

1 PROJECT REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

2 Wednesday, January 11, 2022

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4 The meeting of the Project Review Committee was held remotely. Chair B. Buermann called the meeting to
5 order at 6:00 PM.

6
7 ATTENDANCE:

8 Commission: Scholten, Marietta ☒ ; Demars, Howard ☒; Voegele, Albin ☒; Buermann, Robert ☒; Waite,
9 Kirk ☒

10
11 Staff: Emily Klofft.

12
13 Regional Commissioners: Bill Irwin, Brian Dubie

14
15 Guests: Danielle Hammond (VELCO), Dan Poulin (VELCO), Hugo Hudson

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17 **Changes or Additions to the Agenda:**

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20 **Public Comment**

21 None.

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23 **Minutes**

24 B. Buermann noted two corrections to the minutes, that in line 40 of page 3 it should be 10", and on line 15 of
25 page 4 it should state 4 in support.

26
27 *K. Waite motioned to approve the minutes as corrected. M. Scholten seconded. The motion carried with one
28 abstention.*

29
30 **Project Reviews:**

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32 **Section 248- David & Peggy Howrigan (Wind Project)**

33 *Project Details: 2 applications for a total of 6 wind turbines with 100' towers (150 kW).*

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35 E. Klofft reviewed a letter from the developer. A. Voegele stated that it was important for communities to
36 have renewable energy. K. Waite stated that he agreed that increasing renewable energy was important, but
37 that there were other options for doing so. He stated that this area has been identified as a specific viewshed
38 worthy of protection by the Fairfield Town Plan.

39
40 B. Buermann asked staff what the next step for this application is. E. Klofft stated that it would be helpful to
41 understand any additional information the Committee needed and any specific concerns they may have.

42
43 B. Buermann stated that it had been a challenge to understand the actual viewshed impacts of the parcel. The
44 Committee generally agreed that there was a lack of adequate information about the viewshed impacts. E
45 Klofft suggested that one request the Committee could make if they deemed it necessary is an independent

1 aesthetics analysis, such as what was completed for the PurposeEnergy project. B. Buermann stated that he
2 felt an independent aesthetics analysis was necessary.

3
4 B. Irwin stated that he believed that this project is a test case of the substantial deference awarded to local
5 energy plans, because the Town of Fairfield have a clear goal of protecting the Fairfield Pond viewshed in their
6 Town Plan. He agreed with B. Buermann that an independent aesthetics analysis was necessary.

7
8 H. Demars stated that he felt the angles of the current viewshed analysis were somewhat deceptive because
9 they did not show angles where the project would be more visible. The Committee reviewed the current
10 viewshed images and agreed that they did not show some angles of the project that might have the most
11 impact.

12
13 The Committee agreed that a letter should be sent requesting an independent aesthetics analysis.

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15 **Section 248a- VELCO**

16 *Project Details: Replacement of an existing diesel generator for a cellular tower with a new BESS system at 238*
17 *Troy Street, Richford, VT.*

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19 D. Poulin and D. Hammond presented on the project. D. Poulin stated that the goal of the project was to
20 improve system reliability and sustainability, with the added benefit that the project could be used for peak-
21 shaving of electricity. The project is based on a pilot project in Rutland. The battery system is fully tested and
22 is rated for 0' clearance. The project is 255' from the nearest residence. VELCO will train the Richford Fire
23 Department on the project.

24
25 A. Voegele asked if mutual aid districts could also receive training. D. Poulin stated they could. B. Buermann
26 asked if they had signage on the project of who to call in an emergency. D. Poulin stated they already had
27 signage on the project.

28
29 B. Irwin stated that he had concerns about the impacts of battery fires, such as risk of hydrofluoric acid
30 emissions in case of fire, and questioned if there was complete transparency of these risks. D. Poulin stated
31 VELCO was primarily focused on detection & suppression system safety and couldn't speak specifically to off-
32 gassing concerns. D. Hammond stated that VELCO's safety plans are iterative and that they are committed to
33 safety.

34
35 *K. Waite motioned that the additional information provided about the project had adequately addressed the*
36 *Committee's safety concerns about fire suppression, safety, training and project location. A. Voegele seconded.*

37
38 **Section 248a- Industrial Tower and Wireless, LLC**

39 *Project Details: Application for construction of a 140' tower and associated infrastructure in Enosburgh, VT.*

40
41 E. Klofft provided an update on the project. There is a hearing on the project set for 1/12. NRPC's letter has
42 been entered into evidence by the adjoining neighbors. DPS had previously stated that NRPC did not have
43 substantial deference due to the emergency services impacts.

44
45 K. Waite stated that, as a general rule, he felt lattice towers were a greater visual obstruction than a
46 monopole. The Committee discussed tower type and implications for the Regional Plan. B. Irwin stated there

1 should be more strict standards in the Regional Plan for these types of projects and to prevent excessive
2 spaces for co-location. He stated that even around Exit 19, most towers still only have two carriers, while this
3 project proposed 6 towers. K. Waite stated that he was in favor of co-location even if it meant higher towers,
4 but only if there is confirmation that there are providers that would co-locate on the tower, which the project
5 does not have.

6
7 B. Buermann stated he still had concerns that the Public Service Department was able to override the RPC
8 substantial deference. The Committee discussed the potential implications of this.

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11 **Act 250- Highgate Industrial Park, LLC**

12 *Project Details:* Construction of an access road from VT 78, crossing the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) and
13 extending southerly across an unnamed tributary of the Kelley Brook to permit access to the land-locked
14 southeast portion of this property.

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16 E. Klofft reviewed the project site plan. The project is to add an access road from VT 78 crossing over the
17 Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) to conduct forestry and soil testing activities with the future potential for
18 commercial and industrial activities. There will be a stop sign before LVRT on the access road. E. Klofft stated
19 that the project would involve some wetlands impact and reviewed the wetlands map.

20
21 K. Waite stated that there is a risk that once the road has been established, there is a risk the same road could
22 be used for much more traffic intense uses, which could have an impact on the LVRT. The Committee
23 discussed other potential access points.

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25 H. Demars stated that he was concern about the impacts of run-off on the wetlands, and exploitation of
26 natural resources.

27
28 M. Scholten agreed with K. Waite that she was concerned about future impact of traffic on the LVRT. B.
29 Buermann agreed it would need to be a drawn out discussion at a later date. B. Buermann recommended that
30 the Committee should add a comment to their letter regarding this potential future traffic concerns.

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32 *K. Waite motioned to find that the project is in conformance with the Regional Plan and does not constitute a*
33 *substantial regional impact. A. Voegele seconded. M. Scholten, A. Voegele, B. Buermann and K. Waite voted in*
34 *favor of the motion, H. Demars voted against. The motion caried.*

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37 **Staff Reviews**

38 None.

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41 **Updates**

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43 E. Klofft noted that the temporary changes to the open meeting law that allow for fully virtual meetings expire
44 on January 15th and therefore the meeting will have to be hybrid. After discussion with the Committee about
45 options, future meetings will be held in the office conference room with a virtual option for now.

1 K. Waite requested that the materials given the Committee prior to application include what action is
2 necessary on each project and what new information is available. The Committee generally agreed this would
3 be helpful. E. Klofft stated she would update future materials provided with these changes.
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7 **Commissioner Announcements**

8 None.
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10 **Adjourn**

11 *K. Waite motioned to adjourn. The motion carried. The Committee adjourned at 7:32 PM.*
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DRAFT