

1 PROJECT REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

2 Wednesday, June 14, 2023

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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 ; Buermann, Robert ; Irwin, William ; Waite,
9 Kirk

10
11 Staff: Emily Klofft.

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13 Guests: Shana Louiselle (VELCO), Scott Mallory (VELCO), Kelsey Applegate (Encore Renewable Energy), Ralph
14 Meima (Encore Renewable Energy), John Dasaro (Village Manager, Enosburg Falls), Rebecca Lacross (Eagles
15 Landing Rest Stop), Ed Lacross (Eagles Landing Rest Stop)

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

18 None.

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21 **Public Comment**

22 None.

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24 **Presentation: VELCO, Franklin County Line Upgrade Project**

25 S. Mallory presented on behalf of VELCO, which is the state’s transmission utility. VELCO is upgrading the K42
26 line which runs from the Highgate TAP to the St. Albans TAP in Georgia. It is a major transmission line that runs
27 both ways but primarily carries energy from Hydro Quebec and the large wind projects in northern Vermont to
28 the Burlington-area population center. VELCO is proposing building the new line adjacent to the existing, then
29 demolishing the existing to prevent any possible outages. The new line will be built on a single steel pole, as
30 opposed to the two wooden poles used currently. It will be on average 30 feet taller than the existing line. All
31 construction will occur in the ROW, although some “danger trees” outside of the ROW may need to be
32 removed.

33
34 K. Waite noted that many residents may be using areas within the ROW and asked if there was any anticipated
35 conflicts. S. Mallory stated there were some encroachments into the ROW, for any home or garage built on a
36 foundation, VELCO has moved its poles to ensure adequate clearance. Sheds and other smaller moveable
37 structures encroaching on the ROW will need to be removed. K. Waite asked if poles would be moved
38 East/West within the utility ROW to accommodate this. S. Mallory clarified that this would be accommodated
39 only by moving poles in the North/South direction.

40
41 S. Mallory stated that the project cost is an estimated \$64 million, which would have positive tax benefits for
42 the towns. The project is also allowing the line to be upsized and will reduce line loss, which will allow for
43 another 20 MW of renewable energy growth in the area. K. Waite asked if the 20 MW was in addition to the
44 capacity needed to address the existing SHEI constraints. S. Mallory stated it was, the SHEI constraints are
45 expected to be addressed by GMP’s upgrades to the B20 & B22 lines.

1 S. Mallory reviewed the public outreach completed so far, which includes direct outreach to landowners,
2 meeting with municipalities and community meetings. The project timeline includes construction from 2024-
3 2025 and aesthetic mitigation in 2026. K. Waite asked if there had been any concerns from municipal officials.
4 S. Mallory stated that there had not been any major concerns. H. Demars asked what the expected lifespan for
5 these poles was. S. Mallory stated it was roughly 80 years because of the steel poles.
6

7 S. Mallory showed examples of the clearing necessary for the project. More clearing is required for
8 construction than for typical maintenance, but once complete more vegetation can regrow.
9

10 B. Irwin asked about potential concerns residents may have with electromagnetic fields and if the new
11 configuration would allow mitigation of EMF. S. Mallory stated that the pole design would support this type of
12 mitigation, the full application will include a study of EMF levels, while EMF levels are slightly higher than
13 previous, they are within the WHO standards.
14

15 **Presentation: Encore, Reservoir Road Solar**

16 K. Applegate presented on the project which is a 13 acre, 2.375 MW solar project. The project will provide
17 power to the Enosburg Falls Electric Department through a PPA and is located primarily on land owned by the
18 Village in Berkshire.
19

20 H. Demars noted that the project is located in a sensitive area next to a reservoir, and asked if there would be
21 excavation work that could impact the area. K. Applegate stated that some excavation would be required, and
22 that project engineers had a plan for erosion control. J. Dasaro clarified that the reservoir was not in use
23 anymore, and that the Village used two wells on that parcel for its water. K. Applegate stated there would be a
24 200 ft buffer around the wells, which is consistent with the Source Protection Area plan for the water source.
25 K. Applegate stated that they would meet state minimum standards for buffers around wetlands.
26

27 B. Irwin asked if battery storage was planned for this project. K. Applegate stated it had been considered, but
28 not included as part of this project. J. Dasaro stated that they would like to have battery storage closer to the
29 Village so it could be used as a back-up generator for the school in an emergency. B. Irwin requested that if
30 the Village added a battery storage facility at a later date, they should ensure all firefighters in the nearby
31 area were trained.
32

33 B. Irwin asked if all of the project's power is going to the Village. J. Dasaro stated that all of the power would
34 go to the Village, this will reduce the utility's costs. As part of the project more power lines would be brought
35 to the road, which would have an additional resiliency benefit. B. Irwin asked if the project would have a
36 decommissioning plan. K. Applegate confirmed that a decommissioning plan would be in place.
37

38 E. Klofft asked the applicant why they had selected a fixed mount system versus tracker panels. K. Applegate
39 stated that it lowers maintenance costs. R. Meima clarified that it was largely site layout and project size that
40 inform selecting the fixed panels. K. Applegate noted that a pollinator friendly mix would be used on the
41 project site and an agricultural fence would allow smaller animal species to use the area.
42
43

44 **Project Reviews:**

45 **Section 248- Reservoir Road Solar, LLC**

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1 *Project Details: 45 day notice of a 13-acre 2.375 MW solar project proposed for Berkshire, Vermont.*

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3 B. Buermann asked if there were any additional questions that need to be submitted for the 45-day notice.
4 The Committee did not have any follow-up questions.

5
6 **Act 250- Eagles Landing Rest Stop, LLC**

7 *Project Details: Seasonal retail ice cream & pizza establishment proposed for 70 Nobles Hill Road in Isle La*
8 *Motte.*

9
10 B. Buermann stated the project is under Act 250 because Isle La Motte does not have zoning. E. Klofft
11 provided an overview of the project, which is re-using an existing trailer for a seasonal pizza & ice cream
12 restaurant. E. Klofft reviewed the draft project review sheet. The application stated no primary agricultural
13 soils, but some were shown in the ANR atlas, the applicant is planning to discuss with the Agency of
14 Agriculture. The project is located outside of existing settlement in the agricultural land use planning area. The
15 applicant is planning to plant lilac bushes along the property line for screening.

16
17 K. Waite asked what the distance between the west property line and the edge of the trailer. E. Lacross stated
18 that it was roughly 35' from the property line. B. Buermann asked if the applicant had a wastewater permit. R.
19 Lacross stated they did have a wastewater permit. B. Buermann asked how far back the structure was from
20 the road. E. Lacross stated it was about 100'.

21
22 B. Buermann asked about the sightlines of the site, and whether vehicles on Noble Hill Road would be able to
23 see bicyclists exiting the property. R. Lacross stated that the property was well past the crest of the hill and
24 next to an agricultural field, so the sightlines were generally good.

25
26 B. Irwin asked what the material of the parking and driveway would be. R. Lacross stated it would be crushed
27 slate rock.

28
29 E. Klofft reviewed the Regional Plan land use goals and stated the project was in the agricultural resource
30 planning area. The Committee generally agreed that this use was appropriate for the area. K. Waite asked
31 what the hours of operation would be. R. Lacross stated it would be from 11 AM-dusk.

32
33 *B. Irwin motioned to find that the project is in conformance with the Regional Plan and that it does not*
34 *constitute a substantial regional impact. H. Demars made a friendly amendment to add "provided the project*
35 *receives all appropriate permits". B. Irwin accepted the amendment. H. Demars seconded the motion. The*
36 *motion carried.*

37
38 **Staff Reviews**

39 None.

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41 **Minutes**

42 *B. Irwin motioned to approve the minutes of the April 2023 meeting. H. Demars seconded. The motion carried*
43 *with one abstention.*

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46 **Updates**

1 E. Klofft provided an update on the Enosburgh Industrial Tower project. The Committee had a discussion
2 about cellular service and co-location.

3
4 K. Waite stated that it would be beneficial to have specific minimum standards for site plans and materials
5 submitted to the Committee. B. Buermann stated it may make sense to include this in the Regional Plan. E.
6 Klofft stated that this could also be part of the Committee's policies and procedures, which would make sense
7 to review and update in the new fiscal year.

8
9 **Commissioner Announcements**

10 None.

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12 **Adjourn**

13 *H. Demars motioned to adjourn. The motion carried. The Committee adjourned at 8:07 PM.*
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DRAFT