,024 in Finland.

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Helsinki and we were talking about these issues. I present the about ethics. How important it is to Consider our human rights and the rights of nature.

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Both together are one ethical path. To follow. Now the roadmap to follow. Alongside the United Nations sustainable development goals that we support.

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So ethics was on the table and I always invited and there were some decision makers there and my my screen is to decision makers at all levels, institutional, municipalities, colleges, and hospitals, any institution should be able to be at the table taking decisions and with the community upfront too because we don't want more destruction.

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Thank you very much.

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Alright, thank you, Laura. Back to you, Dwayne.

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Excellent. Thank you, Steve, for that. And thank you, commenters. If you can please, everybody put your hands down, cause we're gonna move on to the next topic area.

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If you did have a comment and perspective that you want to. Bring forward to. The, the forum.

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Please put those in the QA. But we're going to move on to the next topic question and if I can ask Scott.

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Jackson to come on to. The video. Then I will hand it over to you.

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I am. Thank you, Dwayne.

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Yeah.

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Scott, are you with us? Okay, well I don't see you. I just see a little camera icon, but is that okay?

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Oh, wait a minute. There we go.

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There you go. Okay, perfect. So, take it away, Scott. Maybe introduce the topic and then, and then take it away.

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Thanks.

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Yeah, sure. Thank you, Dwayne. Okay, the topic number 3 is titled, What Gaps Need to Be Filled to Empower Local Officials and communities.

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And I guess one way that I think this differs from the other topics is is that it seems to get directly at the idea of local governance.

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And so what mechanisms, what information do we need in order to empower local communities and local officials and communities.

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And so, looking at, the hands that are up so far. Janet Sinclair, you can go first.st

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Hi, I'm Janet Sinclair. I live in Chelvern Falls. I've been like endlessly in your in your Q&A.

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Okay.

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Sorry about that. There's there seems to be some confusion. I'm hoping that somebody here will just answer this right now.

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My understanding is that both the bills, you know, those 2 house bills, for 5 0 1 and 4 5.

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Both 3 as well as the commission. When we're talking about, you know, moving a lot of this authority or to the state and state agencies.

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That it's either currently the way those bills are written that would really be for Solar or wind projects or stuff over a hundred megawatts at this point.

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And that there's a there's a talk about changing that so that this you know kind of the energy sighting board would you know you know reconfigure itself a little bit include some other you know sayings and then might apply.

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To, projects. 25 megawatts or or more. And I think that this gets said over and over again, but there's so much confusion around me.

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So we talk about all these things that you're talking about like you know community agreements and all kind of stuff those are built in to local zoning and if local right and so would somebody please please clarify this for everyone you know what is really the intention here related to these smaller projects?

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Is it staying with the locals or is it going to the state?

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Alright, thank you, Janet. I can't answer your question, but perhaps somebody else could raise their hand if they feel like they can address that question.

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Next up is Michael Michael. It's all yours.

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Thanks. I'm not gonna attempt to answer Jan's question because she and I disagree on this and I know that, but I was going to contribute is I've shared this in a chat and other places that.

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The solar exemption, which is the 1985 law that you know, just allows communities from. Practically regulating solar needs to get addressed in this whole.

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We think about. What rural municipalities have in permitting. Because I think the underlying. Effort is to how do we expedite sighting, how do we expedite development.

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And if we've got a law in the books, it says municipalities can't do it.

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And then to you are saying, to you, we are seeing as Michael Judge did that we could be involved.

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There's going to be legal lawsuits because there's 2 things that are conflicting and state regs are not going to Trump.

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Statute. So although I know the legislature doesn't want to take that away, I think this is the time 40 years later to pull that off the books and actually get a reconstructed vision of the role of municipalities and make it clear what we can do and what we cannot do.

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Just having a legacy thing in there is going to confuse things and lawsuits are just gonna slow things down.

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So it's counter to the goal.

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Thank you, Michael. Glenn Ayres, you're next.

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Yeah, thank you. Glenn Airs, the Greenfield and I'm a member of Elders Climate Action.

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And I put this question in. The QA, but haven't heard anyone address it and and that has to do with we talked about zoning a lot and the Dover amendment.

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And restricting solid development and and that sort of thing but I haven't heard a mention of what the role of local boards of health will be in protecting the public health welfare and safety of the communities.

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Associated with this massive level of infrastructure build out, especially in Western Mass. And I'm wondering what is the role or what is the interplay between the local boards of health.

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And the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Public Health. In in those 2 state agencies.

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How they're addressing the possible impacts to public health and the environment. You know, such as the impacts to air quality, water quality.

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And especially groundwater protection because many towns in Western Mass rely 100%. On groundwater resources for drinking water and yet that resource is completely unregulated by the state.

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It falls to the local jurisdictions. To regulate. Groundwater protection if they do at all. And if we're talking about this level of massive infrastructure build out, thousands of acres of solar panels and battery storage facilities inappropriately located in very rural areas of the state, who is going to protect these.

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Irreplaceable resources such as. Groundwater, drinking water, protecting aquifers. And what is the plan from the state in conjunction with the Department of Public Health and the Department of Environmental Protection to bring the local boards of health up to speed on protecting local public health.

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The environment and public welfare and safety as is required by state law.

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Okay, we need to move on. Thank you very much. Martha Hanna, you're next.

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Thank you, Martha Hanna, Amherst. And I would like to follow up the previous questions to ask really what rights do communities have to protect their health safety and welfare of residents given now this whole range of state laws or prospective laws and so on.

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Do communities have the right. To protect their groundwater. And their aquifers. No matter what who does the permitting.

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Do communities. Have the right to protect their communities and their residents from the impacts of stormwater and so on.

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There's lots of, you know, impacts when you're talking about these very large solar arrays and you know, yes.

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We have a climate crisis, but. Climate change is here and we know that we see the extreme impacts of extreme weather, of biodiversity loss and so on.

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So what rights do communities have to protect their residents from the impacts? That of the climate change that's already here.

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So I think this question of the rights Okay, local communities to protect their residents and the impact of MGL.

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Chapter 40, section 3 and so on really need to be considered in legislation and the consideration of having the state take over permitting.

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Thank you.

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Okay, Sue Butler, you're next.

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Unmute, hi. Can you hear me okay? Great.

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Yep, just fine.

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So in this question of local versus non-local. Energy. Creation. I think that the consumer is used to a long history of energy coming from distant places by a corporation that is making a profit from it.

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And there is another point of view. That's been suggested. In a number of places, I think including at the US.

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Green Building Council. And I certainly, talk about this where I serve on the Sierra Club Energy Committee.

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Which is that if people in their homes. Put photovoltaics on the roof and had a battery back up to that system.

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Within each local transformer. Micro grid. They would be able to share. Available power with local loads.

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And would cut the demand on the grid enormously. And I wonder why there's no. Super local subgrids and the development of building or household based power with battery backup as a means of cutting the the dependency on the larger grid and corporate distant sources of electricity.

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Thank you for your comments, Sue. Judy, you're up.

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Yeah.

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Hi, Judy Eisman from Pelham. I want to go back to the gaps that need to be filled to empower local officials.

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Thank you.

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It's seems to me that. It depends on who's appointed or elected or who volunteers and sometimes cumulative effects aren't understood.

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For example, projects over a mile if they're segmented, the proponent gets all they want even if it's bad for the environment.

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Because nobody has thought to say Oh, wait a minute. Are you gonna do that next half a mile and then that next half a mile later?

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And so the whole project. Doesn't get understood. You know, that's just one example of that sort of cumulative effect.

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The other thing is local communities could benefit from training the kind that MACCC does and used to give to conservation commissioners to help them.

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And I think, and planning boys, those things happen. But beyond that, for these kinds of projects, some kind of staff assistance or a simply money.

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To hire somebody to represent the town's interests in larger projects or even some of the smaller projects if they are actually regional rather than only timing.

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Some things are on a town border and and you really should look at a regional concern. And if we had just the ability to budget for or to ask for some help so that we are rarely representative when they don't have the internal record.

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Present the internal information to do the job adequately. I don't know if that was coherent, but thank you.

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And. Yeah.

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Okay. Thank you, Judy. Dwayne, are we, are we finished? You want one more or what do you think?

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Let's, let's go with, one more question if it can be or one more comment.

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Every keep mind. These are really comments more so than questions. We don't have anybody here necessary to answer the questions.

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There more comments. So please let's do one more and try to do it within a minute. Thank you.

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Alright, so, Kathy, Orlando, I'm gonna give you the floor.

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I don't know that you've spoken yet today or this afternoon.

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Hey, thanks very much. This is a quick comment that, circuit writers have been very helpful, especially out in our smaller rural communities to be able to help provide, bridge some of those gaps, provide some training, provide some expertise and guidance.

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Great. And these are circuit writers for

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Oh, in the past, it's been, wetlands protection, mostly experience it through the wetlands protection, but through planning.

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So to be able to do this for any of the boards that are going to need to be incorporated into this, somebody who can have that holistic.

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Picture in their head really understand the timing, the issues and the kinds of training and will help people to be able to know where to get the resources.

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That they need to. Whether that's technical expertise, funding, helping to run meetings, something, sometimes having kind of like the back office support.

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That a lot of the regional planning agencies can, provide to local communities for something of this. Extent.

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I don't think my sense is that the RPAs, although the circuit writers could potentially come through them, they're gonna need more funding.

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So whether it's more funding to the RPAs to be able to do this or having it come directly from the state, having somebody whose sole focus is on this.

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I think would be tremendously helpful for all of the town boards and commissions that need to be reviewing things.

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Right, thank you, Kathy, and thank you to all the other speakers. Back to you, Dwayne.

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Great. And thank you to you, Scott, for, facilitating that. So thank you very much.

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And let me, I really advance the slide to the last of our 4 topics. And let me introduce Stephanie Cicero who serves as the director of sustainability.

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At for the town of Amherst. So and let me also encourage any commenters who have not commented before to voice your perspectives, and provide a comment, but obviously also if you've already made a comment, we will accommodate you as well.

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Okay, so thank you, Stephanie.

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Thank you so much, Doing. So our next topic question is, what does true public engagement look like?

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I believe this really speaks more to process. Some ideas, from her research. And I think those were great places to start from, but if you have some other ideas on your own, please raise your hand and we will start with Michael.

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Where to comment on all of these but everything about this a lot. Looking at the recommendations from the commission and H.

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45, 0 1, I think the things that I would say. The amount of time provided is crucial.

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Some of these recommendations, the timeframe is 30 days, 60 days. Especially in a situation where municipal board is gonna wanna create openings for its community and its residents to give feedback so that the board can then comment to a state level agency.

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That requires time and outreach and education and involvement. So I think that's huge. And I think the timelines, the states providing are not necessary long enough for substantial engagement with.

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Oh

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From the local boards to the actual community. I think the role of engagement, so there's a the concept of providing input and there's some of the languages about advisory.

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Advisory is very different than having some actual decision-making role or something higher than advisory. One doesn't have to take one's advice.

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And so how much of engagement really is that? And then I think the other challenges given the complexity people have talked earlier at the beginning about advanced notice.

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That what we have seen is that developers come with fully fledged projects with all the details and all the presentations.

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And it's got to be at the beginning, which I doubt developers want to do, but that's really where the engagement starts and to push that as much as possible.

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Would be important.

04:21:34.000 --> 04:21:42.000

Thank you, Michael. And John Peppy, please go ahead.

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Sorry, I had lowered my hand. I think maybe you saw it raised earlier. Sorry.

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Okay, it's raised now. But

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Oh, I'm sorry, I got it backwards. Okay.

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That's okay. Judy Iceman, please go ahead.

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Judy, did you have a comment?

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Yes, you are.

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And is am I unmuted now? Okay, it wouldn't. I'm sorry. I have Judy lisman from Tallum.

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I have been surprised recently and partly this is because so many meetings are not in person but are on zoom but I think public meetings should actually provide for given take between the speakers and the board members to whom they are addressing comments.

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I have been surprised at how some communities just don't allow that. A speaker from the public can make a statement or ask a question and are often not answered.

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And that's just not the way I run a meeting. Even if it takes longer, even if it's a little bit confrontational.

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I think the public has a right. To be spoken to and to have their answer their questions answered at the time that they're asked.

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And I've, but that's, you know, actual public engagement. Of course, we up in Pelham have real town meetings.

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So we all taught and we're used to that. And so I understand why there may be a necessity at some points, but I think folks should work a little harder.

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To make sure that they are actually. Listening and showing themselves to be listening.

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Thank you. So much, Judy. And Diana.

04:23:41.000 --> 04:23:43.000

Hi, can you hear me?

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Yes, and could you please tell us what community you're from and any affiliation if you have one?

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Yes, sure. So I'm Sanna Etos. I work for Energy Allies, which is a very small nonprofit.

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That works to create community-led energy solutions. I actually live in eastern Massachusetts, but I'm joining to learn from Western Massachusetts and hear those voices.

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We recently piloted a community that engagement process on a community solar project in Boston. And we just published a report that I can put in the chat.

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Of creating a community advisory board although as someone just commented it was more a community decision making board set.

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We started from day 0, so we educated them on solar and all the different decisions they would have to make, giving them the information they needed, so that they could decide things like community ownership and where the product was located.

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And how it was financed. And so we would love to do more of those projects in other parts of Massachusetts and.

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And that was just one pilot project, then we want to see more of that. And it does take time as people have said, but I think it's a really important piece to making sure that communities have a say and where their energy comes from and how these projects are developed.

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Thank you.

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Great, thank you so much, Diana. And Glenn, you can go ahead and on.

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Glenairs.

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There you go.

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There we go. Yeah. Thank you. Glenn Airs, Greenfield Mass, and I'm with all this climate action mass chapter.

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And I think that in order to have true public engagement, you're going to have to have a formal process.

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And I'll use the example of the regulations for the waste site cleanup program. That's under 105 CMR 40.1,400.

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Which provides for a public involvement process. And that's a formal process. The municipality or the applicant cannot get out of that process.

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They must follow those regulations. And of course they need to be enforceable. So in this case, the state will need to come up with legitimate regulations that require or trigger the public engagement process and then they'll need guidelines on how that process is to be implemented at the local level and it needs again to be enforced.

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Because without guidelines, without regulation, without enforcement, it's meaningless. So I think you have some examples that you can follow, but it'll take a little effort on the part of the state to put those regulations in place.

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Thank you.

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Thank you, Glenn. We're going to jump to Arlene Gold.

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Hi, it's Arlene and. Oh, I'm from Amherst.

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When I saw this question at the very beginning, it just struck me. That this meeting is happening from 30 or whatever.

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A lot of people can't attend this meeting, so it would be good to have it. Maybe it other times.

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That might be more conducive to more people who have jobs. That wouldn't allow them to participate in something like this.

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So, that's a very detailed, It just struck me when I 1st saw this. I thought, wow.

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Then a lot of people can't. Probably engage right now because they're at work. So anyway, thank you.

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Thank you. So much. And I'm going to jump to Deborah Evans. I don't believe you've spoken yet.

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Please go ahead and unmute.

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Hi, thank you so much. Yeah, just sort of pulling together what a bunch of people have said.

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Arlen, I, yes, definitely who's who's here is very representative of who will be here.

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This kind of This kind of form. It is recorded. People can go to the site and watch it, but, I think

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I think that there what would help communities. If there's opportunities or just some norm of neighbor to neighbor really starting to talk about the vision for.

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Living through the climate crisis and not just solar in a vacuum. I'm so grateful for all the work people are doing and all of the the legislative and process and and I'm not saying that that's that I mean it's perfect we definitely need it but in terms of community engagement people don't even have understanding of the things that are being talked about.

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On this form of those of us who have the time and space to lean in. So I think there's a more fundamental maybe less jargony, you know, visioning kind of things that communities can do like what you know.

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To onboard people. And then you know and then they they become comfortable and then they can you know understand what what we're talking about and then have a watch party and watch the recording of things like this.

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Thanks.

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Deborah, can you just tell us what community and if you have any of the

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I'm sorry, I'm from Amherst. And, a concerned citizen. Okay.

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Okay, great. Thank you so much. Let me jump to Amanda Alex. We only have a minute left.

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So, Amanda and I think Martha.

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Thank you, Amanda, Alex Shootsbury. I'm concerned about the growing power of large electric utilities as we move towards widespread electrification.

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Allowing one industry to have a monopoly on the power supply is troubling. In California, recent changes to net metering and restrictions on community solar are negatively impacting homeowners, small businesses and low-income stakeholders.

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Utilities will always favor the investors rather than rate payers. I think that's a fact.

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I worry that state regulation might not be enough to offset this increased level of influence by the utilities in Massachusetts.

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I think the rate payers slash taxpayers voice in this matter. And I think as Glynneirs said, the needs it needs to be made an active and official part of public participation.

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And I think that his, excuse me, reference to the public involvement plan by the Bureau of W site management is a good one and and I think it's a good model.

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Thank you.

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And then Martha Hannah, I think you will be the last. Responded. So please go ahead.

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Thank you. Hannah from Amherst and to follow up one of the previous comments. Community engagement, real community engagement is a lot of work on the part of the staff or the legislative body so whatever to educate people enough to be able to give good comments and sadly too often listening sessions turn out to be just feel good sessions for the participants.

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Yes, we've got a chance to speak. But then they have almost no impact on the decision-making bodies.

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And so true public engagement is a lot more effort and takes a lot more time and design than what often passes for.

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Public engagement, you know, like one comment. Session or something. So good luck to everyone trying to really do that and do it correctly.

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Thank you.

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Okay, and thank you. Stephanie for that facilitation and for all the commenters and let me thank all the facilitators, Lynn, Steve, Scott and Stephanie for listening and and facilitating the comments.

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And the community voices that we heard today. It's been really helpful. And important contribution to this forum.

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A reminder to everybody the form is being recorded. That will allow the public to engage in the in the what was discussed in the off hours.

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Is the best we could do at this point. So with that, let me, move on.

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To our next. Afternoon, second session. And these 2 panels the 1st one which I'm very pleased to have Senator Comerford facilitate for us.

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Both of these panels on are on balancing the trade offs the 1st panel.

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I'll let Jo introduce, and then I will facilitate. At the end of this panel with our final panel.

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So thank you all and thank you, Senator Comerford, for facilitating this panel and over to you.

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Thanks, Dwayne. I'm glad to give you a breath. Because you've been going all day.

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Okay.

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Thank you.

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So thank you so much. And I just want to say I've been riveted today, everybody.

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I, I typed a little comment earlier, but I really am moved and emboldened and heartened.

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And I want to thank the staff that are on for from offices both administrative and legislative. I, you know, it's just, there's a lot of, a lot of food, to take us forward to the work that has to be done.

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Okay, enough pontificating for me. We've got a great panel. It's going to be about 30 min, 30 to 40 min with each speaker speaking for about 4 to 5 min.

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And we've got an unbelievable lineup. So we have Heidi Ricci, director of policy and advocacy from mass Audubon.

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Jessica Rempel, Natural Resources and Analysts from the Cape Cod Commission, Clem Clay, director of the U Mass Extension Ag program and I want to say that, thanks to Clem for also agreeing to, serve on a special commission on agriculture in the Commonwealth in the 21st century where we are actually looking at the intersection of energy and ag.

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At the same time as we do this kind of solar sighting work. So thank you, Clem and Stephen Roof, Professor of Earth and Environmental Science at Hampshire College.

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So let's go with that in that order. If no one objects, we'll call in Heidi first.st

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We'll hear from everybody. Then we'll take your questions. Thanks so much, Heidi. Over to you.

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Thank you so much. Senator Comerford. I appreciate everything you've done. On this form and on this topic.

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Thanks everyone for attending today and I appreciate this opportunity to share my perspectives in mass Audubon.

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I've been interested in land use and planning, throughout my entire life. How can we maintain the important ecosystem service values of our forests, farmlands and wetlands, including wildlife habitat, water resources, recreation, quality life.

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While meeting our other essential needs such as housing, economic development, transportation, and yes, energy systems. The context of the climate crisis I would add the role of land and carbon sequestration and storage.

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Moderation of extreme heat, intense storms and floods, and more frequent droughts. The cost of losing these functions are very real, but they're not paid for by project developers.

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My degrees are in biology and resource management throughout my career of applied science and policy to optimizely adduce across these different competing needs and interests.

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So, land is a limited resource. We need to use it wisely. Mass Audubon has studied the patterns and trends of land development and conservation across Massachusetts for decades.

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In our losing ground series of reports. In the 19 eighties, Massachusetts was losing 85 acres per day to development.

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Subsequent editions found that it that was reduced to 44 acres a day, then 20, then 13.

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The most recent addition in 2,020 losing brown nature's role in a changing climate. We saw the number ticking up just a little bit to 13.5 acres a day.

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That and this is due to a new form of land use, large ground mounted solar arrays converting thousands of acres of forest.

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That's sort of on strongly supports the clean energy and climate plan. It's absolutely essential and we're already seeing the impacts of burning fossil fuels here and across the world causing floods, droughts, heat waves, rising sea levels.

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The plan includes the role of offshore wind, solar, and transmission and distribution upgrades. It also includes the role of land.

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Land is capturing 10% of our missions today. We need to increase this carbon capture capacity because even if we meet the clean energy transition goals, there will still remain 15% of emissions that cannot be eliminated.

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Mass Audubon's report, Growing Solar Protecting Nature, looked at whether we can build the solar.

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We need while protecting the nature we have. We found that it is possible to meet the 27 gigawatts of solar target.

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Well, citing mostly within the existing developed or altered lands such as rooftops, parking lots, and large turf landscape areas.

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By shifting sighting this way it avoids a loss of 40,000 acres of forest, 9,000 acres of prime farmland and 23,000 acres of our most biodiversity lands by 2,050.

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It also avoids an additional 5 million metric tons of CO₂ emissions. Although these within development projects are more costly than large ground mount arrays in force or farmlands.

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When the full costs are considered, this option is in fact The. Less costly for several reasons.

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Offsetting that 5 million metric tons of CO₂ emissions would be quite expensive if it's even possible.

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There's no current technology that can accomplish this at the scale that our forests currently do for free.

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Even if it can be done, the increased cost of building solar within the built environment are more than offset in comparison.

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There are other costs as well of losing so much forest farmland and biodiversity. For a filter and infiltrate vast amounts of water, the more force we lose, the more vulnerable we are to flooding and erosion from these increasingly intense storm events.

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For us also help recharge groundwater, essential for water supplies as we experience more frequent droughts.

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Growing food locally is also important. We can't afford to convert prime farmland to solar or even dual use if it means that we're gonna lose capacity in our row crop production.

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These are just a few examples of the very real but often not quantified. Costs. Citing solar within developed areas and paint and pairing it with batteries within local distributed energy systems has other benefits as well.

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It reduces the amount of new transmission distribution facilities that will be needed and those costs savings should be factored in.

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To achieve this outcome, incentives and regulations need to be adjusted to support within development citing. And not incentivize conversion of forest and prime farm lands.

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Some ground-mounted solar will likely be needed to meet the overall target. The location of these projects needs to be optimized to minimize impacts.

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So the sites suitability standards are really key. They need to be applied to both incentives as well as permitting.

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And I would just wrap up by saying we only have so much land, we need to use it wisely in the context of all of our priorities.

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The clean energy transition, housing, economic development, biodiversity, and climate resilience. Thank you.

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Thank you so much. Heidi really appreciate that perspective so much. And I'm going to turn it now over to Jessica.

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Thank you, Jessica.

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Okay, thank you. Thank you so much for the invitation to be on this panel. I'm excited to be here today.

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So just as a little background on myself and to shed some light on my perspective on today's topic this afternoon's topic.

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I was actually born in Western Mass but grew up on Cape Cod. My parents moved down to the Cape when I was 3 years old.

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After graduating, I moved off Cape and moved all over the US and Canada, my background.

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And I like to say at this point, I guess, in my career, my initial, my 1st career was as a wildlife field biologist, mostly working with birds.

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But I was always interested in how human activities impact wildlife and thinking about ways to. Mitigate those impacts.

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So I ended up working for several different environmental regulatory agencies, including mass wildlife, natural heritage and danger species program where I reviewed all sorts of different development projects for their impacts to state listed rare species.

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And at the time, it included some of the 1st a large scale ground mounted solar projects in the state.

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That, experience, you know, led to another job with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which took me out to Southern California where I worked exclusively on renewable energy projects in the California desert.

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And at the time I was there, there was a large planning effort underway called the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan.

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Where agencies and stakeholders were working on large-scale planning for renewable energy in the entire desert southwest region. And that's great.

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And you know, I think what I've been hearing from some of today's discussion is, you know, we need to be looking at these things holistically and statewide or at least regionwide.

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The But, and I think what we're also hearing is that even while those sorts of planning processes are taking place, these individual projects keep coming in and keep having to review them.

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So that's kind of where what I was working on was those individual projects that were coming in one after the other for review.

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And working with the developers to, you know, redesign their projects or design their projects to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts in that case to, you know, federally protected species.

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In 2,019 I moved back to Cape Cod to take this position as natural resources analyst with the Cape Cod Commission and the Commission is the regional planning agency for the 15 towns that make up Barnstable County or Okay, and the commission's mission is to balance economic development and environmental protection on the Cape.

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And as the natural resources analyst, I work on planning initiatives such as planning for solar development and I also review what we call developments of regional impact because as somewhat unique amongst regional planning agencies and the Commonwealth.

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We do have a regulatory role. We have regulatory authority so we can review large scale ground mounted solar projects for their impacts to regional resources.

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And again, you know, during these reviews, we work with the solar developers to design their projects to avoid minimize and mitigate impacts, you know, for my issue areas to wildlife and plant habitat, wetlands and open space.

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Soon after I started working here, we began developing some decision support tools for the communities that we serve. One was a solar screening tool, which is a web-based GIS application to identify areas across the Cape that are more or less appropriate for solar development.

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Based on the degree of natural or built environmental features they have on the landscape. And we also worked on developing a model solar bylaw to help our communities plan for and regulate solar at the local level.

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And these decision support tools themselves were identified through regional planning processes such as whenever we update our regional policy plan, which is our guide or our framework for growth management in the region.

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It's updated about every 5 years. You know, we, we will acknowledge those key challenges facing the region and, and provide some recommendations on actions that we or others should take.

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To address those key challenges. We also recently completed a climate action plan for Cape Con. That also, provided recommendations for the sole, the model bylaw development.

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And these planning processes are opportunities for the public and stakeholders to provide common and recommend actions for the commission and others to pursue to help the region move forward on climate action and transitioning to renewable forms of energy because we do know we need to make that transition, but we want to do it the right way in the right places.

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So for me personally, it's been interesting to work and I'm gonna put the air quotes on large-scale solar in different parts of the country and the state because even though the environments are different, you know, I was working with desert tortoises in California and box turtles in Massachusetts and the scale of the projects really varies, you know.

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The a project that's 5 or 10 or 20 acres on Cape Cod is a big deal.

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Whereas, you know, it's in the hundreds if not thousands of acres out in California. But the things we wanted to protect in California and in other parts of the Commonwealth are generally the same things we want to protect on Cape Cod and that boils down to our wildlife habitat, our wetlands, our open space, our natural and water resources.

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So balancing the trade-offs, the topic of this afternoon's panel discussion is just, you know, very much at the core of what we do through planning for and regulating solar projects on the Cape.

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And, and that's why we developed the screening tool and model bylaw to help Cape communities plan for and regulate solar projects here.

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Thank you.

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Thank you so much. Really appreciate that perspective and your remarks. I'm going to go over to Clem now.

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Thank you, Senator Comerford. I'm Clem Clay. I direct the Extension Agriculture Program at U Mass Extension.

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I'm not a policy person, although I have some training in that department, but really, do work with folks who work with farmers a lot.

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And so I hope to be able to represent that perspective somewhat and and I'm also involved with. Research project that Dwayne Bregger leads up looking at dual use or agri Voltaics.

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So I'm gonna repeat a few things I said on a panel last fall just to sort of as context for.

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Future the conversation about these trade-offs just coming from the agricultural perspective. State plans embrace goals of a no net loss of farmland and working forest and of aiming for 30% protection of these lands, legal and permanent protection.

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So that's sort of one goal that the state state has set. That's relevant to the context of all the goal setting being done for clean energy transition and climate work.

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There is no formal goal in Massachusetts for food production that's embraced in a state plan. But there is a regional plan with significant support from state ag departments that proposes a goal of 30% local food production.

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And based on some assumptions about land and diet in that report, its analysis suggests that a 15% increase in active farmland across New England.

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Which would be 75,000 new acres of farmland in Massachusetts would be necessary. To achieve those goals.

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Or achieve that goal for, increased food security at a level of 30%. Currently, so those are goals.

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Currently, we're losing farmland and not gaining it in Massachusetts. And currently farmers are facing challenges including climate change effects on crop.

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And pests, high labor costs, high land costs. And competition from out of state producers who have lower cost structures.

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As I've said in other contexts, farming is hard and getting harder. And as far as I'm aware, none of the proposals to increase land protection or food security.

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Provides an economic roadmap to address these challenges that farmers are facing and and ensure that they can into increase production and stay in business.

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There is as Senator Comerford mentioned a special commission looking at some of these issues. But solutions are hard to find and hard to fund.

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So I just want to sort of. Put all that out there because I think I'm the only person here today sort of representing an agricultural perspective and I think it's valuable for other folks who are paying attention to other.

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Parts of the equation to just sort of Be aware of those basics. There's no doubt I think given all of that that you know there are people who would like to see more farmland and more food production and also that we have these stated and accepted goals of increasing.

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Increasing solar and and other forms of clean energy production that there's potential for for conflict, between those, goals and purposes.

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And, you know, I'm again, I'm not a policy person.

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I'm not paid to come up with recommendations, for this, so I have to be sort of cautious in that.

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But I do think that Some options for managing that tension include really trying to to invest in the land protection goals that are stated and to focus on making sure that high quality soils and and and high quality farms that have the potential to produce food for future generations.

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Our protected, as well as providing guidance during that process to farmers who are selling their development. Rights about what their future.

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Solar options may or may not be so that nobody feels as if they have been. You know underpaid for for the easements that they're selling.

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And then I think using there's a there's a lot of land on farms that's not the best.

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Most productive land and so if we are going to accept that some farmland needs to contribute towards solar goals, then, is there a way to provide incentives to direct solar development to those those parts of those farms rather than the most productive parts.

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And so I think that's sort of a second tier of consideration. And then I won't get deeply into it because I don't want to, but I'm happy to take more questions on it, but I think, agri which as I said we're doing some research on from an agronomic and economic standpoint here at Umass.

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Is, you know, something that, people should be looking at and considering, but So far, it seems like it may be more of a niche solution in New England than not a panacea.

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It's it's tempting to sort of get excited about win-win. Solutions but the cases in which you you can really achieve all the goals of energy production and food production without significant compromises may be narrower than we would all.

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Like them to be and I'm sort of paid to pay to be a skeptic in a sense so I don't mean to be a downer about that but I do think that until we really see what's feasible.

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We have to be cautious. In our optimism about, you know, just how replicable or expanse expandable that model.

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Is without bumping into other issues such as, either increased, risks of crop failure in certain years.

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As we've got weather patterns bouncing around from year to year or, just the possibility that there's less flexibility for farmers in their in their crop selection than so they're not contributing in the same way to food security goals that they might have.

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So I'll leave it at that. Happy to answer more questions when we get to that point.

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Thank you.

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Thanks, Clem. And last but certainly not least, welcome to Steve and Stephen.

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Thank you very much. I am a climate scientist and for 30 years I have researched past and present climate change and its impacts.

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And while I'm concerned about the harm from current and future global warming, I am more concerned about the immediate harm to human health and suffering caused by our use of fossil fuels.

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And so to put it bluntly, fossil fuel pollution is literally killing us. And there's a double standard I hear today.

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We're demanding that solar development be risk-free. But at the, at the same time, we're willing to tolerate fossil fuel pollution that we know kills thousands of people in Massachusetts every year.

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Massachusetts, more than 95% of our air pollution comes from the combustion of fossil fuels.

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Those burning that fossil fuel releases particulates, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, and other hazardous pollutants.

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These things cause cancer, heart and lung disease, asthma and other problems. A recent study out of Boston College just 2 years ago.

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Told us that air pollution in Massachusetts is killing well over 2,000 people each year. That's about 5% of all the deaths in the state.

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Attributed the air pollution caused by fossil fuel burning. That air pollution is also responsible for over 15,000 cases of pediatric asthma.

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Over 300 low birth weight babies. And a measurable lowering of performance IQ in our children.

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If you look across the United States, human, human caused outdoor air pollution causes nearly 200,000 premature deaths each year.

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That's more than traffic accidents and homicides combined. As an aside I have to wonder what those impacts of air pollution are on the animals and plants whether they're wild at our homes or on our farms.

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Air pollution is something we can fix. We need to stop burning fossil fuels and that's the gist of the Massachusetts decarbonization plan.

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Brings me back to solar energy. The whole point of building out solar energy capacity is so we can stop burning fossil fuels.

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The trade-off balancing the trade-offs as a session is titled. You have to compare 2 things if you're balancing the trade-offs and in this case we must compare the costs of solar development to the cost of the alternative, which is fossil fuels.

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Hi, argue that the public health safety and welfare risks of groundnuts solar are miniscule. Minuscule compared to the death and the destruction caused by burning fossil fuels.

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We heard this message earlier today, rooftop, parking lot in brown fields need to be built out with solar but will not be enough.

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Won't be enough. The Massachusetts decarbonization plan suggests 60,000 acres of ground mount solar will be needed in addition to rooftops parking up some brown fields.

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Mass Audubon in the growing solar protecting nature study. Finds that the protecting nature scenarios that they favor can be done with 100,000 acres or less of ground mounted solar.

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That's less than 2% or about 2% of Massachusetts land area. It's not a lot.

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That's lesson 1 10th of what we've already developed. I also suggest that groundnut solar development is perfectly consistent with our land preservation goals.

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We can permanently protect at least 40% of our Massachusetts land. And still use 2% for ground-mounted solar.

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They don't have to be in competition. And drama solar is not destroying the land.

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It provides a rich ecological habitat and ecosystems there along with the solar panels.

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I think solar fields need to be valued as critical working lands just like farmlands. I also wanna remind us that solar is not the biggest threat to our forests.

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We heard at this the forum back in September from John Rogan at Clark University that Solar development is only been responsible for 10 to 15% to forest conversions.

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The other 85 to 90% have been caused by housing, commercial development and roads. So to perceive our to achieve our land preservation goals, we really need to bring housing another development under control.

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More of a masterwide plan for managing housing and how it uses the land. So yeah, housing and commercial development are destroying and I mean literally destroying permanently destroying 4 to 5 times more forest and agricultural land than ground mount solar.

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So we're facing the choice. If we restrict and delay solar development. Then we're choosing to accept the death disease and environmental destruction that comes with burning fossils.

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So I argue that we do need a streamlined process for citing solar in Massachusetts. We need that to build out and Triple or quadruple the rate of solar build-out in the next 5 or 6 years.

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And to meet those critical decarbonization goals. So thank you.

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Thank you so much. Thank you to this panel. I. You know, Steve, I think you're a really interesting last person on this panel.

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And so I'm gonna ask the other panelists if you wouldn't mind to respond.

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To Steve's observations about the need to quickly reduce fossil fuel. Or that the scale of ground-mounted solar is often overstated.

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And I appreciate that each of you is trying to really wrestle with trade-offs. Here and how do we get the The good enough best.

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Pass forward. Anybody want to jump in?

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And maybe Heidi and, Heidi and Jessica, you, you each talked about, you know, the solar citing recommendations, right?

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What are the, what are the best ingredients in solar citing recommendations? If you were able to wave a magic wand and say, okay, administration legislature put a tool together that does XYZ things.

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What would it be?

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Yeah, so I mean I think the site suitability is really important and then aligning the incentives and the regulations both state regulations and local.

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With that and it's complicated but I think that's really important. Just a couple of examples.

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You know, to build the smaller or mid-size arrays on some of the turfed landscaped areas that exist.

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You have things like. Structural setbacks from roads and property lines. You have local historic district standards, which I understand in some places prohibit people from even putting a solar ray in their backyard even if you can't.

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See it from the street. So there there's that kind of thing. There's I also recognize however that the issue of scale, you know, that it's cheaper to build these large.

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System. So that's where we need to align the incentives. And we need to better account for the the full costs.

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Which is. You know, none of this is easy. But I'm really glad that we're talking about it that the legislators talking about it.

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We need to make it easy for the cities and towns. To to really do, you know, very quick easy permitting for the within development and within altered areas.

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Projects to somewhat reduce the costs of those.

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Okay.

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Yeah, and yeah, if I can.

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That's helpful. I think this panel to the nothing is easy panel. Right at this mandate to reduce fossil fuels quickly.

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As Steve says, while figuring out the best path forward. Sorry, Jessica.

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No, thanks. Sorry to interrupt. I was gonna jump in and just kind of tag on with what Heidi was saying and to answer your question and comment on what Steve said, you know, definitely we hear that and that was part of why we conducted our climate action plan, a greenhouse gas emissions inventory was to show show, you know, like we are part of the problem on Cape Cod.

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You know, we are producing these greenhouse gases, how do we remove them and and reduce that and part of that is transitioning to renewable energy.

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So we know we have to do it and we know we that solar is a part of it, you know, to I do get still get that response from you know folks from the public at public hearings for renewable energy developments like why not parking lots why not landfills and you know I do think we also have to you know pat ourselves on the back a little bit for all the good work that we have done like most of our landfills have been

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covered in solar panels so that's a good good example of good placement but it was kind of like the low-hanging fruit it was incentivized and now a lot of those locations are taken.

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So we do have to kind of branch out. But I do still see that there are a lot of opportunities.

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We through our analyses we've been looking at you know aerial imagery and what's called planet metrics data to look at how many ground mount solar projects and now we've expanded that to look at how many rooftop solar projects.

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And I think this would be something that the state and Audubon and others are doing too to kind of track the progress over time and be able to show that we are making progress on all fronts and that we are still taking those opportunities.

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To develop on the parking lots and rooftops as well as you know those marginal disturbed lands without having to go into you know necessarily pristine forest so I think we're just kind of keep tracking that.

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There's still a lot of work to be done and totally agree with sentiments about, you know, and totally agree with sentiments about, you know, providing the, still a lot of work to be done and totally agree with sentiments about, you know, providing the policies and the incentive to make those good projects faster.

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Thanks, Jessica. Clem, do you want to talk, you know, in this conversation or add in anything about the critique that I know you and I have heard about the fact that we don't have food production goals currently in the Commonwealth.

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Right, so we have nothing to sort of but up against. Working lands, being, you know, being, used for solar production, because we don't have a food production necessarily, you know, a goal that the administration of the legislature own.

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Yeah, I think you just put it better than I could have. I, so I'm not sure I have much to add, but I think that that is a challenge and I don't.

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Want that to be taken as, as that anybody who supports agriculture opposes solar development and other aspects of clean energy transition, but I think when you get into these conversations about.

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Trade offs and one. Yeah, set of objectives is very well kind of quantified and studied and the other isn't it it it does.

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Create kind of an imbalanced conversation in a sense. And I, and I think that that's just part of the challenge of identifying goals for food security in general is that it's a everybody likes the idea of local food but there are a lot of different perspectives on you know, how you should, what kinds of dietary assumptions you should be making or what understanding what the capability of different types of land is.

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It just becomes very complex. Very quickly and so we haven't really refined it to a science.

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And I think that that probably would help in these conversations not so much to resist development of, solar on all agricultural land, but to really identify more clearly.

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The types and locations of agricultural land that are most critical. To that food security goal.

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Thanks so much. And Steve when I was listening to you I was thinking this is the everything all at once right that we have to really be intolerant of fuel emissions and when I was scrolling through the chat earlier, the comments earlier.

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I, I saw a lot of people talk about conservation and other sectors, you know, and I got some text saying, got to think about housing emissions and transportation emissions.

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And I wonder if you want to just react to that. In this larger solar bucket. I know there's been a ton of you know conversation I think rightful conversation from my perspective on carbon sequestration.

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But you know in the bucket of everything all at once, how do you think about the work that has to be done for a net 0 building codes, which we now have.

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Thank goodness or public transit that's electric, things like that.

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Well, you're totally right. And those comments are right on. I think the only excuse really is that today's session is about solar development.

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The Massachusetts decarbonization plan speaks about 4 pillars of decarbonization and just today we're focusing on one of those pillars and that's getting our clean energy supplies.

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But yes, conservation and that includes energy efficiency retrofits for housing and buildings would include much better zoning energy requirements for new buildings.

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And again, the housing on the housing and commercial development, that's what's threatening our forests in our natural landscapes.

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That has to be discussed at the same time as solar. And it almost feels like solar development is bearing the entire weight of destroying our natural environment.

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And it's not. That's only 1 5th of what is destroying our landscapes. And solar is a use of the land like farming is the use of the land.

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It's using a land to provide a critical resource that we need to survive. So we need to balance all of those things and it's it's not easy and it's a lot of competition, but it's really hard when we're just so hyper focused on solar, solar development and we're worried about these potential risks.

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We just have to keep in mind remember, I don't think any solar field has killed people, let alone thousands of people per year.

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So we really need to move forward. In my opinion, of people per year. So we really need to move forward in my opinion and developing that solar so we really need to move forward in my opinion and developing that solar so fossil fuels will stop killing us.

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Thanks. Thanks so much, Steve. Anybody from the panel have any closing thoughts before we thank you?

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Heartfelt thanks and turn it back to Dwayne.

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I can start. I just wanted to say thanks again for the invitation. I think, you know, at 1st when Dwayne invited me, I was questioning why someone from Cape Cod was gonna be talking at a Western mass solar forum, but he reminded me that, you know, a lot of the work that we're doing at the Cape Cod Commission and on Cape Cod is definitely transferable and applicable

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to other parts of the state. And again, it's all relative, right? And it just really matters.

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In your community what your values and goals are and I think that kind of community engagement and community processes whether it's at the local level regional level or state level are really going to be important for defining you know how we want to move forward on this.

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Throughout the Commonwealth. Thanks again.

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Yeah, thanks. And I just wanted, thank you as well and to add a few final words.

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One is the importance of water resources. Our hydraulic system is. Being massively impacted by climate change already and these attend storms that we're seeing as well as these droughts that we've been having in several in the last decade.

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Regards to that. As far as, you know, it's absolutely true. Other forms of development are impacting forests, you know, even more than solar is and we need integrated planning.

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We need a lot more housing. The MAPC has done great analysis about the potential for redevelopment on vacant and underused commercial properties.

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And if we could redevelop those close to transit with. You know, net 0 buildings and solar on the new rooftops of the new parking lots, you know, then we can meet multiple goals.

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So there's opportunity here.

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Thanks so much, Clem. Anything? No. Alright.

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I think I'm all set. Thank you. Appreciate it the opportunity.

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Terrific. Heidi, we're gonna, I'm gonna leave it with that thought, right?

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I agree. The MAPC calls us to a very nuanced. Intersectional way of dealing with the I'll say existential.

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Crises that, hit us all at once. So thank you so much to the panel. Really grateful for your wisdom, and over to you, Join.

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Fantastic and a special thanks to you, Senator Comerford, for taking on that facilitation role and for and to the panelists as well.

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Thank you. Greatly appreciated. Okay. So, as we did before, we're gonna, do a quick poll as we're doing a transition to the, second paddle for this afternoon.

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A quick panel. Sorry, a quick poll question. How do you rank the following goals for Massachusetts in order of priority?

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These are for solar targets and other goals. Here are your choices here. And so how do you rank the following goals for Massachusetts in order a priority?

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So rank the orders there. And we'll give you a moment to do that while we are. Making a transition to the next panel as well.

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In the meantime, while that's happening, if I can ask the next panel members to.

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Start getting their cameras ready or open their cameras. To get ready for the next panel. This would be Josie Alberg.

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Adrian Nunez, Courtney Philly Carp and Catherine Rotti.

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Appreciate it. Thank you.

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And sorry, I'm told, There's more there's more options here in the poll.

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You may need to use the scroll bar. On the right to see all the options there in terms of the goals so don't forget to scroll down.

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Is that

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Is a more challenging poll than the earlier ones. So, give you a moment, a moment.

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Okay, Mary, when you think that's. As a sufficient response, you can we can provide the results.

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Okay, I do understand answers are still coming in. This, this will make you think of it. So, we'll give it a minute, but let me,

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Let me introduce. Oh, here we go. Thanks, Mary.

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Great. So.

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With the highest priority. So that would be, meeting greenhouse gas. Reduction targets. 100% renewable energy in Massachusetts.

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Conserving land for wildlife and recreation. Preserving force. Local food production.

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So all the

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As. Senator, come, for and others have said this is hard. Cause all these things need to be balanced carefully.

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And appropriately and in some optimal way. And that is what we've been discussing and the challenges ahead.

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And the opportunity. So. Let's close that. And move to.

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The final panel. For the forum. Just a heads up after this panel. We'll do a very quick wrap up.

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And then we'll be done for the day. So, for the Second.

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For the for the second panel this afternoon, we're still talking about balancing the trade offs, but here we're going to look at a different dimensions of the of the trade-offs here.

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Maintaining, how do we sort of maintain local control? As we particularly in western Massachusetts have strong desire to do as a home rule state and wanting to.

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Control our destiny and Western Massachusetts. So we wanna maintain our local control, but also.

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Importance, and efficiencies associated with standardizing sighting and permitting processes.

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And so let me introduce, our. Panelists for for this for this panel and 1st is, and we'll work, we'll, speak in this order.

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Josie Ahlberg is a legislative analyst from the Mass, Massachusetts Municipal Association.

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She and her colleague Adrienne Nunez. Also a legislative assistant analyst for MMA will really share.

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A remarks that we do have more than 4 or 5 min. You can each have about 4 or 5 min or however long you would like.

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We'll start off with, the perspective from MMA. Then we'll move on to Courtney Feeley Karp, senior counsel for Klavens law group.

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Works. Closely with the solar development industry from the, legal, perspective and has ample experience with project permitting and and legal issues.

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So thank you. Courtney. And then, we'll hear from Catherine Ratte, Director of Land Use and Environmental Development at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

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So thank you for to all of you for Joining us on this panel. Again, similar format.

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I will unshare the screen so we can see each other, better, but we each have 4 or 5 min to offer some remarks and then enter into some.

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Just a reminder again, to the attendees and other panelists. To feel free to offer comments.

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Questions which we might be able to get to in some of the discussion after the panelists speak, but also to create a record of perspectives and comments from attendees.

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That will be shared. Amongst all of us and comments from attendees that will be shared amongst all of us publicly and our state, officials and others.

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So let me turn it over then to, Josie to, to start us off on this panel unless you wanted Adrian to go first.st

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You, guys can work that out between the 2 of you.

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No problem. We do it often. You got the right order. Thank you, Dwayne.

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So good afternoon, everyone. And I have to say thank you to the U-mass Clean Energy Extension for hosting this forum and to Senator Comerford and Representative Domb and the other members of the Western Mass delegation for inspiring this action in conversation today.

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As Dwayne mentioned, my name is Josie Allberg and I'm joined by my colleague Adrienne Nunez.

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We're both delighted to speak with you today. And just before we jump in, we want to express really our sincere appreciate appreciation to the Healey Driscoll administration for really leading the Commonwealth towards our climate goals together.

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We also appreciate the hard work of our fellow commission members. Both Adrienne and I were behind the scenes helping John Mangiaratti who served as our designate to the commission.

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And we have to think as well the chairs, Chair Roy and Chair Barrett for being with us every step of the way is our friends and partners in the State House on Clean Energy as well to Undersecretary Judge for his leadership over the past several months.

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So I'll plan to raise a few quick items for discussion and I want to reiterate that these pieces are specifically from the Commission's recommendations.

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They still need to be enacted through legislation and many through rulemaking before they would take effect.

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So take that with a grain of salt. But at the local level, the main recommendation is to require consolidation of permitting processes in every city and town in the Commonwealth.

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With current technology and our understanding, we expected this process would apply to nearly all of the solar projects that may come to fruition in the short term.

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This proposal, if finalized, would remove authority at the local level. To enforce any local level policies that would be outside the boundaries that would be set by the standards put forward by the Department of Energy Resources in the rulemaking process.

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And it has a potential also to severely limit the ability of a community to deny an application, to deny a permit.

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And we know that the clean energy projects of the future will touch every city and town across the Commonwealth and that these projects have the opportunity to bring considerable disruption but also significant opportunity.

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And while there is a need to cite and build a large amount of clean energy infrastructure across the state in a very short period of time, we know that local input, specifically through public hearings, interactions between local boards and commissions and through thorough reviews of proposals that that work makes projects better.

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We do not want to see those benefits to the local process be watered down when community members will be the ones living with these projects for decades to come.

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Over the past several months, the commission has really wrestled with the issue of nimbyism and of community members who might not have access to or trust in educational materials about the benefits of the clean energy transition or have information on health and safety benefits that they feel comfortable with.

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We strongly feel that this lack of information, reliable information and context, plays a more significant role in delaying projects than the municipal process itself delays projects.

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We strongly support the recommendation included in the Commission's final report to provide for a statewide public education campaign, specifically about the clean energy transition.

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To reach our goals, we know that we need to bring everyone to the clean energy table, including those who are not currently participating or listening to awesome events like this one.

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What we have been advocating for on behalf of the cities and towns and the Commonwealth as the Mass Municipal Association is an onramp to consolidated local permitting.

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What was proposed by the Commission would be a massive paradigm shift for our municipalities. And in our own policy work and research, We chose instead to advocate for an optional local consolidated permitting process that would be guided by incentives for the municipalities who choose to participate.

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As a local option, a consolidated permitting process would take shape with early adopters with the Yes communities participating and we'd hope that additional communities will promptly see the benefits for those communities who have said yes and allow those local officials to get the necessary buy in from their residents to participate as well.

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We see that avoiding a 1 size fits all mandate would allow for important flexibility and to ensure adoption of this permitting process in communities of all sizes in all corners of the Commonwealth.

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So with that said, I'll turn things over to Adrian to speak on a few additional items a little bit more on the state side, but thank you again Dwayne and I'll pass it over to Adrian.

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Thanks, Josie. So yes, at the state level, the recommendation is to expand and reform the EFSB and create a consolidated permitting process for large projects.

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We've heard about this earlier today. The proposal limits the municipal voice to the submission of advisory opinions at the very start of the application process.

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And those advisory opinions are just that. They're essentially suggestions with no requirement for the developer to actually follow them.

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Second, the commission also recommends that the state provide guidance and support for municipalities in crafting community benefit agreements.

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Again, I know we've heard a little bit more about that earlier today. This could be a really fantastic opportunity for communities.

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As long as the final details of the policy allow for flexibility so that cities and towns can determine the benefits that their communities really need the most.

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And what is inappropriate mitigation for any implications for citing this infrastructure within their cities and towns?

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Lastly, regarding the site suitability framework, we are so appreciative of Steve Long's leadership in the commission on this particular item.

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We very much appreciate this approach. However, again, the details are not fleshed out. The proposed framework would develop, would be developed through a regulatory process.

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And be applied, of course, at the state level as well as the local level. And at this point, it's completely unclear what implications this would have.

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For the local process, how this would be applied, how this may limit or potentially enhance a community's local level vision for CEI siting.

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So just to sum things up, we are incredibly grateful for all of the hard work that has gone into reviewing citing and permitting processes.

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The proposals that have been put forward by the commission are really fantastic starting point for the conversation. However, there are many, many details that are unclear.

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And would theoretically be worked out through various regulatory processes. And as it stands, these details do threaten to disempower municipalities.

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We know that municipalities are ready. They're committed, and they are essential partners to the development of clean energy.

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Securing CBAs or importantly encouraging community acceptance and buy-in. Our municipalities are key to the success of the energy transition.

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So we strongly urge the legislature and the administration to ensure that municipalities maintain their authority in any final reforms that are approved.

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And we urge that any reforms to local processes are optional for cities, at cities and towns and paired with incentives.

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That's all for us, Dwayne. So I'll pass the mic back to you.

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But thank you. Josie and Adrienne. Great. Let's move to, Courtney Feeley Karp.

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Glad to see you. And take it away.

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Thanks, Wayne. It's always a pleasure to get to see you. Even remotely. And of course this is one of the more complicated topics, local controls that always is, no money, select the panel of all women to solve the world's problems.

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So I also just wanna add before the pitch works are brought out because I do work with solar companies, but our firm has also represented a number of municipalities and their clean energy planning and development and we work with a number of farmers in farming organizations as well around agricultural issues, particularly as they relate to clean energy.

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Sort of transformation and you know outcomes and whatnot so our firm has a broad range of experience you know sort of senator in the community space but our clients range in a lot of ways and You know, and the reality is there are no easy answers, right?

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That is the theme of the day. This is incredibly complex. And I think it's important to remember that to take a step back a little bit, not only are there, you know, are there impacts.

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Not all impacts are negative. There are a lot of positive impacts, you know, from these projects. You know, tax revenue, lease revenue on land that is otherwise sort of have little economic value in some instances.

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You know, and in green field space and whatnot. And so, I, you know, I just wanted to highlight that.

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Sort of the voice I'm representing is that there has been less conversation about how some of the benefits jobs among others that these projects do bring to various communities.

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And the communities have a role. And enabling that. And so one other piece I just, you know.

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Drawing a little bit from my personal life. I think taking a holistic look at this, I've talked a lot about this is You know, and this is the core of the challenge, right?

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So. Come over my personal life when my daughter was born she was one very premature at one pound each 26 weeks and oftentimes we bit children's hospital and we would be given a choice you can give your childish drug and there might be developmental delays or other consequences.

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Or she would stop reading. I'm like, was that really a choice? Or, you know, and the doctors would just slug and say there are no good choices here.

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You just have to make the best choice for the moment. And we're being asked to do a lot of things in that same vein.

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We're being asked to make choices for both the short term and the long term. Like people are looking at what are the consequences right now these decisions and holistically statewide.

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So not just in time but in breath that this decision in this town has a short-term consequence and a both in in the space the physical geography of the town and the immediate impact but also holistically the long term needs of the Commonwealth and just to kind of Mix it up a little bit, I guess, and today we'll keep it a little.

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I know, Adrienne was getting a little spicy. But you know, I would just say that kind of start the conversation.

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These are the core issues of why is complex. Yes, do we believe in local control? Look, I grew up in Massachusetts.

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I believe in 3 ways of doing things. That's how the whole world should operate, right? This county government, that's for the birds.

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It certainly doesn't work on election day. We do much better. There's plenty of things that make local control wonderful and great and special.

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And we're also a Commonwealth. And, and so how do we balance all those things and we have these state mandates?

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And so I would just like push back a little bit and say this is where the rubber meets the road as far as somebody say is it like a local option is not gonna be good enough for these things, right?

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That local control and local voice and local impact is really important. But there needs to be acknowledgement of the Commonwealth and the bandits and the things that we need to do.

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And the question is, what, how do we balance that? And I would push back a little bit.

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It's like, it's on a trade-off. It's not an either or.

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It's how do we hold both of these things and the tension in between them to better outcomes for both the town and everybody, right?

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So it doesn't have to be someone when someone loses. Is how do we hold the tension and increase that space to find the best outcome?

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So, and I think, you know, in the work that I do, that's constantly what we try to figure out whether it's an individual project or like a more comprehensive scheme.

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Looking at some municipalities planning about how to how to do that. And I think there's important questions that everyone needs to ask, but I would just sort of kind of refrain the conversation a little bit about that as a coexistence attentions rather than thinking one or the other.

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Thanks, man.

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Very good. Thank you, Courtney.

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Oh, and my apologies for this. I'll translate it because I know Mary said to slow down and I know that was aimed at me and I'm sorry I was trying to do better.

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Yeah. Hi, Courtney is a train wreck for ASL, that's for sure. Alright, sorry about that.

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Okay.

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Okay. Alright, great. But thank you, Courtney, for those, that perspective from, Solar, one who works closely with solar developers.

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Super. Catherine, over to you.

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Thanks, Dwayne. And, thank you all for sticking with us to this end of the day.

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I'm surprised I get to be the last word, but I'm also honored and I'm honored to be with everybody here.

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And thank you all for your interest in this very important topic. I'm a regional land use and environmental planner.

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Who has worked to advance the transition to clean safe sustainable energy for most of my professional life here in the Pioneer Valley.

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I moved back here in 1998 after having grown up in Amherst in the sixties and seventies attended college served in the Peace Corps, lived in Madison, Wisconsin and then attended college, served in the Peace Corps, lived in Madison, Wisconsin, and then came here, came back home.

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Picking up on what Courtney was saying, let's work to think, broadly about our shared needs and goals.

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We need to transition to clean safe sustainable energy. And we need to do so urgently. And from my experience, there is agreement.

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Across our cities and towns that the current citing and permitting process is delaying the transition that we have all agreed is necessary.

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And we also agree that local control in Massachusetts towns is a cherished cornerstone. Of our centuries old effort to build a better form of government.

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And that our local leaders many of whom serve as volunteers. Do know their communities best. They do need protection from unanticipated impacts of state programs.

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Such as the failure to require stormwater management on large solar fields that has resulted in localized flooding and significant property damage.

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Is there a conflict between the goal of standardizing a permitting process? And maintaining local. Not necessarily.

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Standardization could result from elements of a process that includes local government. Creating and endorsing the standards.

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This is not a loss of local control. It is an application and an integration of local control into the early stages of a permitting process, the design of that process.

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Reading the recommendations of the Massachusetts Commission on Energy Infrastructure, citing and permitting. One fact jumps out.

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There is a lot more work to do. And based on how government work advances in Massachusetts after my 26 years of working adjacent to state government.

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I'm very optimistic that everybody on this meeting and everybody who watches this recording and who wants to have a say in the details will have that opportunity.

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I agree with many of the questions that have been posted in the previous panelists. That robust meaningful engagement of all members of our communities are essential as is the site suitable work that is yet to be detailed.

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At the same time, we do have to celebrate and honor the work of the Commission and the broad support for the recommendations that are included in the report.

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Given my position here as a representative from a regional planning agency whose primary constituents are municipalities. Of course, I agree with the points made by my esteemed colleagues at the Mass Municipal Association.

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But, and I'm sure many of you feel the same way, we are responsible. For the future of our region.

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And here in the Pioneer Valley at the Planning Commission, we have long subscribed. To the Bruntland Commission definition of sustainability, which is Meeting the needs of the present generation.

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Without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Clearly, we need to complete our transition to clean, safe, sustainable energy, and we need to do it now.

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I recall when many of us here, including Dwayne, Stephanie, Lynn, Banander, we all collaborated on the 1st regional clean energy plan for the Pioneer Valley back in 2,000 the early 2,000 When we started, we proposed that we would take responsibility for citing 10% of the Commonwealth's clean energy generation here.

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Because we are home to approximately 10% of the population. But in our very collaborative regional clean energy planning process, members of the community said, we want to do more.

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We want 15% or more. And I think I want to remind people of that and I want to encourage us all to move forward with a similar stance of collaboration.

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We still need to host clean energy here. Not just for the Commonwealth, for the country. And for the rest of the world because we have space to do it and we have regulations to make it safe.

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We need to learn from the research and the experience of municipal officials the best way to make this transition. Massachusetts State Government has a fantastic history of combining carrots and sticks.

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With a significant over emphasis on the carrot. To encourage collective action that benefits all of us.

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And that approach has worked. We're a leader across the country in so many areas. We got to continue that approach.

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While at the same time standardizing processes in a collaborative and inclusive way, to avoid wasted energy, wasted time, and wasted scarce resources.

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On deciding commission, Lizzie, WAN from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, one of our sister regional planning agencies represented the voice of regional planning agencies and she did.

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Indoors, the consolidated process. But with the caveat that there has to be as many others have said concurrent additional support for cities and towns, including the establishment of the Division of Energy Siting and Permitting.

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Which will collaboratively establish clear state standards for local review. Offer technical assistance to cities and towns to support the implementation of the consolidated process.

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With regional planning agencies supporting and playing as much of an assistance role as we can. And promote these requirements under the new process.

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The division must provide funding support to municipalities to comply with the consolidated local permitting process. Additionally, the Commonwealth should fund regional planning agencies that didn't get the federal funds to update or develop missing clean energy plans so that we can engage everybody in our municipalities to be involved in this process.

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That way we will ensure an equal focus on energy efficiency on mutual benefit and local control.

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Because we're short on time, I'm gonna stop, but I do encourage those of you who haven't yet had a chance to read the report, but go to the appendix because under the appendix you can see how every person voted and you can see their comments in many cases representatives voted to support a recommendation but they added really good details on how that recommendation needs to be implemented.

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And I also just wanna say. I did go to the visit the Harvard Forest years ago when I was doing a work of project on trees and You look at the dioramas, you can see that we did chop down all the trees in the 1,007 hundreds.

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Unfortunately, it was the European settlers after kicking out. Killing the indigenous people. All the trees were gone and they grew back.

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So I know that's a simplistic thing to say, but. We do need to protect the planet for the future.

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So thank you for the opportunity to speak and I look forward to people's questions.

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Super. Thank you, Katherine. I'm glad I put you last because those are great. Wrap up and, summary words for a lot of the issues that we've discussed today.

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So thank you for that and thank you to all the panelists for for your remarks. Let me. We have about 5 or so minutes.

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We have a quick wrap up. Let me ask. One question first, st which is not meant to be defensive.

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Or offensive to the commission, but I did want to get. Yeah, I have some input and thoughts from Josie and Adrian it sounds like you were probably you were very close to the commission's work.

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And we have received some critique, if you will, and, Comments today and previously with regard to the commission and sort of a lack of a voice from Western Massachusetts in the membership of the commission.

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That's not to say Western Massachusetts wasn't recognized or that members didn't have understanding of western Massachusetts but i guess if you could perhaps Let us know your thoughts in terms of how the special nature of Western Massachusetts with regard to our rural nature, the fact that we had the land.

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We have less load but we have the land this is kind of a special situation for us particularly with regard to solar citing yeah, if you can sort of, maybe give us a sense of how these issues of, from and perspectives of Western Massachusetts were accommodated or voiced, within the work of the commission.

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And coordinate or Katherine as well if you have any insights into that.

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Sure, I'll start us off and Josie, you can fill in some gaps. Dwayne, I don't have the list of, commission members in front of me.

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So there's that, I will say. But there was, so we did take it very seriously at the MMA that we were the only representation for cities and towns.

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And of course at the MMA, we are looking at the Commonwealth as a whole and looking for through lines that connect all of our communities.

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And I will say that, you know, from conversations that Josie and I have had with our membership, we are seeing some very similar issues.

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Across various regions, including one that I do believe is, you know, of interest to Western Massachusetts, which is, you know, what is the fair share of, sort of engagement and sort of hosting, the clean energy infrastructure.

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So this did come up in some conversation in, in fact, I think it came up impartially around citing suitability.

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There is, there was also representation from. I'm not sure the organization, but there was a representation for working lands and farmers.

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In this conversation, so there was a concern among, commission members as a whole as to, you know, again around site suitability, you know, what, what are we doing in terms of preserving working lands?

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How will we actually put together this site suitability framework to ensure that we are not say clear cutting forward for us, how are we making these decisions.

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And there was a pretty broad consensus. Among members that there was an interest in prioritizing developed, land.

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It for initial sighting. So hopefully that's helpful. I think that all of those, are really of interest to Western Massachusetts.

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There's also 1, one other thing before I pass the night to Josie is, you know, there is a real concern, of course, for, small communities, right, that may not have the capacity to either take on, a modification to their system or have to deal with some, you know, additional requirements from a process.

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The was a concern to ensure that small communities were provided some additional words to make sure that if they were say crafting cbas that they had the knowledge and ability to do that i think on your poll we saw that some most communities felt like they didn't have that ability to do that.

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So some of this conversation was definitely coming up to make sure that all communities. Sort of, had the resources that they needed to be able to engage in both levels of the process both at the local level and also with the large project process and the reforms to that process.

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Josie, anything to add that?

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Yeah, no, thanks Adrian. I think what I'll just add is that the time has the clock is still running on this topic, right?

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We have until the end of the formal sessions end of July and of next month to help influence and guide our legislators and their staff to help understand this issue from a Western mass perspective, from a central mass perspective, from the north and south shore in the Cape.

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So now is really the time to really dive in and learn as much as possible and trying to evaluate, well, if x then y, what would this mean for my municipality, for my planning board, for my zoning board, whatever the implications might be.

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So I just want to say that while maybe yes, the the commission only had a handful of municipal representatives and a lot of voices from the larger utility companies and solar developers, that doesn't mean that there's not time now to influence how the legislation shapes out, whether that's through representative Roy and Senator Barrett's actions or with just your own delegation now is the time to keep the keep the needle on this

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issue. So I'll just add that in. You were to hear other comments too on that question.

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So I just push back on that a little bit and say the commission was actually quite balanced in its representation.

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There were 3 different seats for municipal and local control as Kavanaugh invented the MAPC, how to see the Mass Association.

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Concomes had a seat. Of course, obviously the MMA at a seat. The utilities also had 3 seats.

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You know, the agricultural interest was the American Farmland Trust, which I think is an incredibly active and important you know, participant in these conversations, particularly with respect with agricultural land.

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There were 3 seats for onshore. Renewable energy and then one for vineyard offshore because obviously that's its own thing that's a little bit off topic from what we're talking about today.

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And you know, and there was, One seat for Lever and there were 4 seats for EJ.

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Including one from Springfield to your question. Dwayne about Western mass representation, among others. So actually the representation was quite balanced on and actually I think You know, I would like to command Mike and his team and.

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And others for, you know, really putting the work in on this. And as is the case with most broad reaching policy initiatives that are proposing massive change, like everyone's going to be a little bit unhappy and that's how you know you're probably in the right spot of where the policies should end up.

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If you made somebody happy, that they probably got too much. So I think it's important to recognize that you know, change is not easy, change is going to be a little bit messy difficult, but change is necessary.

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I think if we're talking about, you know, that this is complicated and whatnot, it's also necessary.

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And I think you know, and one of the things I would say that I think has been an important conversation point and I see this a lot working with projects in very towns of various sizes.

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I actually think the more it's not just support for different municipalities but the more that we can provide consistent standardized.

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Expectations on how this thing should work. The smaller communities, many of which are in the 4 1 3.

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Would really benefit because I think that it's. Having a blank slate to start from that's can be very overwhelming.

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And that to the extent we can have this division into we are to support these groups and have more model bylaws and plans in place that those are the things it's not so much having an option for local control but it's actually having the tools to effectuate the policies that many of these communities as you know Catherine is a lead you who want to do these things but don't know how to do them well to the benefit

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of both the town and the clean energy because their resource constraint because they're smaller and that's understandable.

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They're not a community that has a huge staff. To be able to devote certain resources to these things.

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And so I think there's a lot in the commission report and recommendations that acknowledge a lot of the things that aren't necessarily you need to Western mask but certainly that mushroom mass is grapple with for some of these projects.

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I also think that as to come full circle a little bit to the panel right before us. I just wanted to add Dwayne to your point about which your mask.

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Is I just can't, sorry, help myself. And I'm sorry to the interpreter.

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I will try to set out. But particularly with the agricultural piece. And I think Senator Comerford made a really good point.

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Fine up in the question about having. Food. Part of the Massachusetts food plan and what the mandates are within that or what should be in that and what's missing and how do we hold both of those things?

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I've had the great pleasure of working with a number of farmers. I'm doing an agriulte of projects.

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And I think that their continues to be evolving work, but one of the projects I'm living was proud of.

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Had a formative parcel of land that had suffered and lost the entire crop 2 years in a row from drought.

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And a new way of doing things. And I think I think agriculture has been an important part of this state's history.

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Our small, de democratic form of government's been a small, important part of our state history. But what does that look like in the 21st century and beyond in the climate challenge world?

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And agriculture is not going to be bucolic and growing stuff as you see fit. It's going to have to be more specific and constrained to the clean energy needs and we responsive to it if it's going to succeed.

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And I think our democracies have to do the same thing that it doesn't have to simply mean that you're somehow behaving to the save or somehow losing that home rule.

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It has to be we're enabling our towns to be more empowered with appropriate tools to effectuate these Commonwealth mandates because they are.

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You know, all of the local leaders are also leaders within our broader Commonwealth. As Catherine said, it is more than even the come up.

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It's our region in the world. And you know in Massachusetts has been a consistent cleaner in part because we try harder to do it better.

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We don't always get it right, or knows, but we're really in a position to really weigh all of those things.

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And I guess I would just say we need to continue. To have these types of conversations and I just do want to close with.

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Dwayne and his team got. That these are important conversations because they need to be had out in the open about what this tension is and how we can figure out what everyone, what will serve everyone.

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Some of the things and what will serve the Commonwealth in most of the things and I know we can get there and it's hard and challenging, but I do think that it is, you know, it is about.

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Perspective taking and figuring out, okay, how can we shift this paradigm a little bit that this is you know that this is something that is change but it doesn't mean that it's it's a loss.

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It's just a different way of doing things.

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Thank you, Courtney. Super any last remarks, Katherine or, final remarks?

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Are you okay?

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I'm good, thanks. Thank you again for the opportunity.

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Alright, awesome. Yeah, great. So thank you. Josie, Adrian, Courtney, Katherine.

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For taking us taking us to the end here for the for the panel we are at time except for a quick wrap up so, again, this has been a great panel and a great.

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The form thank you everybody for sticking with us. many of you throughout the day.

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Again, the full recording of the. Form will be on our website. Within the next few days.

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And let me, you guys can close your cameras and we'll move on to the wrap up slide to share.

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And we'll close out and, on time. I'm I'm impressed with myself that we are actually on time.

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So thank you for everybody. Keeping us on pace. Okay, so, Again, for the wrap up.

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This, slide deck, as helpful as it may be, will be available, on our website as well as the, slides from this morning.

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Morning's kickoff. I do know at least Michael Judge's slides are available to us. We'll post those.

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I will also ask, Representative Roy, if we can post his slides as well. So these will be available at the Western Mass overform website, in the coming days, as well as the full video recording of the forum.

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And also, as I mentioned before, the full transcript of the Q&A's, that have come in, I will say that we have 118.

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Comments questions and comments that have come in during the course of the day. Which is actually a robust testimony and record of voices and thoughts from the community.

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And so we will also post those and make those available to all attendees. At the forum and in anybody else else who, comes to our website.

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Second, we are interested in gaining your feedback on this form. And so we would appreciate if you would take a moment to offer your feedback.

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The post forum feedback is available at that short. If it's possible, Mary might be able to chat that out to everybody.

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Or you can type it in but also importantly we will be following up the forum with an email to all attendees and empanelists.

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With this link as well. Shortly. So again, appreciate if you could.

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Take the short time, to fill out the. Feedback and provide us feedback for the for the forum.

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I think it was. Just in the last panel. Was mentioned.

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The importance and the 2, months essentially, remaining to reach out to our state legislators to voice your opinions and get your thoughts in there with regard to ongoing deliberations on bills and laws with regard to the signing commission recommendations as well as the broader policy And so, just, tips for reaching out to your local legislator.

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If you go to. Find my legislator. at the, state website.

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It provides you the names and email addresses for your local state legislator. You can type in your zip code or your address and it will provide you with your, your, senator and your representative, as well as, their names are typically hyperlink so you can get their websites and hence their emails.

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Last, A couple more things a big thank you. 1st to all our speakers, our panelists, our facilitators.

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The value in the. Knowledge gained through this forum is really a result of all of your hard work to put your thoughts together and express your thoughts and share your thoughts with the, with the forum.

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So thank you, to all of you. Thank you to all who have helped organized and planned the forum.

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I particularly want to thank,

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Let me just see something.

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I particularly want to thank. The clean energy extension staff here. River Strong Mary Kraus, Zara Dowling.

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And then a special thanks, to our partners and collaborators in the planning and visioning.

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For this forum, our dear legislative delegation, Senator Jo Comerford and representative Mindy Domb.

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Thank you so much and for your hard work in listening and, and, and working on these hard issues on behalf of all of us.

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Lastly, I wanna thank all of you, attendees for your, interest, your comments.

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And continued engagement in these important issues. So with that, let us call it. A forum and do stay.

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Do do offer your comments and your feedback with the survey that we will send out as well and also.

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Feel free to share our website. For the solar forum to others who have not been able to join us today and the recording will be there within a day or 2 and you can you can listen to it again or share it with other people to listen to it at their leisure.

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So with that, let's call it an afternoon and thank you very much and goodbye everybody.