

Agenda Report Reviewed by:  
City Manager: 

**CITY OF SEBASTOPOL  
CITY COUNCIL  
AGENDA ITEM**

**Meeting Date:** March 2, 2021  
**To:** Honorable City Councilmembers  
**From:** Agenda Review Committee  
**Subject:** Approval to Authorize Mayor to Sign Letter of Support to Save Solar In Sebastopol  
**Recommendation :** That the City Council Authorize Mayor to Sign Letter  
**Funding:** Currently Budgeted: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No XX N/A  
Net General Fund Cost:  
Amount: \$

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget AK (verified by Administrative Services Department)

**INTRODUCTION:**

This item is to request that the City Council Approve and Authorize Mayor to Sign Letter of Support to Save Solar in Sebastopol

**BACKGROUND:**

The City of Sebastopol received information that PG&E, San Diego Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison have proposed or are expected to propose the following:

- Make choosing solar more expensive, putting it further out of reach for middle and low-income households.
- Impose discriminatory new fees on all solar users that will further discourage solar adoptions.

The item tonight is to authorize the Mayor to send a letter to the Governor of California letting him know that the City of Sebastopol, a leader in rooftop solar installations, stands in support of protecting the future of rooftop solar.

**DISCUSSION:**

California is a leader in adopting solar energy with over a million consumers generating their own renewable energy onsite. Adoption of onsite solar energy is not only a tool to reduce energy bills for homeowners, renters and businesses, but also a risk management tool against climate change. Rooftop solar systems not only reduce strain on the state’s electricity grid but add much needed energy year-round, especially during evermore frequent extreme heat events.

There is one policy that is vital to that investment: net energy metering. Net energy metering is a program that compensates consumers for any excess electricity exported to the grid and shared with nearby neighbors. Net metering has helped fuel the growth of solar across the state, including in my community. As we work to reduce fossil fuel use through electrification efforts, it is imperative that we simultaneously give consumers tools to lower their energy bills and meet increased electricity use onsite wherever possible. We should not be taking clean energy solutions away from people, we should be making it easier and more affordable to go solar.

Utilities are lobbying the CPUC to gut net metering, California's cornerstone rooftop solar policy. CPUC launched their proceeding last year and is expected to make a final decision late this year. Rooftop solar is helping reduce

the impacts of the climate crisis, stabilizing the grid, supporting green jobs, stimulating the local economy, lessening the need for harmful fossil fuels and providing energy independence to families, schools, businesses and places of worship. The utilities are working to make it more expensive to choose rooftop solar and storage, putting it further out of reach for middle and low income households.

**Agenda Item Number 4**

Instead of gutting net metering, we should strengthen it to keep rooftop solar growing, get it into the hands of more low-income people and renters, and increase the use of solar-powered batteries. Sebastopol has shown the lead in many ways, especially Solar. We need to continue to lead and advocate.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

As of the writing of this staff report, the City has not received any public comment. However, if staff receives public comment from interested parties following the publication and distribution of this staff report such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting. In addition, public comments may be offered during the public comment portion of this item.

**PUBLIC NOTICE:**

This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to schedule meeting date.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal cost associated with this item tonight.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council authorize the Mayor to send a letter to the Governor of California letting him know that the City of Sebastopol, a leader in rooftop solar installations, stands in support of protecting the future of rooftop solar.

**Attachment:**

Letter

Solar Fact Sheet

**City Council**

Mayor Una Glass  
Vice Mayor Sarah Glade Gurney  
Diana Gardner Rich  
Neysa Hinton  
Patrick Slayter



**Agenda Item Number 4**

**City Manager**

Larry McLaughlin

lmclaughlin@cityofsebastopol.org

**Assistant City Manager/City Clerk, MMC**

Mary Gourley

mgourley@cityofsebastopol.org

**City of Sebastopol**

March 3, 2021

Governor Gavin Newsom  
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

And

California Public Utilities Commission  
505 Van Ness Ave.  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Docket #: R.20-08-020

Dear Governor Newsom:

As Mayor of Sebastopol, I am writing to you to ask for your support in protecting rooftop solar in California.

California is a leader in adopting solar energy with over a million consumers generating their own renewable energy onsite. Adoption of onsite solar energy is not only a tool to reduce energy bills for homeowners, renters and businesses, but also a risk management tool against climate change. Rooftop solar systems not only reduce strain on the state's electricity grid but add much needed energy year-round, especially during evermore frequent extreme heat events.

There is one policy that is vital to that investment: net energy metering. Net energy metering is a program that compensates consumers for any excess electricity exported to the grid and shared with nearby neighbors. Net metering has helped fuel the growth of solar across the state, including in my community. As we work to reduce fossil fuel use through electrification efforts, it is imperative that we simultaneously give consumers tools to lower their energy bills and meet increased electricity use onsite wherever possible. We should not be taking clean energy solutions away from people, we should be making it easier and more affordable to go solar. Instead of gutting net metering, we should strengthen it to keep rooftop solar growing, get it into the hands of more low-income people and renters, and increase the use of solar-powered batteries.

Again, I ask you to protect this critical policy. We are concerned that drastic changes to the state's Net Energy Metering program by the Public Utilities Commission could negatively affect consumers and California's clean energy growth. As we emerge from the economic and public health crises caused by COVID-19, we urge you to maintain the benefits of solar energy for all Californians.

Signed,

Una Glass  
Mayor

City of Sebastopol

cc: City Councilmembers  
Members of the California Public Utilities Commission



# Keep Rooftop Solar Growing With Equity & Climate Resiliency

*Fires, air pollution, power outages and punishing electricity bills: these issues affect all Californians, but have a disproportionately greater impact on communities of concern.*

## Rooftop Solar, along with Battery Storage, is a Key Solution that Puts People at the Center of the Clean Energy Transition

**Giving people tools to control their energy bills.** The transition to clean energy doesn't work if people can't afford their electricity bills. Supersizing the utility grid without passing along savings to consumers is not a solution.

**Fighting climate change.** We cannot get to 100% clean energy solely with utility-scale renewables. Reliability issues, infrastructure costs and siting challenges threaten our climate change success if we put all of our eggs into the utility-scale basket.

**Keeping the lights on.** Local solar & storage is the only clean way to reduce the impact of power outages on our communities. Yet, state leaders continue to squander this opportunity to make our grid more resilient ([New York Times story](#) illustrates this).

**Reducing the cost of operating the grid.** Transmission & distribution costs are the main driver of ever-rising utility bills. Local solar and storage reduces both the cost of maintaining the current infrastructure, and the need to invest in future infrastructure. According to CALISO, local clean energy saved ratepayers \$2.6 billion in avoided transmission costs in 2018 alone.

**Providing good-paying, local jobs in every community.** Rooftop solar and storage supports 75,000 family-sustaining jobs in every corner of the state; more than all the utility companies combined.

*California's plan to decarbonize must put people's economic needs at the center. That means ensuring growing, affordable access to rooftop solar and storage.*

### The New York Times *Its Electric Grid Under Strain, California Turns to Batteries*

When demand exceeded supply in a recent heat wave, electricity stored at businesses and even homes was called into service. With proper management, batteries could have made up for an offline gas plant.

## Net Metering is the Cornerstone of Rooftop Solar & Storage

Net metering lets solar users give their extra solar energy to their neighbors for a bill credit. This commonsense transaction between solar users and the utility puts valuable local clean energy on the grid and reduces our reliance on far-away energy and long-distance power lines. Adding a battery provides even more value to the solar user as well as everyone in the community by helping make the sun shine at night.

## Utilities Lobbying to Gut Net Metering

PG&E, San Diego Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison have proposed or are expected to propose the following:

- Make choosing solar more expensive, putting it further out of reach for middle and low-income households.
- Impose discriminatory new fees on all solar users that will further discourage solar adoptions.

*California's plan to decarbonize must put people's economic needs at the center. That means ensuring growing, affordable access to rooftop solar and storage.*



Credit: National Renewable Energy Laboratory

## Net Metering is the Cornerstone of Rooftop Solar & Storage

We are in a climate emergency, compounded by an unreliable and costly electric grid. To help address these problems, the CPUC should use net metering to make rooftop solar and battery storage even more valuable and more accessible for California and its residents.

**Keep rooftop solar growing.** At minimum, maintain the current pace of rooftop solar adoptions.

**Prioritize Equity: Bring rooftop solar + storage to more low-income families and Communities of Concern:** Today, rooftop solar is growing in lower- and middle-income neighborhoods, including on affordable multifamily apartment buildings. We should accelerate this trend so that more of California's Environmental Justice and Social Justice (ESJ) communities and renters benefit from local clean energy.

**Make Solar-Charged Batteries Standard with Rooftop Solar by 2030:** Solar-charged batteries reduce strain on the grid; help accelerate the retirement of polluting fossil fuel power plants; and allow people to keep their lights on and food fresh during power outages without dirty and dangerous back-up generators. On the heels of California achieving one million solar rooftops last year, we should now strive for one million solar-charged batteries by 2030.

## Contact:

Dave Rosenfeld

916-778-0096

dave@solarrights.org