

ALTERNATIVE POWER ENTERPRISES

REMOVAL OF COUNTY SOLAR PERMITTING AND REBATES

OVERVIEW

Alternative Power Enterprises is proposing that Ouray County remove the barriers to the development of solar energy projects by removing the requirement for building permits on solar energy installations. At present, Ouray County is the only county in our region requiring building permits to install solar energy systems.

THE OBJECTIVE

- Remove permitting requirement; While building permits may be of the highest importance for building homes, barns and other structures, we find that the process should not apply to solar energy systems. Aside from the time to provide all documentation for the permits, the approval time can take up to three weeks during peak building season, causing the solar contractor to sit and wait, until approved, before work can begin. Most projects only take 1-2 weeks to complete and could be inspected and completed in the time it takes for the permit approval process. Ground mounts are all pre-engineered. Having a stamped letter adds additional cost to the customer. Regarding roof mounts; Typical solar modules weigh 20 to 50 pounds each and are distributed evenly across a roof along with the racking systems that support them. By dividing the weight of the modules and underlying racking by the area of the modules, we generally find that the combined weight of solar modules and the racking that supports them puts about 3-4 pounds of weight per square foot on a roof. Most structures built after 1970 are designed to support loads far greater than this.
- Cease rebates on building permits and sales tax. The county sales tax rebate was originally put into place, in 2009, to incentivize solar in the county. Since then the price of solar has come down 50%, sometimes more, and this incentive is no longer a strong sales point. When we crunched the numbers the difference between permitting costs, engineering, permit refunds and sales tax refunds, the cost difference was inconsequential. The county seems to be the one losing on this, permitting requires employee time, tax refunds require employee time and the county misses out on the revenue.
- If there are is anything questionable, structural or regarding setbacks, a well-informed solar contractor will contact the county or a licensed engineer to assist.
- A state electrical permit is required on all PV systems, ensuring that the system is properly installed and safe.
- Home Owners Associations are not permitted to prohibit the installation of solar panels on a unit or property which is owned by a member of the association. Any such prohibition in the governing documents of an association is void and unenforceable.

THE OPPORTUNITY

- The county has the opportunity to receive and use sales tax revenue.
- By eliminating building permits for solar, this frees up time for the building inspector to do her job. The inspector typically goes to the job site at least two times before signing off, this appears to be an inefficient use of her time.
- This helps small solar businesses with continuous revenue instead of remaining at a standstill until the permit process is included. This opens up room for business growth within the county.

OUR PROPOSAL

We propose that the county remove the requirement for building permits on solar installations and terminate the county rebate program. Alternative Power Enterprises is available to work with the county to assist with whatever the county needs to change this protocol. Your careful review and consideration of this proposal is appreciated.