

PROGRAM/PROJECT REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2009

MEETING WITH GEOFF GREEN, ACT 250 DISTRICT 6 COORDINATOR

Present: Colleen Steen, Michael Guernsey, Patrick Howrigan
Staff: Greta Brunswick

Brunswick welcomed Geoff Green and thanked him for coming. She explained that the Committee is hoping to hear about the process the Commission goes through in reviewing Act 250 applications, with particular attention focused on Criterion 10, conformance with local and regional plans. Green explained that there are 3 part time commissioners and one alternate. He explained that 80% of projects are classified as minor, which do not require a public hearing unless one is requested. He explained that he does a lot of pre-application work with applicants to assure all application materials are prepared and that a realistic project is proposed. He noted that 2% of permits get appealed to the Environmental Court. The committee discussed the strength of regional plan language and whether it is possible for a project to conflict with the plan the way it is currently written. Green noted that the way it is currently written it would be difficult to find a conflict. The Commission is bound by Environmental and Superior Court decisions which require mandatory and specific language to determine a conflict. The Plan currently contains mostly "shoulds". The committee discussed whether the comments submitted that do not relate to conformance with the regional plan are useful. Green noted that they are as they provide impetus to discuss good planning initiatives. It was noted that cumulative impacts are not dealt with at the Act 250 level, due to statutory authority. Green recommended that if the NRPC wants to strengthen Regional Plan language, they should focus on a particular topic to start out with, since it is such a large comprehensive document.

REGULAR MEETING

The meeting of the Policy/Project Review Committee was held at the Northwest Regional Planning Commission office. At 5:30, M. Guernsey noted that there is not a quorum, but he would like to get started.

ATTENDANCE:

Commission: Beaderstadt, Andrea ; Garrett, Harold ; Guernsey, Michael ; Howrigan, Patrick ; Kade, Barry ; Kittell, William ; Lambert, John ; Leach, Christopher ; Peirce, David ; Roberge, Richard ; Speer, Neal ; Steen, Colleen ; Charron, Claude ; Bob Manning .

Staff: G. Brunswick.

- 1) **Minutes.** With no quorum, M. Guernsey asked for comments on the October meeting notes. C. Steen noted that she was at the meeting, but marked absent.
- 2) **Staff Updates.** With no quorum, G. Brunswick began staff updates.

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- Brunswick has submitted letters of comments for four minor projects due to timing constraints. She is looking for approval of these comments after the fact. If the committee wanted to submit additional comments or change what was submitted, this would be possible. The projects include a 6,800SF addition to Our Lady of the Meadows and a 1,800SF maintenance and storage garage in Richford, Harrison Concrete aggregate storage building in Georgia, a 2 lot subdivision in Sheldon, and 5 small guest cabins in Montgomery. The committee members present accepted the comments.
- Brunswick noted that the Northeast Aggregate Rock Crushing Quarry Act 250 application was submitted and approved. The committee submitted comments on the preliminary site plan.
- Brunswick noted that a preliminary application for a sand extraction pit in Highgate has been submitted. The committee discussed the importance of reclaiming and restoring unused historic sand pits, as well as a plan for future reclamation of the proposed sand extraction areas. The members present agreed a letter should be sent noting that there do not appear to be any issues with the Regional Plan at this stage; however, an adequate reclamation plan should be incorporated into the project.
- Brunswick updated the committee on a letter she received from the engineer of the Morin Heights Subdivision Project located in Fairfax. She noted that the Committee reviewed a conceptual phase of the project in 2005, which instigated a meeting with Fairfax planners and Selectboard members about growth outside the growth center and potential conflicts with the Regional Plan. The engineer, J.H. Stuart, explained that the Act 250 application would soon be submitted for this project and inquired about any new policies the Commission has developed in relation to this project's conformance to the Regional Plan. The committee members present agreed that a response should be sent noting the 2007 Regional Plan as the basis for any policy and participation by the Commission in Act 250 projects. The response should also note that previous comments issued by the committee do not set precedent for future comments.

3) **Project Review.**

- Deli and Convenience Store/2 Lot Subdivision, Swanton (Growth Center). The project will subdivide a single lot into 2 lots located on the corner of Route 207 and Bushey Road in Swanton, in the recently expanded area of the Regional Growth Center. Lot 1 will remain undeveloped and contain an easement for an existing in-ground wastewater disposal system. On Lot 2, a 3,531 sq. ft. deli and convenience store is proposed, which will make use of the wastewater system on Lot 1. The committee discussed potential traffic concerns and wastewater issues. The Regional Plan notes development in the Growth Center must connect to wastewater infrastructure. The committee will continue discussion on this project.
- Georgia Mountain Wind Towers, Milton and Georgia. Information was mailed with the November meeting cancellation notice. M. Guernsey explained that the representatives from Georgia Mountain Wind will be coming to present on the project. He noted he thinks a good role for the RPC is a clearinghouse of accurate information on wind generation. He is curious how the presenters will break down the numbers, specifically in reference to how many households the project claims it can power. Brunswick reminded the committee that they are bound by Regional Plan language relating to power generation. She noted that the Regional Plan language refers to the Quechee Analysis for assessing visual impacts and handed out information on it. She also recommended that questions should remain inquisitive on the details of the project. The committee will have time to deliberate on this project at the next meeting.

4) **Presentation from Georgia Mountain Wind Applicant (6:30 PM).**

Guests Present: Martha Staskus, Kevin Harrison, Steve Terry, Peter Cross, Kathy Harrison-Robtoy, and Jim Harrison.

Jim Harrison introduced the project and the partners present and then handed it off to Martha Staskus, of Vermont Energy Resource Associates (VERA). Staskus explained the details of the project, which includes a 5 tower project on Georgia Mountain. See Georgia Mountain Community Wind Sheet for an overview of what was presented.



Please note:

Sorry for the brief minutes relating to the Georgia Mountain Wind presentation. The electronic word file has been lost. Assistance in making sure these minutes accurately depict the meeting is greatly appreciated.

5) **Other Business.** None

Meeting adjourned at 7:30