

#080770
2/5/09

RE: Solar Energy topic at today's meeting

Dear Gainesville City Commissioners,

As a Gainesville resident with solar panels I would like you to consider the following before this afternoon's meeting on GRU's solar plan.

1. Gainesville's designation as a *Tree City* greatly restricts the use of solar panels for many residents. Even trees on adjoining properties can effect the optimum use of solar panels. I'm concerned there would be a strong push to remove trees to accommodate GRU's plan. You know, like the special rights bill board companies have.
2. Will people, like myself, who already have solar panels be grandfathered into GRU's feed-in-tariff program?
3. Regarding the proposed feed-in tariff 20-year contract with an above market value rate:
 - a. if a person sells their home, would the contract remain in effect for the new owner?
 - b. the current rate may be above market value, but will it be locked in for the duration of the 20 year contract or will it adjust according the then current market values?
4. installing solar panels is an expense few people can afford.
5. as the country is in a recession, near depression, even fewer people can afford solar panels.

Considering facts 4 and 5, how can GRU or you, justify the expense of GRU's proposed plan and how in good conscience can you pass along the \$1.2 million per year bill to GRU customers when so few have or will have anytime soon in this economy, solar panels?

The media makes it sound like GRU is a role model with German business people coming to Gainesville to observe GRU's proposed system. When in fact Germany has been using solar power for decades and are the major manufacturers of photoelectric panels, such as the ones on my house. They are more likely coming here not to learn from GRU, but rather to offer suggestions and promote their products.

GRU can certainly use the support of other *successful* energy saving programs as GRU is so inept with their own program. Their incompetence during the installation of solar panels on my house last summer delayed the installation by 3 weeks; a week after GRU approved the installation and turned the system on they shut the solar panels off and locked it so only they could turn it on and gave no reason for it. Several phone calls later I was told GRU had decided to change the way solar systems were installed beginning July 1. But being my system was installed in June, they figured they would start with mine. So for two more weeks the solar panels I was paying for collected only dust while my contractor had to pull another permit to change the conduit from metal to PVC. The nearly 6 week total delay caused by GRU meant delaying my application to the State of Florida for a rebate. By the time my application was submitted, the 2008 rebate budget was spent. If the project had been completed on time, I would have made the cutoff and received a rebate check by now. Currently my name is on a waiting list but I have been told not to expect the rebate. The rebate was the major incentive to install the solar panels as it will take years for the savings from the solar panels to amount to much.

For a business who says their goal is to save energy, they have staff driving gas guzzling SUVs, waste time driving to customer's homes for signatures, etc without first calling to verify the customer will be home, arrive at a customer's home without the proper forms or equipment and then have an attitude because they couldn't get into my yard as the gate was locked. Never mind that the locked gate saved that person from being greeted by my two large dogs.

When I asked GRU for a checklist of things I needed to do to get the solar panels installed, they had none. Their staff gave conflicting information, Bill Shepherd was conveniently never available when I sought answers to questions his staff didn't have. In fact, he never returned a call. I never did receive an answer as to why I had to show GRU proof of home owners insurance before they would approve the solar panel installation.

If GRU wants to save energy, they can focus on smaller more affordable things like solar power for water heaters. Requires less space, sun or investment (~\$5,000) compared to \$30,000 + for an 1,800 sq ft house. I'd like to see GRU focus more on water conservation using cisterns, rain barrels, rain gardens. These are more affordable, conserves water and protects the earth and natural water sources from water runoff.

Driving around Gainesville, I see so many trees cleared for apartments (which there is a glut of) homes and buildings but no solar panels installed on any of these new structures. What incentive is there for new construction to use solar panels? But here's GRU ready to spend money we don't have on something that would give so little return.

Why not create a smaller plan that is more affordable and will appeal to more people? Water conservation and proper landscaping is something that anyone can do no matter what their budget. It gets people outside, becoming more aware of their impact on the environment and taking pride in their yards, grow their own veggies. It can be a community activity in apartment complexes. Proper landscaping can save on heat and cooling bills too.

Please shelf this GRU plan. It is not efficient. It is too costly and provides little benefit to the few who can afford solar panels.

Thank you.

DJ Dalziel

FYI - don't be misled to think solar panels provide power during a power outage. GRU has the system designed so that solar panels depend on GRU power in order to collect solar power.