



Department Source: City Utilities

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: October 16, 2023

Re: Community Solar Program

Executive Summary

Staff has prepared for Council consideration an ordinance to amend Chapter 27 of the City Code of Ordinances. The ordinance would establish a Community Solar program for residential electric customers by establishing a voluntary Community Solar electric rate. City of Columbia Utilities staff proposes to initiate a one megawatt Community Solar program offered through a Community Solar rate subscription model. This program will make solar energy accessible to customers through a virtual net-metering program providing on-bill solar credits from generation at local solar fields.

Discussion

Staff has investigated various business models and cost structures associated with community solar programs. As a result of this work, staff has developed a business model that considers the feasibility and incentive for both the Utility and its customers.

After development of the model with the utility billing software service provider, the Community Solar program has been refined to work within the City's billing system. This design will allow for access to solar energy regardless of a customer's type of home or ownership status and will be mobile within City of Columbia electric territory.

The Community Solar program will offer approximately one megawatt of solar available in blocks of solar, with each block being one and a half kilowatts. Solar energy will be provided from a combination of the Truman Solar field located east of Columbia, and the solar field located on Bernadette Drive.

One block is estimated to produce 3,280 kWh annually, and participating customers will see an average monthly premium of less than \$1 per month per year. Each participant will subscribe to one block per household. The subscription will be an automatically renewing annual subscription through 2044 with an annual true-up of solar credits. Participants may unsubscribe from the program at any time with no additional cost. If the customer moves residences within City of Columbia electric service area, the subscription can be transferred to the customer's new service address. Each block subscribed will have a one-time registration fee of \$27 and a monthly subscription fee of \$24.77. Actual production from the solar fields will be measured and allocated into the Community Solar blocks. Solar credits will be offered at the lowest tier of the electric rate schedule, which is currently \$0.0889 per kWh, for the equivalent production of one block of community solar. Both the monthly subscription fee and solar production credits will show as line items on participant's monthly bills.



Staff intends to implement this program in January 2024. Former customers of the SolarOne program will be given the first opportunities to participate in the program, then any electric customer of City of Columbia Utilities, owner-occupied or renter, may participate. Once all blocks are allocated, a waiting list will be created.

If the program is determined to be a success, the model for this program is designed to allow for potential expansion to allow for more customers to participate in the Community Solar program.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None
Long-Term Impact: None

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

[Strategic Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Resilient Economy, Secondary Impact: Inclusive and Equitable Community, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

[Comprehensive Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Economic Development, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
2/20/2020	B33-20 Amending the contract with N. Harris Computer Corporation to develop the community solar utility billing software and Appropriation of Funds

Suggested Council Action

Approval of Ordinance.