



OPALCO Solar Survey 2017

Key Findings Overview

Why?

The 2017 OPALCO Solar Survey

In accordance with OPALCO's **culture of listening**, this survey measures member interest in the community solar project to inform business planning.

This is a tool to understand the co-op membership's sentiments toward solar energy overall, the proposed plan, and how to communicate to those with concerns.

Survey Details

A 26-question survey was released to the OPALCO member base on May 2, 2017 and was closed on June 23, 2017.

The final sample size was 1,248 respondents, just over 10% of the OPALCO member base

PixelSpoke conducted statistical analysis on the data to find key insights, and all open-ended responses were read through individually (several thousand).

PixelSpoke is an independent consultant that has the expertise and credentials to design and administer surveys, as well as analyze and interpret survey data.

Overview

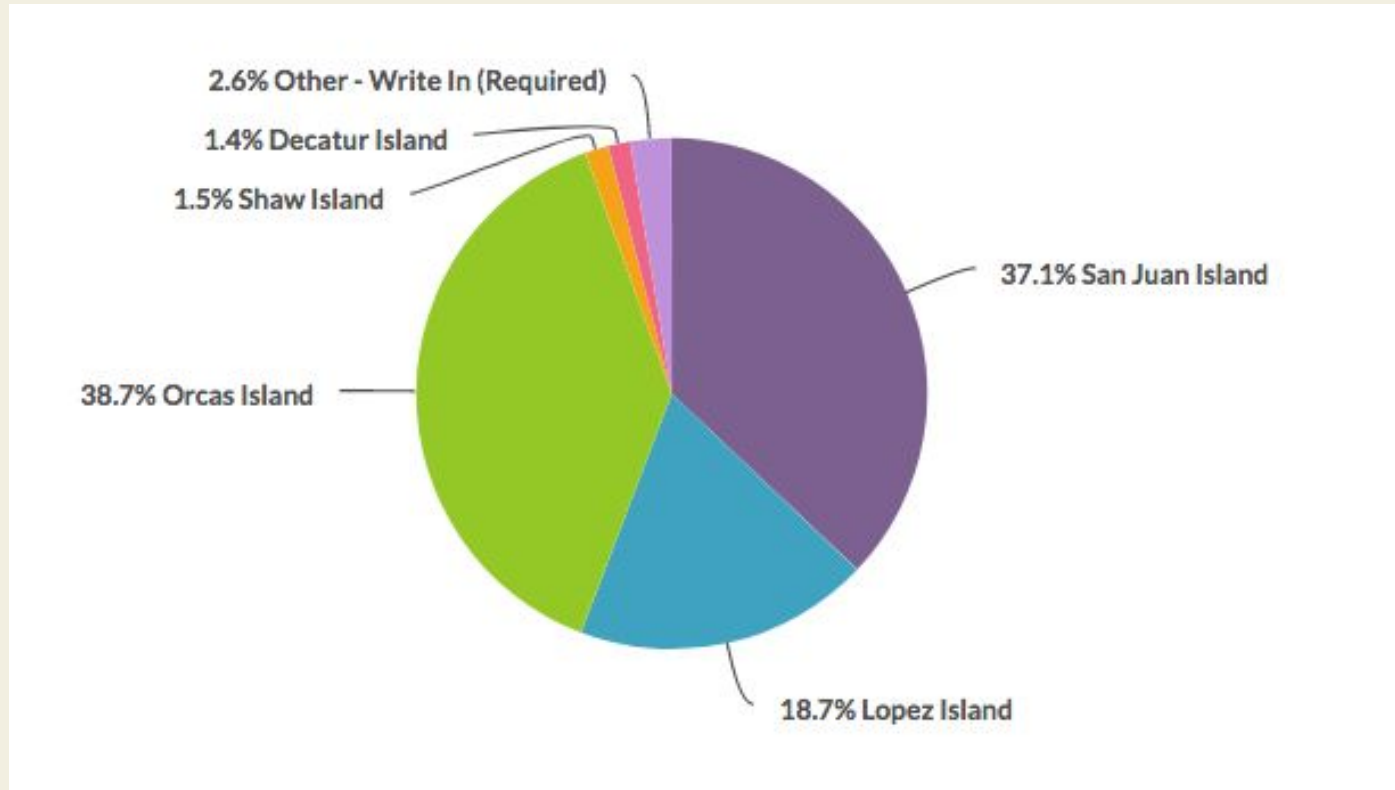
OPALCO has the community support for this project, provided that:

- it is not funded by a rate increase
- members receive frequent updates
- benefits to the members are clearly defined from the beginning



Demographics

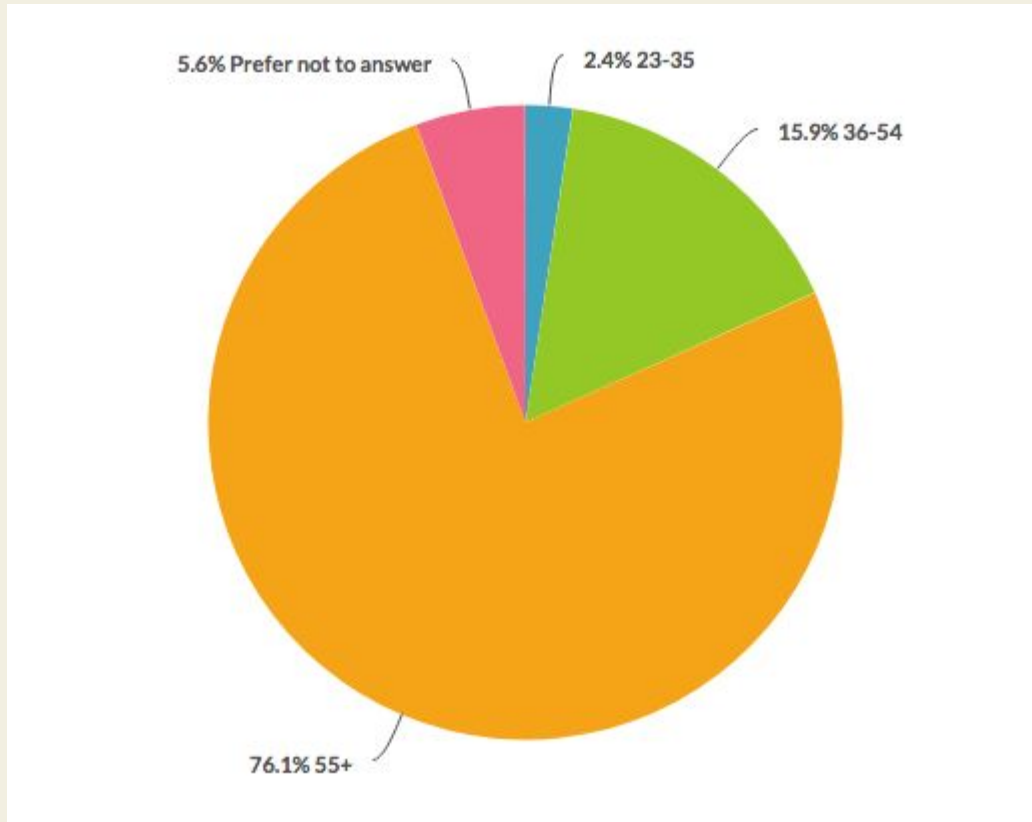
Island You Live On



Household Income



How Old Are You?



Interest Depends on Price

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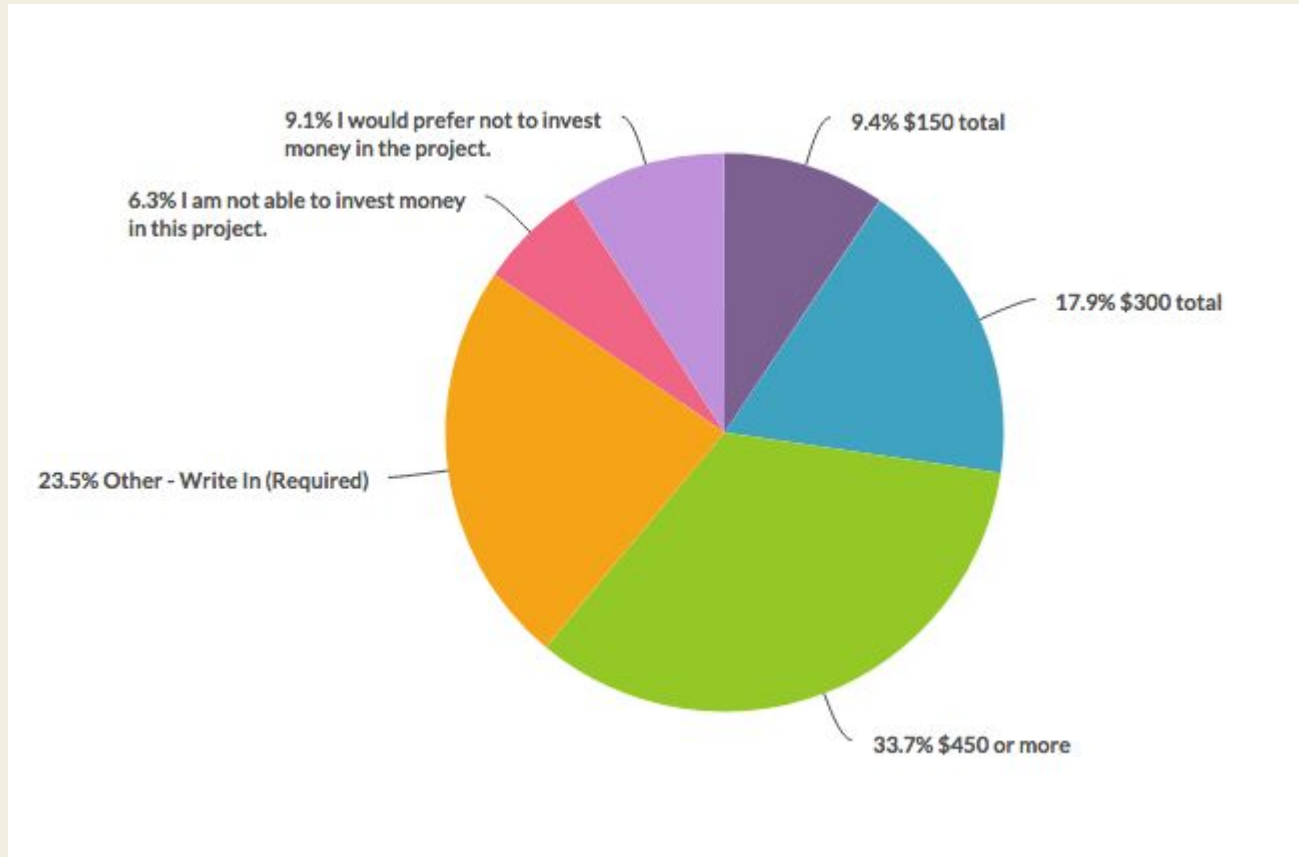
Most Important Factor

Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	Score	No. of Rankings
My out-of-pocket costs.	1		4,835	806
How much OPALCO's rates will go up to pay for this project.	2		4,463	799
How much power the new system will produce (kW).	3		3,567	692
How much money I would get back on my power bill.	4		3,081	639
How much carbon output the project will offset.	5		3,007	623
How the project affects the aesthetics of our island communities.	6		1,748	501
Community recognition of my participation in the project.	7		460	312

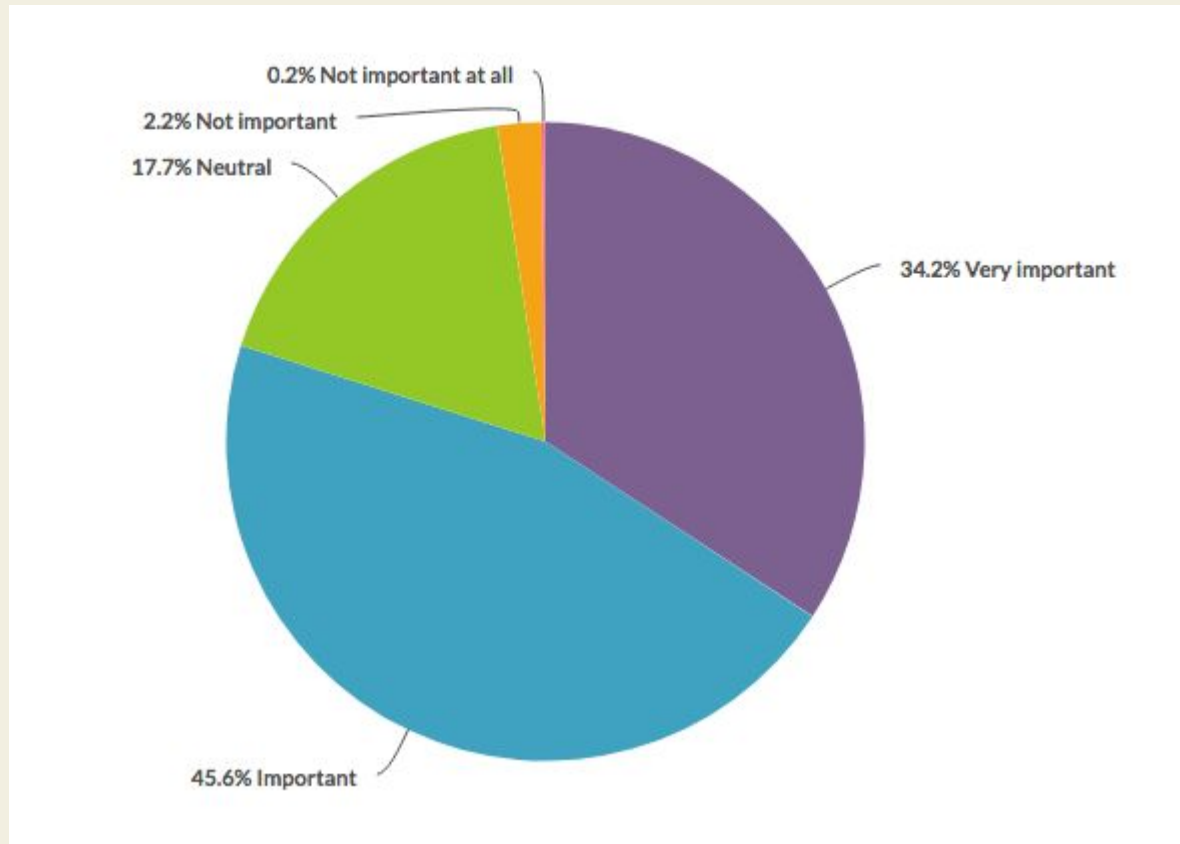
What Would Prevent Your Participation?



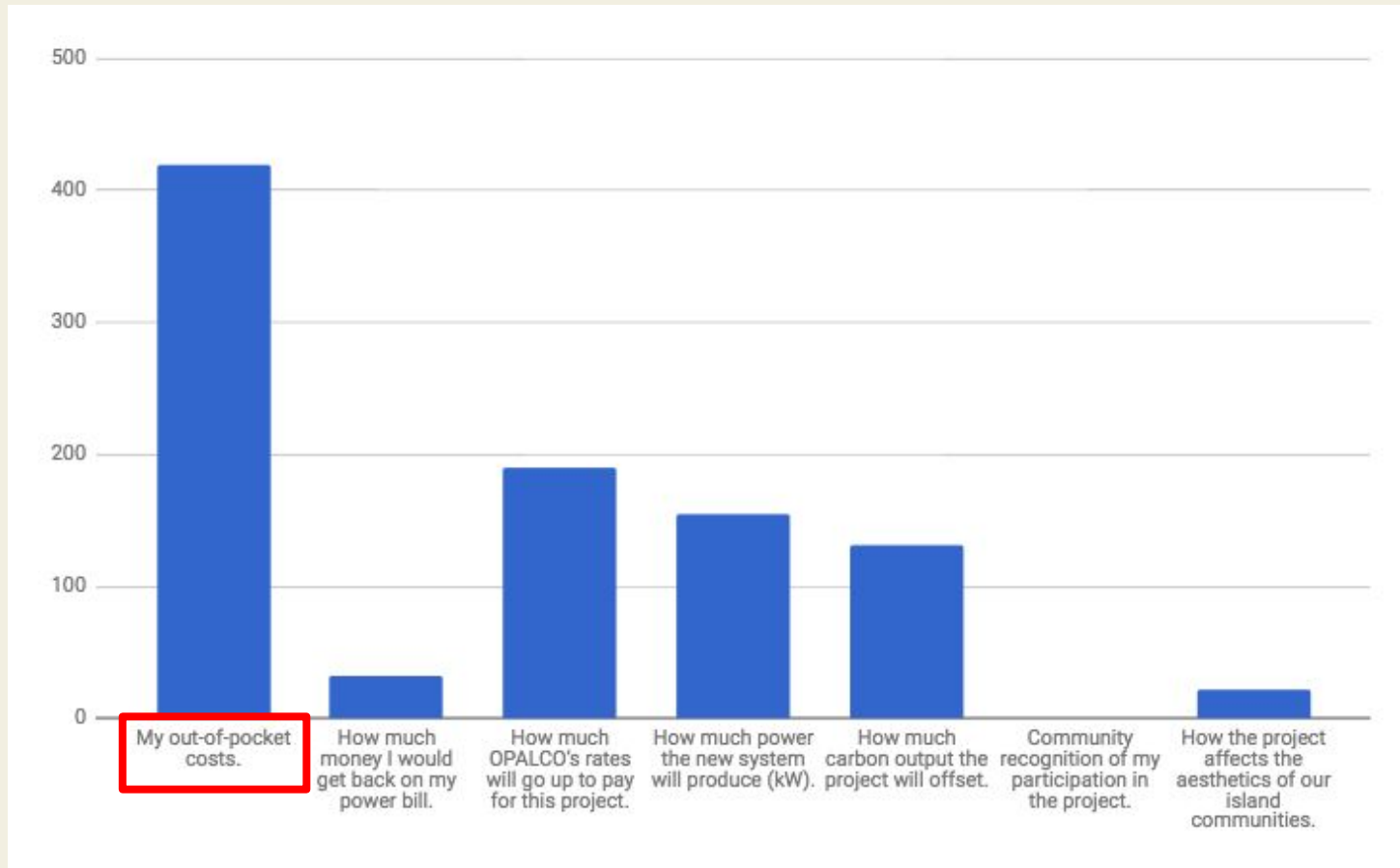
How Much Would You Invest?



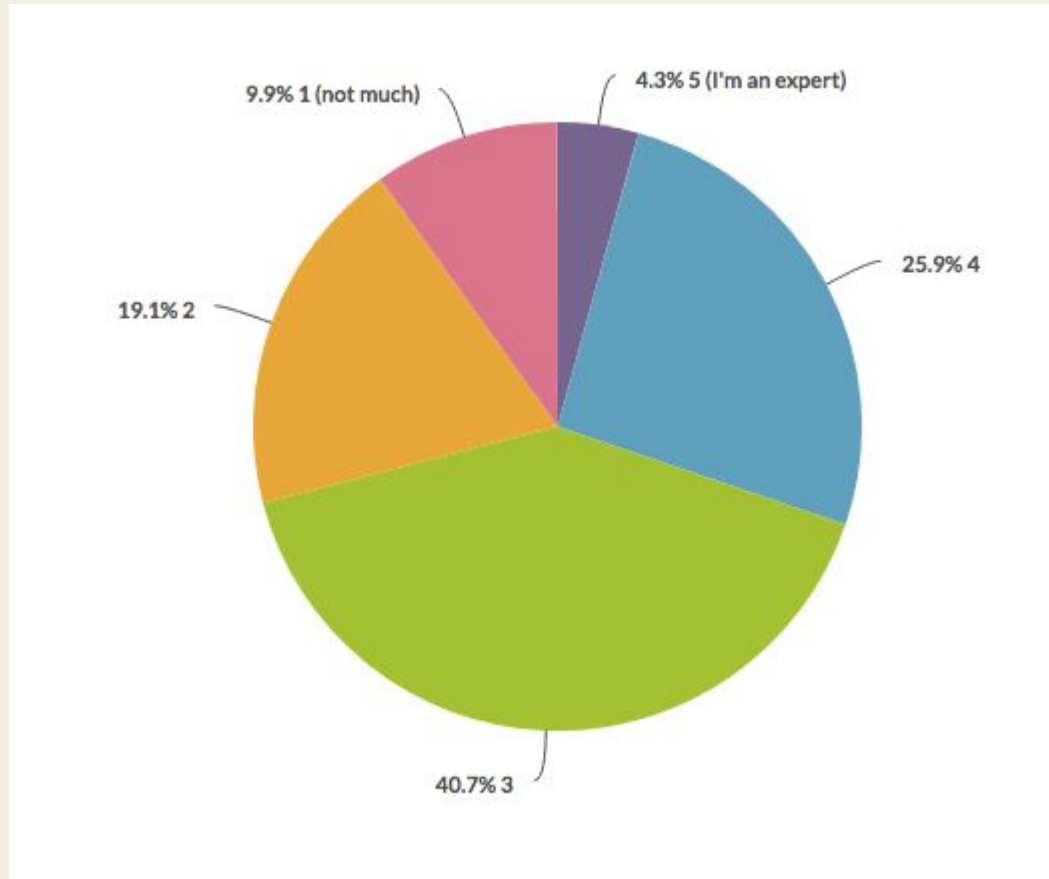
Importance of Recouping Investment



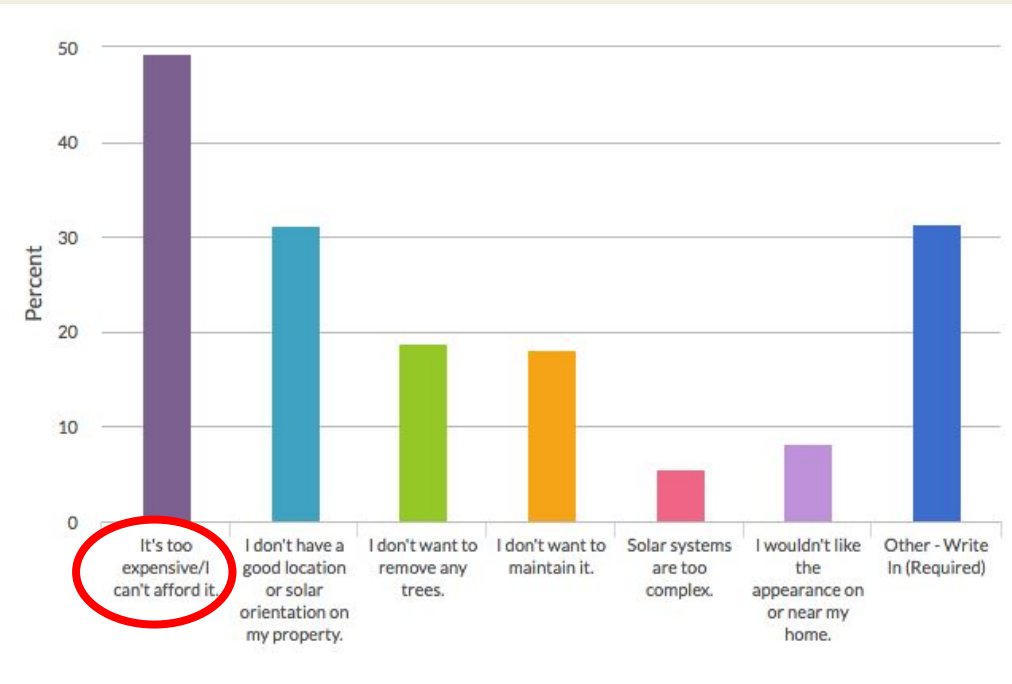
Reason for Interest



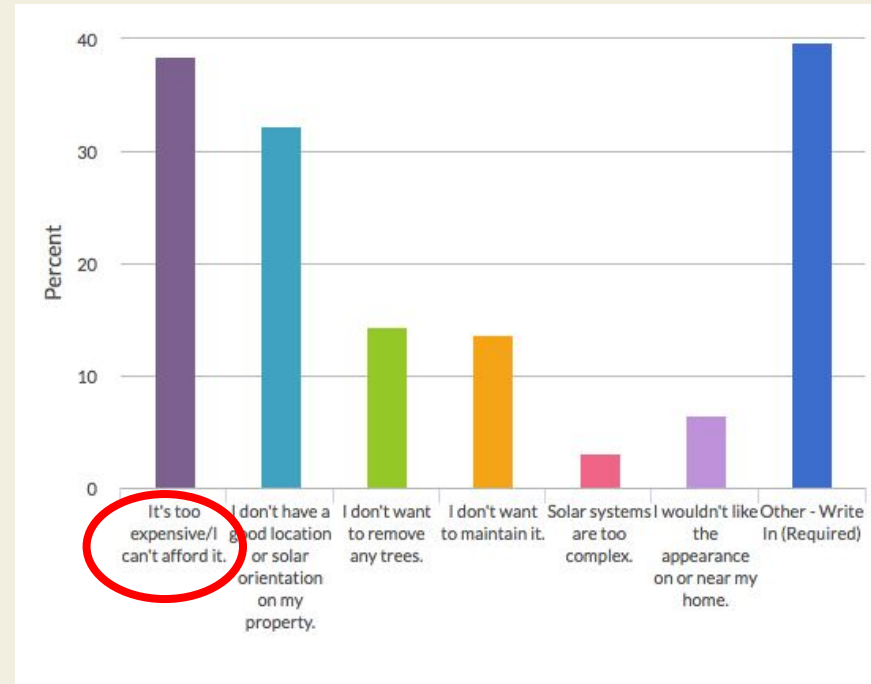
How Much Do You Know About Solar?



What factors would prevent you from installing solar on your own home?



Total



Rated themselves 4/5 or 5/5 on knowledge of solar

I'm Interested Because...

“I would be **proud** to live in a community that is moving in a renewable energy direction.”

“Helps me to do something I could not afford on my own.”

“It **gives me hope** for the planet! It's exciting to be part of this.”

“The project contains the spirit of cooperation, the operative word in Cooperative, which means **we are all in this together** as a community – moving forward to generate our own electricity here in our islands.”



Trendsetting Islanders

“To be a progressive and **positive model** for other communities”

“**Send a message** about renewables to other communities.”

“I hope that the San Juan Islands could **be an example** of how to use the broad political and environmental policies.”

“To **become an example** to other communities of a sustainable community.”

Not Interested Because...

“I like the idea but I feel that OPALCO already **tapped out the community financially** for affordable power. I think if OPALCO applied and received a grant or a donation the community would support it.”

“None of the reasons presented are credible or **economically feasible.**”

“The **cost / benefit seems to be negative.**”

Not Sure...

“I would need to know the projects **expected costs and the impacts on our present electric rates** and base facilities charges before making a final decision.

I would want to be sure it is not an irresponsible project that could possibly **add more cost** to homeowners who foot the bill in taxes and donations for many projects on this Island. Many have chosen to move away because the cost of living here for property owners continues to climb and at some point they can **no longer afford to support the cost.**

Key Takeaways

- OPALCO members are in favor of the solar system project because of the environmental impact and the opportunity to be a trendsetting community, as long as it is not funded by a rate increase
- Cost is the main reason people have not already installed a solar system, and the main worry they have about OPALCO's project
- The more informed about solar energy people consider themselves, the more likely they are to pursue solar, which means OPALCO should make community education a top priority for this project.



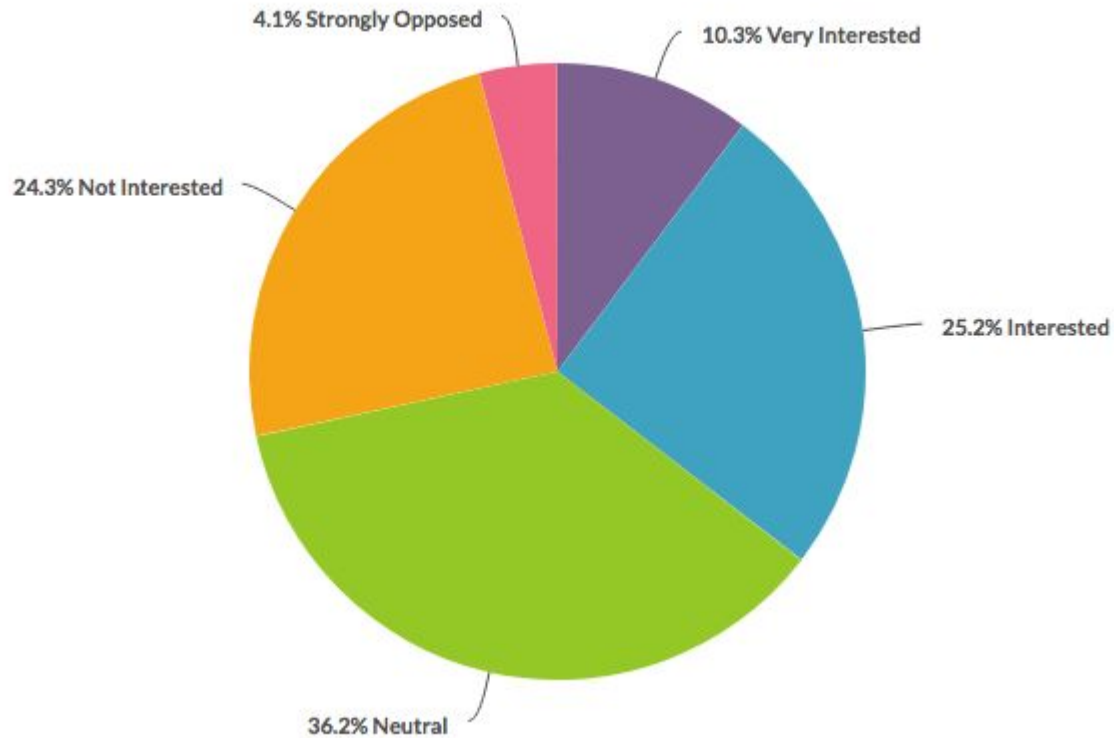
Key Takeaways, cont.

- People want to financially support the project, but on their own terms – through a chosen investment amount with a clear ROI, not a change in their bill
- Since many of the more informed members already have private solar systems, OPALCO needs to find a way to include them – credit, buybacks, etc.

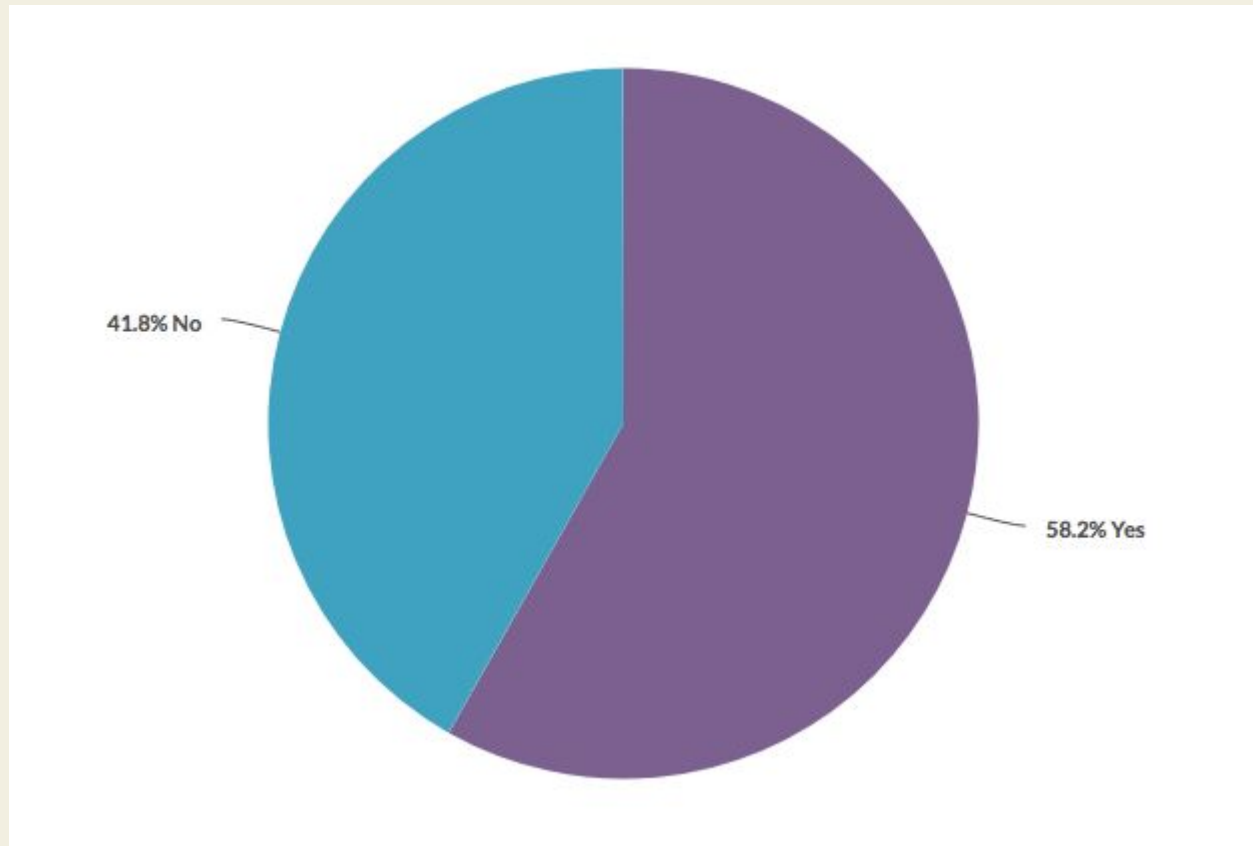
Strong Community Focus

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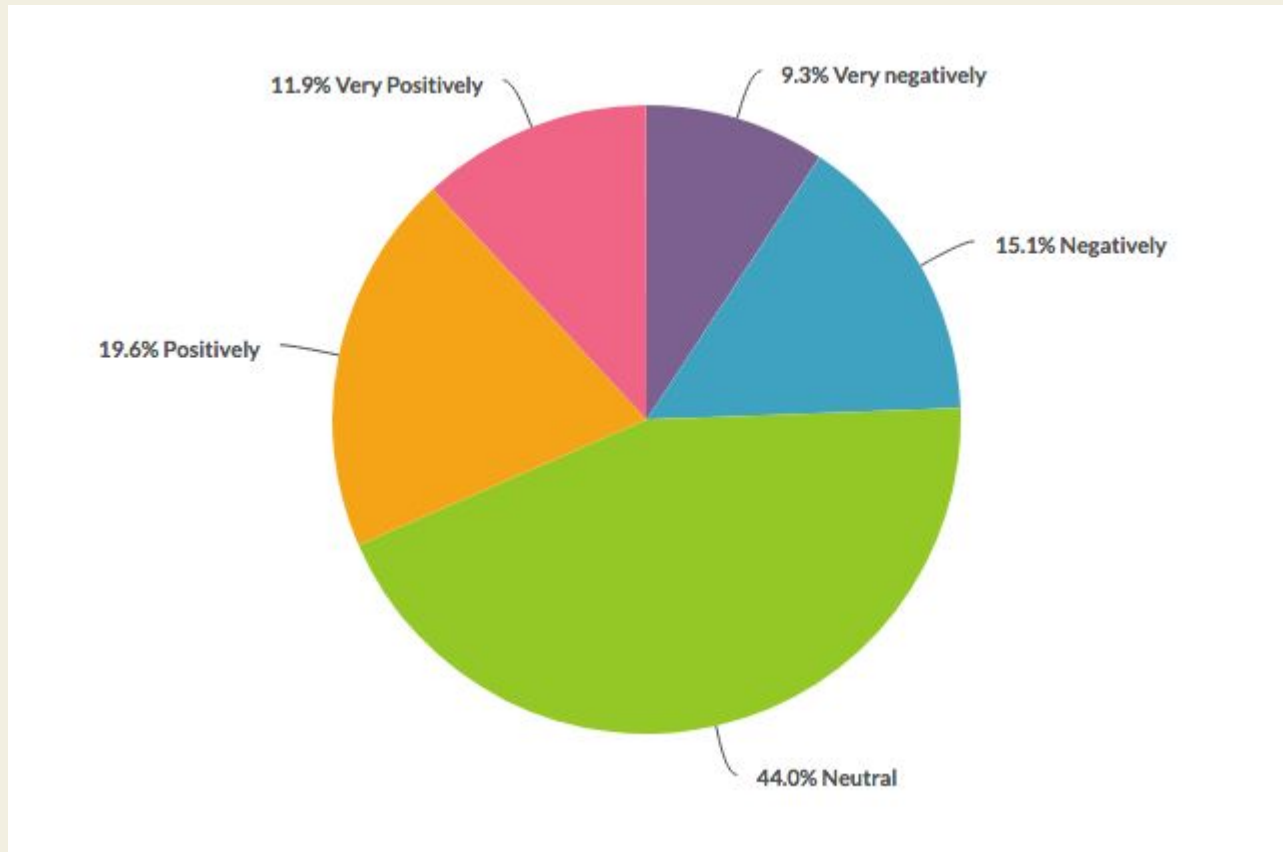
Interest in Neighborhood-Organized Community Solar Projects



Willing to Donate Production Credits To Help Other Members Pay Bill



How would you feel about having a large solar array near your home?



How to Fund

(hint: don't increase rates!)

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How Should It Be Funded?



Key Takeaways

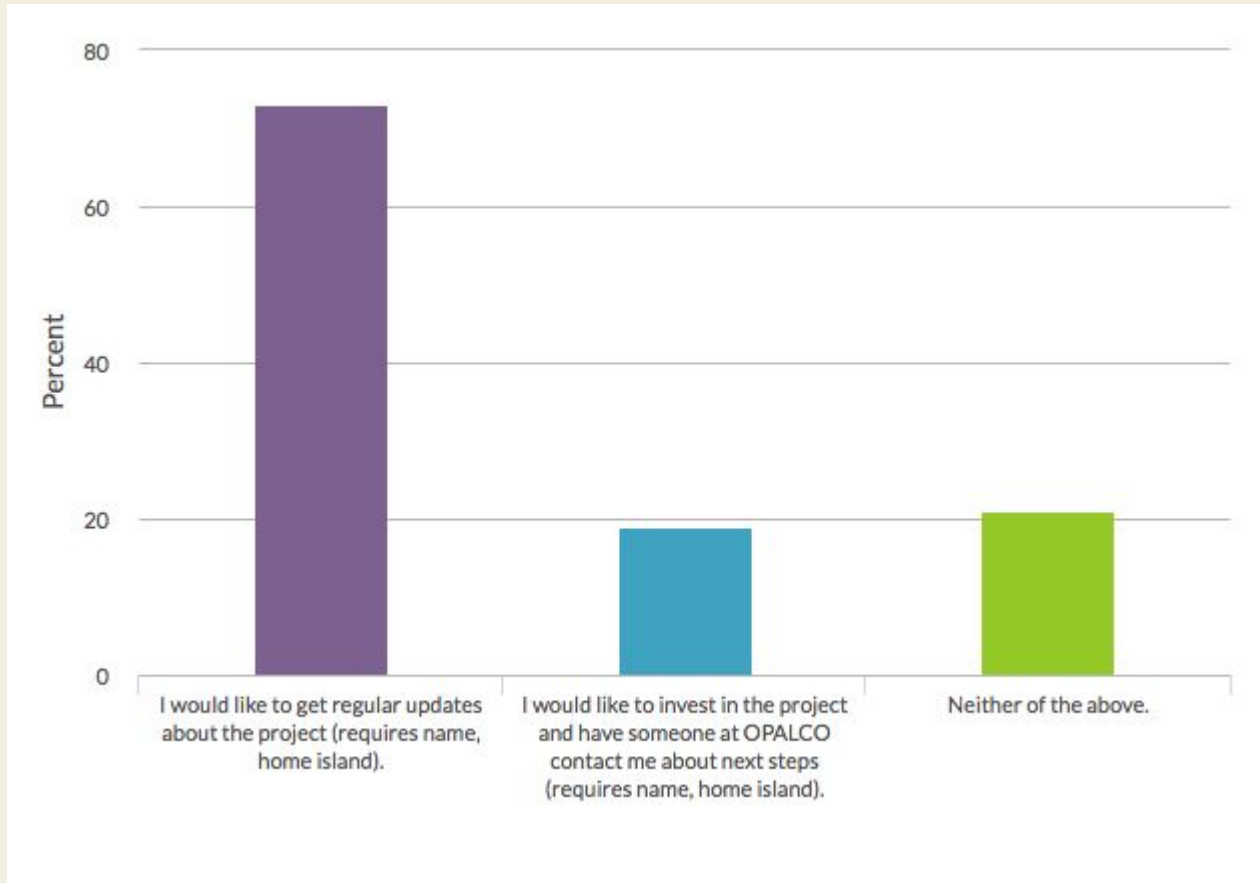
- The majority of members are interested in the project for environmental and community reasons, provided that cost concerns are mitigated beforehand
- People want OPALCO to prove that it works in this area before investing their own money
- Selling solar power to OPALCO from members' private systems is a frequent request



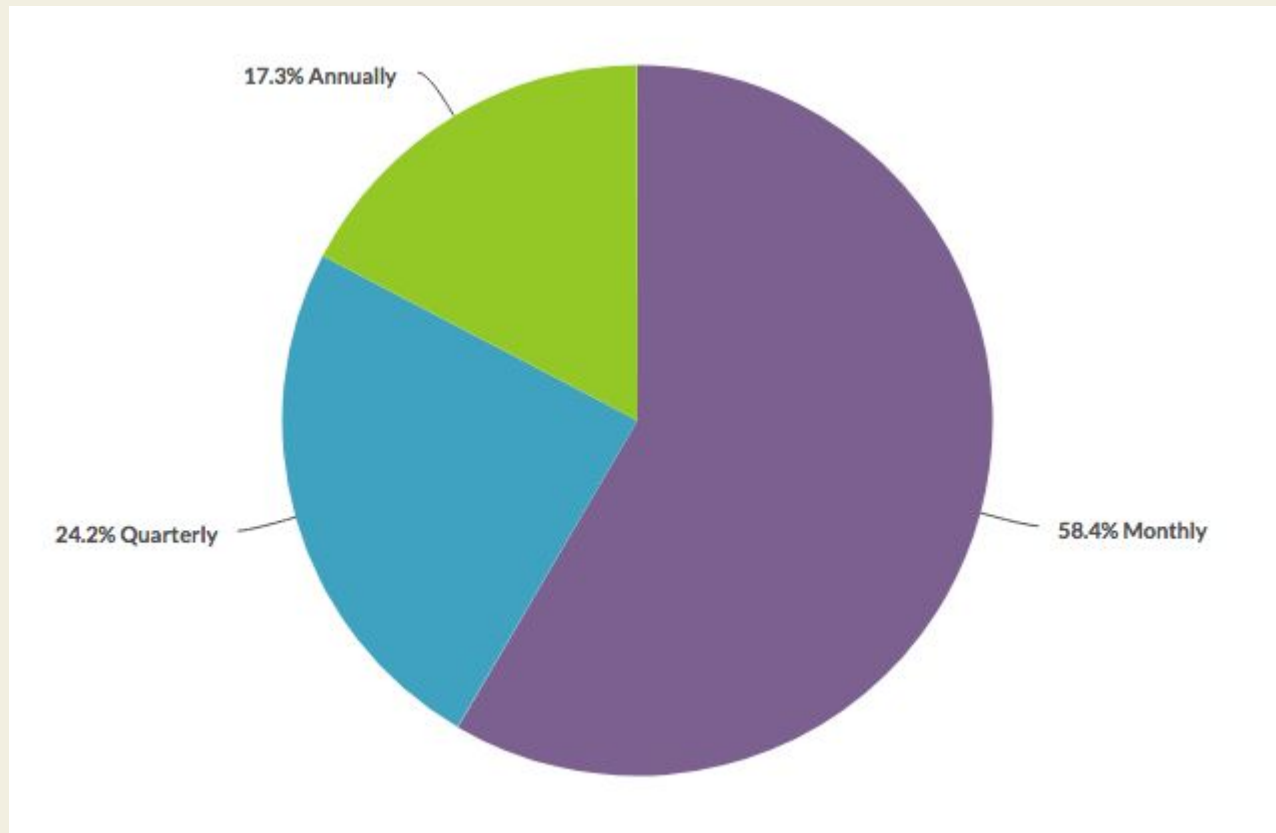
Keep Members Informed with Frequent Updates

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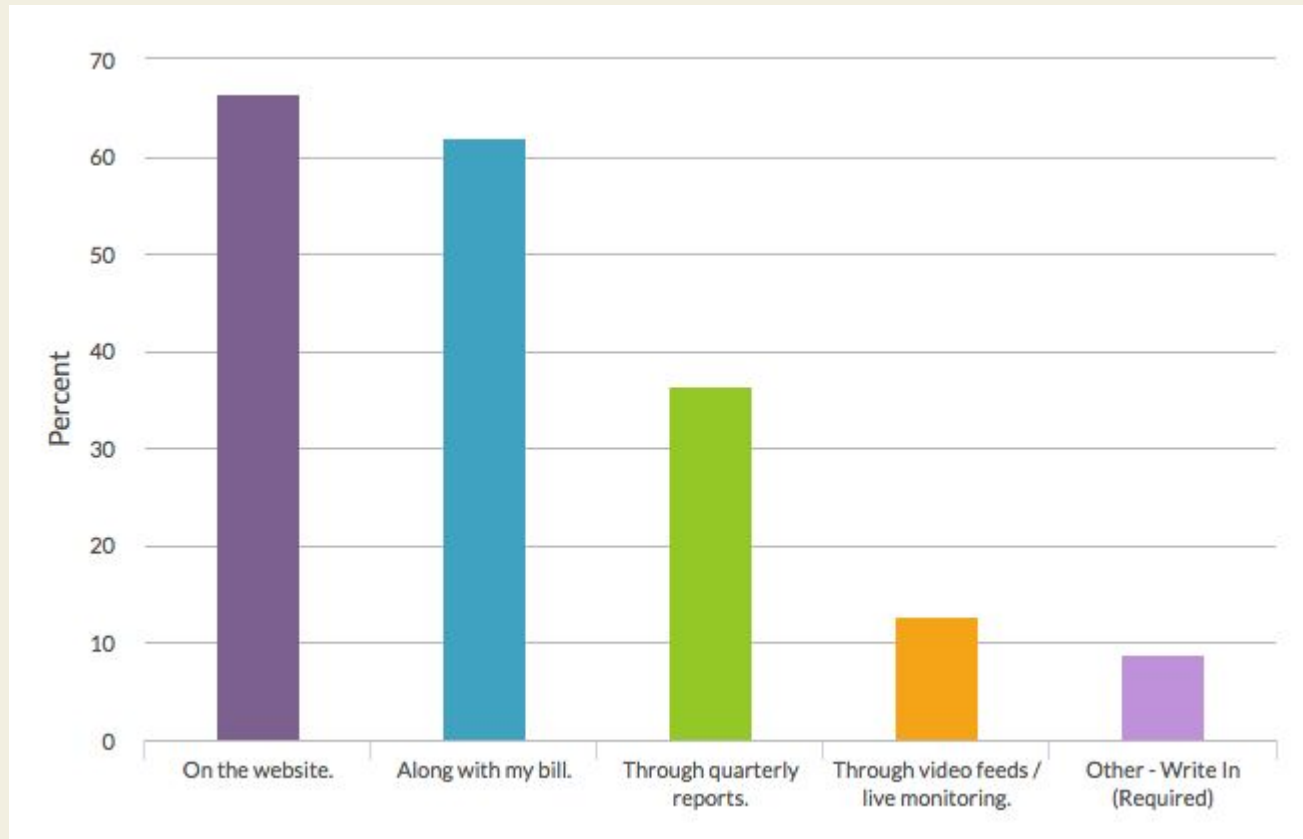
What Kind of Communication?



Preferred Frequency of Production Credits



Preferred Way to Receive Updates



Keep Members In The Know

- Multiple people would like these updates to be in local newspapers, such as The Sounder, Orcas Issues, Lopez Rocks, Orcas Online, SJ Update, The Journal
- Annual Report
- Quarterly Email Newsletter
- With your bill



Bottom Line

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- it is not funded by a rate increase
- members receive frequent updates
- benefits to the members/investors are clearly defined from the beginning

