January ??, 2016

Hon. Stanley C. Rosenberg, Senate President

Hon. Robert A. DeLeo, Speaker of the House
State House, Boston

Re: Reforms to Solar Policy and Elimination of Net Metering Caps

Dear President Rosenberg and Speaker DeLeo:

The Brookline Board of Selectmen wishes to express our appreciation for the efforts of the Administration and the Legislature to ensure that the Commonwealth continues to lead the nation in energy efficiency and renewable energy. We understand that a balanced, long-term energy plan with a range of energy sources providing safe, efficient and uninterrupted energy delivery is essential if we want to maintain and improve our economic growth and provide a high quality of life for our residents. We appreciate the efforts of you and your colleagues to comprehensively address our energy issues.

Electricity from solar must be a key part of this picture.

In recent years, Massachusetts has become a leader in solar development, with over 900 megawatts of installed solar capacity statewide. This far exceeds the original solar goal of 250 megawatts by 2017, and well on the way to the current goal of 1,600 megawatts by 2020. Local effort in cities and towns to host solar developments on residential, commercial, and municipal property has been the bedrock of this success. Brookline currently has issued permits for more than 600 kilowatts of privately-owned residential solar. May 2015 Town Meeting voted unanimous approval of a 1.4–megawatt solar plant at the DPW transfer station. This is clear evidence that the policy framework established by the Green Communities Act in 2008 has served us well.

In order to sustain progress toward the goal of 1,600 megawatts by 2020, and continue building on our past achievements, the Brookline Board of Selectmen strongly supports the elimination of the net metering caps. Net metering is a critical part of solar development financing. The caps have already been reached in the National Grid and Unitil service territories, stalling municipal and private projects currently under development and precluding new ones from beginning. Soon the applications for projects in other areas, including Brookline, will hit their cap limits as well.

 Second, the value of net metering credits must be kept at a reasonable level. Current policy, in many cases, is to value net metering credits at the full retail rate. Several of the solar bills under consideration would decrease the value of net metering credits for new projects, once the goal of 1600-megawatts is reached. We appreciate the intentions of these bills to support municipal and privately owned solar projects and sustain solar development. However, we are concerned that certain of the proposed changes in the net metering policy could risk future projects.

Third, the SREC II incentive program expires once we have reached 1600 megawatts. We strongly support the creation of a new program that lowers costs for ratepayers and allows us to achieve even greater long-term solar goals and to take full advantage of the federal tax credits that have been extended.

Again, we ask you to support (1) eliminating the cap on net metering (2) maintaining a fair value for net metering credits, taking into account project size and type, with full rates for small projects, and (3) creating a new solar incentive program to reach solar goals after 1600 megawatts. This is the only way that Massachusetts will be able to achieve continued progress and meet our ambitious solar energy goals.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

CC:

Hon. Charlie Baker, Governor

Hon. Cynthia S. Creem, Senator,

Hon. Frank Israel Smizik, Representative,

Hon. Edward F. Coppinger, Representative,

Hon. Michael Moran, Representative,

Hon. Jeffrey Sanchez, Representative.

Hon. Thomas H. Golden, House Chair, Joint TUE Committee
Senate Chair: Hon. Benjamin P. Downing, Joint Conference Committee

House Chair: Hon. Brian Dempsey

Senate Minority Member: Hon. Bruce E. Tarr

House Minority Member: Hon. Bradley H. Jones, Jr.

Senate Member: Hon. Marc R. Pacheco

House Member: Hon. Thomas A. Golden, Jr.