

From: [Angela Crowley-Koch](#)
To: [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
Cc: [Durbin, Andrea](#); [Esau, Rebecca](#)
Subject: October 21 meeting, Agenda item 827 - Increase in Bureau fees
Date: Monday, October 19, 2020 1:54:42 PM
Attachments: [OSEIA comments to BDS fee increases.pdf](#)
[ATT00001.htm](#)

Please find attached OSEIA's testimony for Wednesday's city council hearing, Agenda item 827. I will also be testifying in person.

Thank you,
Angela

Angela Crowley-Koch
Executive Director
Oregon Solar Energy Industries Association (OSEIA)
Oregon Solar Energy Education Fund
503-867-3378

Mayor Ted Wheeler
Commissioner Dan Ryan
Commissioner JoAnn Hardesty
Commissioner Amanda Fritz
Commissioner Chloe Eudaly
1900 SW Fourth Avenue
Portland, OR 97201

October 19, 2020

RE: Agenda item 827, permit fee increases

Dear Portland City Council,

Solar installation is the fastest growing segment of the largest industry in the world. Unfortunately, solar companies that serve Portland customers are facing mounting delays and barriers to solar installation permits for the City of Portland. In the context of the current permit delays, it is difficult to support fee increases, especially without a plan from Bureau of Development Services (BDS) to increase service.

Oregon Solar Energy Industries Association (OSEIA) has been representing all facets of the Oregon solar industry for almost 40 years. Dozens of our members operate both in Portland and in other jurisdictions and all report that Portland's permitting is the most expensive, aggravating and fraught-with-delay process in the state. Frustration is at an all-time high; solar installers have been focused on keeping their employees working during the pandemic, but huge permitting delays are making that challenging. Portland has established a nationwide reputation as having a slow and extremely convoluted process for receiving a solar permit.

On September 15th, 2020, OSEIA sent a letter to Mayor Wheeler asking for his intervention to make solar permitting easier, more streamlined, and faster than the current process. While we appreciate some recent steps the Bureau has taken to make changes to the solar permitting process, they still fall short of what is needed to serve the citizens of Portland that want to use solar power to produce their own clean energy.

Neither in the Mayor's response or in the Bureau's recent changes was there anything to describe what the Bureau is doing to address the process and timelines in order to decrease delays. Solar installers used to be able to get a permit in three hours (under ideal circumstances) and the process now takes on two to five months. We had hoped and expected to see a plan to improve the timeliness of granting



permits, but neither the new guidance nor the small steps taken by the Bureau have substantially decreased the time of permit approval.

With this context, it is very difficult to support an increase in fees without seeing an improvement in the timeliness of permits, a plan to improve the timelines for permits, or a plan for how fee increases would be used. If the increased fees mean more permitting staff will be hired and permits will be processed faster, OSEIA will be in strong support. However, if the fee increases maintain the current slow and cumbersome system, OSEIA is strongly opposed.

Waiting two to six months for a solar permit – or any construction permit - is not conducive to an economic recovery. The residents of Portland demand more solar. Nowhere is this more evident than in the passage of the Portland Clean Energy Fund. However, with the current status of the permit review and issuance protocol for solar, we fear that this landmark opportunity and program will be ineffective.

An increase in fees must come with an increase in service for those paying the fees and their customers. OSEIA respectfully asks the City Council to require improvements to the solar permitting process before approving fee increases.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Crowley-Koch". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Angela Crowley-Koch
Executive Director

Cc: Director Esau, Director Durbin

City Council Meeting - Wednesday, October 21, 2020 9:30 a.m.
975 2654 0107

Public Testimony

Agenda No.	First	Last	Zip
827	Ezra	Hammer	
827	Angela	Crowley-Koch	97293