

Offshore Wind Working Group
DRAFT Recommendations
May 15, 2018

My understanding is that the subject recommendations are the main item to be discussed at two public comment sessions that have been scheduled for May 29 & May 31. Several comments follow:

FIRST, the recommendations run 4-1/2 pages, with numerous bullet points and sub-points. I sincerely doubt that members of the public will read and comprehend this document and come to the sessions prepared to discuss it intelligently. A one-page statement in “plain English” would seem more suitable if you are sincerely interested in public reactions (as opposed to simply satisfying a procedural requirement).

SECOND, the underlying premise seems to be that involving Delaware in offshore wind projects is a good idea, leaving only the question of how such involvement should be arranged. Before getting to that part of the discussion, wouldn't it make sense to address the real issue: whether offshore wind power plants make economic sense?

(A) How much would the offshore wind power add to grid capacity? Due to the intermittency of power from this source, the answer is presumably zero. Accordingly, how would the offshore wind power be backed up to ensure the continuous availability of electric power that the public expects?

(B) Assuming there are valid reasons for investing in “renewable energy” projects, why should offshore wind power projects be preferred over alternative forms of “renewable energy” such as solar power or on-shore wind power? According to estimates published by the US government, these alternatives are considerably cheaper due to the lower construction costs involved – and the Delaware government has a responsibility to the public not to needlessly inflate the costs of electric power.

(C) Who would bear the extra cost for off-shore wind power, e.g., taxpayers or ratepayers, and how would the money be collected?

THIRD, the foregoing questions have been raised repeatedly at meetings of the Working Group, starting with its first session last October. Assessing proposal for offshore wind power projects, 10/9/17. <https://bit.ly/2y9jSc8>

The high cost of offshore wind power was identified as a key issue. Some speakers said the extra cost would necessarily be passed on to ratepayers or taxpayers in some fashion, as had been learned from the Bluewater wind project (which fell through after Delmarva Power declined to sign a long-term supply contract) and the Bloom Energy fuel cell project (which resulted in a supplemental tariff for Delmarva Power ratepayers that is running about five times higher than initial estimates).

To my knowledge, these questions have never been answered in a coherent fashion; they therefore remain on the table. When is the Working Group planning to come to grips with them?