

Meeting Notes

Solar on Multifamily Affordable Housing (SOMAH) Advisory Council Meeting Q2 2024

May 2, 2024
Virtual Meeting

Attendees

SOMAH Program Administrator Team

Marisa Villarreal | SOMAH Program Manager
Hannah Keenan | SOMAH Program Manager
Vallerie Gonzalez-Byrum | SOMAH Program Manager
Minerva Defee | SOMAH Program Manager
Brittany Chenier | SOMAH Program Manager
Rachael Diaz | SOMAH Program Manager
Luke Ballweber | SOMAH Program Manager
Staci Rivas | SOMAH Program Manager
Stacey Lee | SOMAH Program Coordinator
Monica De La Cruz | SOMAH Program Coordinator
Alessandra Gonzales | SOMAH Program Coordinator

SOMAH Advisory Council

AJ Perkins | Instant ON
Alma Marquez | Independent Consultant
Andrea Barnier | Self-Help Enterprises
Carlos Aguilar | Coalition for Economic Survival
Christian Cruz | Clean Power Alliance
Elizabeth Elliott | Kashia Housing Authority
Jakobi Ewart | The Niles Foundation
Jeff Strickland | Plus Power
Ken Wells | O&M Solar Services

Not in attendance:

Nicole Lim | California Indian Museum & Cultural Center
Andres Ramirez | People for Mobility Justice

Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Session 1: Advisory Council Overview
3. Session 2: SOMAH Program Update
4. Session 3: SOMAH Program Overview & Goal Setting

5. Wrap Up & Next Steps

Meeting Notes

Session 1: Advisory Council Overview

Stacey Lee, SOMAH Program Coordinator

Stacey Lee provided a refresher on the purpose, mission and roles of the AC, as well as general updates for SOMAH's advisory groups. Stacey introduced the chair and vice-chair roles of the AC. AC members were invited to nominate themselves for either role between this and the next meeting. Chairs will be elected in the Q3 meeting.

Notes

AC Roles & Expectations

- The AC will coordinate with and advise the SOMAH PA on program implementation on a variety of priorities.
- The AC will collaborate with SOMAH's Job Training Organization Task Force (JTO TF), whose focus is job training organizations and workforce development.
 - More crossover meetings between these groups will start this year.
 - In 2026, AC and JTO TF will become one advisory group.
- Members will serve a two-year term, with no limits on the number of terms a member can serve.
- Additional opportunities for the AC to stay engaged throughout the term include reviewing and providing feedback on key program documents and participating in ribbon-cutting ceremonies for completed SOMAH projects.

SOMAH Advisory Group Updates

- Lunch stipends will no longer be provided to cut down on administrative budget costs and to align with no longer having full-day meetings with lunchtime breaks.
- There are no plans for in-person meetings in the future.
- JTO Task Force 2024-2025 Cohort
 - Seven returning members.
 - Two new members: Wshana Moss (The Niles Foundation) and Hattie Wyatt (Young Community Developers).

- Cohort's first meeting was held in March 2024 and the next meeting will be in June.

Session 2: SOMAH Program Update

Mina Defee, SOMAH Program Manager

Mina Defee presented the latest program stats and regulatory updates.

Senate Bill (SB) 355 and Program Handbook Updates

- Background
 - 2023: SB 355 was created by Senator Susan Eggman's office and signed by Governor Newsom on October 7, 2023.
 - January 5, 2024: SOMAH PA submitted Advice Letter to modify Handbook 8 and Program Implementation Plan (PIP).
 - Handbook 8: Approved on February 6, 2024, (effective February 4) and fully implemented on February 15, 2024.
- Handbook Updates
 - SOMAH continued until 2032.
 - Expanded eligibility to higher area median income (AMI) properties, Tribes, housing authorities and mobile homes.

Discussion

- **AC Member:** Is there any data or stats on how many additional properties are now eligible after these changes?
- **SOMAH PA:** The PA has limited data on affordable housing at the moment, but the data has been made public. We are currently cleaning up the data and we will get back to you all with the information in the next couple of months.

Session 3: SOMAH Program Overview & Goal Setting

Mina Defee, SOMAH Program Manager

Mina provided an overview of the SOMAH PA, an update on the program's administrative budget and incentive funding and the PA's priorities and goals for the upcoming year. In breakout groups, AC members brainstormed the following discussion questions:

1. Where do you see yourself having the most interest/impact in the program?
2. What would you like to get from your participation in the AC?
3. How can we work together to achieve our goals?
4. What could and should the SOMAH PA prioritize to meet our goals?
5. Have you dealt with similar budgetary situations for other programs? How did you balance everything?

Group 1 Breakout

Interests & Coordination

- Interested in bringing resiliency and energy equity to the conversation. Help keep the momentum going when priorities or people in the office change.
- How can the AC stay connected with other relevant programs and stay aware of what else is out there?
- With the AC merging with the JTO TF in the future, there can be more coordinated efforts with the WFD perspective and expertise.

Marketing, Education & Outreach

- How can we make SOMAH more economically attractive?
- Benefits of third-party ownership so owners don't have to deal with operations and maintenance.
- More opportunities to share successes now that eligibility has expanded and made the program more accessible.

Tenant Education

- What is the tenant perspective once the SOMAH system is interconnected? Use this lens when community-based organization (CBO) partners conduct outreach.
- How do we highlight who the program is serving and what the incentives are? How can we maximize incentives to get the lowest cost to property owners (POs)?

Stackable Programs/Co-marketing

- Example of collaboration with code enforcement program – connect with properties that might need to get up to code or need additional/broader measurements for property upgrades.
- Interest in pairing SOMAH with Self Generation Incentive Program (SGIP).
- Battery storage is a hot topic, and it would be great to explore co-marketing opportunities

Resiliency

- Solar plus storage does not always equal resiliency.
 - Load control, switching for islanding (removing from the grid), etc.
 - Challenge with interoperability – the setup of the solar and battery are done, but without the knowledge and education of how to pair/design and implement.
 - Community microgrid component of how to make things work.
- What can we do to meet our goals: resilience, energy storage, pairing with SGIP, research and examples.
- Identify more pathways to resiliency and advocate for those changes.

Group 2 Breakout

Interests & Coordination

- Interconnection timelines are a huge concern as a property owner knowing how much it can affect tenants.
- Excited to start merging with the JTO TF.
- Newer AC member was interested in joining this group knowing how much SOMAH funding is available and wants to increase participation.
- Grow the contractor pool and assess why contractors drop out after eligibility.
- Streamline contractor participation and get property owners involved as developers.
- How is the PA working with the AC to support priority issues (contractor participation, Tribal outreach)?
 - Consider subcommittees, meeting outside of the quarterly meetings, working toward SOMAH goals individually with PA support.
 - Support for subcommittee meetings for those who have the capacity to be more involved in their area of expertise.
 - Subcommittees could be less programmed and focus more on facilitating interactive conversation.
 - Possibly one subcommittee meeting in between quarterly meetings.
- Appreciation of when the PA provides content to share with direct instructions, or when the PA solicits feedback on direct issues, like in emails sent in between meetings.
- Interest in learning how the PA works on certain issues so the AC can support rather than work on them separately.
- How can AC members be advocates for the program and the changes that can be made to incentive structure or other program areas?

Marketing, Education & Outreach

- Look more into the communication methods being used, especially in DACs (Facebook is still used a lot in those areas).
- Would like to receive content about SOMAH that can be shared with their networks.
 - Disconnect between the number of projects and activity in the program and the publications or content about the projects that are being shared through social media and email newsletter.
 - Based on the DGStats, there are more projects we could be talking about.
- Sharing more of the property owner perspective – go beyond the one ribbon-cutting story and talk more about the 14 projects that didn't get the big ribbon-cutting event.
- Share program impact posts that don't require a whole case study production. How can program participants share more about SOMAH and create their own content that we can then share?
- Many SOMAH case studies are anchored in ribbon cuttings, which are big productions.
 - One idea is to reach out to property owners separately to talk about their experience with multiple projects and their experiences with the program more broadly/generally.
- Shine a light on eligible properties to show who can benefit from SOMAH and the potential reach of the program.
- Content that speaks to the financial bottom line and how tenant benefits also come back to the property. While they give back to the tenants, they also invest in upgrades to the whole property.
- How do tenant benefits end up offsetting operating expenses and boost property value? How can we highlight those savings to property owners that might not understand the value beyond the direct benefits to tenants?
- Celebrate the milestones (inspection, permission to operate, incentive claim) that are built into the project timeline to give POs something to look forward to and know what to expect.

Wrap Up & Next Steps

Stacey Lee, SOMAH Program Coordinator

Stacey reviewed action items and administrative reminders for the AC. The Q3 meeting will be joint with SOMAH's JTO Task Force and will take place in September.