



Legislation Text

---

File #: 2011-0360, Version: 2

---

Clerk 08/16/2011

A MOTION relating to solar energy; requesting the executive to review the renewable energy system cost recovery program and provide a report to the council on options for the county to participate in community solar projects as part of the renewable energy system cost recovery program under RCW 82.16.110, 82.16.120, 82.16.130 and 82.16.140; and requesting the executive develop options to protect solar access by January 15, 2012.

WHEREAS, King County's Growth Management Comprehensive Plan recommends that the county seek to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions from all facets of its operations and foster the development and increased use of clean, renewable and alternative fuels and energy technologies, and

WHEREAS, King County's Growth Management Comprehensive Plan policies E-208, F-316 and F-317 specifically encourage the use of solar energy both at King County facilities and in the community, and

WHEREAS, producing renewable energy can also reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and

WHEREAS, despite a rainy climate, solar energy in the Northwest has proven to be a viable energy option, and

WHEREAS, promoting solar energy can encourage new energy technologies and green jobs that support a sustainable economy and energy independence, and

WHEREAS, solar access is the availability or access to unobstructed, direct sunlight, and

WHEREAS, one of the barriers to solar installation is a lack of solar access protection from development on neighboring properties, and

WHEREAS, at the local level, communities use many different mechanisms to protect solar access, including solar access ordinances, development guidelines requiring proper street orientation, zoning ordinances that contain building height restrictions and solar permits, and

WHEREAS the 2008 Growth Management Comprehensive Plan Policy F-316 establishes that King County should study measures to protect solar access and implement best practices in this area, and

WHEREAS, Washington state established the renewable energy system cost recovery program in RCW 82.16.110, 82.16.120, 82.16.130 and 82.16.140 that authorizes an incentive payment to help offset the costs associated with the purchase and use of renewable energy systems located in Washington state that produce electricity, and

WHEREAS, the concept of a community solar project was added to the state's renewable energy system cost recovery program in 2009 in order to expand local solar energy projects and encourage a broader participation in the development of solar energy, and

WHEREAS, the expansion of the energy system cost recovery program allowed for the formation of community solar project ventures so individuals could pool resources and install solar panels on local public facilities that might have better access to full sunlight, and

WHEREAS, community solar projects allow individuals, regardless of whether they own property, to own all or part of a solar energy system that generates up to seventy-five kilowatts of electricity and receive incentive payments, and

WHEREAS, solar systems manufactured in Washington state receive a higher incentive payment, and

WHEREAS, the incentive payments offered for the energy generated by community solar projects are some of highest in the world and can thus benefit citizen investors and participating local governments, and

WHEREAS, the incentive payments authorized under RCW 82.16.110, 82.16.120, 82.16.130 and 82.16.140 expire June 30, 2020, and

WHEREAS, community solar projects are an exciting opportunity for local governments to participate

in the expansion of solar energy because the program calls for the placement of the solar energy system on the property owned by a cooperating local government and also allows for the cooperating local government entity that owns the property on which the solar energy system is located to also be a member of the company that owns the solar system, and

WHEREAS, Seattle City Light has launched the first community solar installation in King County, to be installed in Jefferson park in Seattle, and

WHEREAS, King County owns land and buildings throughout the county which may be good candidates for community solar projects, and

WHEREAS, community solar projects offer many opportunities; further analysis is needed to determine the most effective way for King County to participate in the community solar projects envisioned in RCW 82.16.110, 82.16.120, 82.16.130 and 82.16.140;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The executive is requested to review the renewable energy system cost recovery program established under RCW 82.16.110, 82.16.120, 82.16.130 and 82.16.140 and provide a report to the council by January 15, 2012, on options for King County to participate in community solar projects as authorized under RCW 82.16.110, 82.16.120, 82.16.130 and 82.16.140. The report shall be filed in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall forward electronic copies to all councilmembers; and

B. The executive is requested to develop options to protect solar access for consideration in the 2012 Comprehensive Plan Update by March 1, 2012.