

1 PROJECT REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

2 Wednesday, March 13th, 2024

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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 6:02 PM.

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7 ATTENDANCE:

8 Commission: Scholten, Marietta ; Demars, Howard ; Buermann, Robert ; Irwin, William ; Garrett,
9 Harold

10
11 Staff: Emily Klofft.

12
13 Guests: Ralph Meima (Encore Renewable Energy)

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

16 B. Buermann suggested adding minutes to the agenda after review of project review policies. The Committee
17 agreed.

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20 **Public Comment**

21 None.

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24 **Project Reviews:**

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26 **Section 248- Mill River Solar, LLC**

27 *Project Details:* 4.95 MW solar facility located at 846 Mill River Road, Georgia, VT.

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29 E. Klofft reviewed the project site plan and draft project review sheet. The project will be a fixed-mount solar
30 system over 23.68 acres of land. There are several potential natural resource impacts on the project site.
31 Wetlands and wetland buffers have been identified on site, but the project will not be in the wetlands or
32 buffer. Some of the project construction equipment may be located in the 100-year floodplain, no permanent
33 project elements will be located in the 100-year floodplain. Some of the project’s fencing will be located in the
34 river corridor, the fencing will allow flood water to pass through. The project will require roughly 2 acres of
35 forest & brush clearing. There is a deer wintering area on site which will be protected with a 100 foot buffer.
36 There is one grasslands bird species that is located on the site. Impacted prime agricultural soils will be
37 stockpiled for future use.

38
39 E. Klofft stated that a small portion of the project is located in the Conservation & Forest Resource Planning
40 area. The applicant provided a detailed map showing the location of the project related to the Conservation &
41 Forest Resource Planning Area, some areas of fencing are in the land use planning area, however this will not
42 require any clearing of forest land. The project will have views from Mill River Road and Bronson Road.
43 Existing vegetation will screen views from Bronson Road, while there will be new vegetative screening is
44 proposed to screen views from Mill River Road.

1 B. Buermann asked the applicant to confirm a decommissioning plan was provided. E. Klofft stated that a
2 decommissioning plan was included.

3
4 B. Irwin asked if there had been any comments from the town. R. Meima stated he had met with the Georgia
5 Planning Commission as part of the 45-day notice process and they had questions. E. Klofft stated that she had
6 not heard anything from the Town.

7
8 B. Irwin asked what the customer for the electricity is. R. Meima stated it was Green Mountain Power, the
9 project's power will go directly into GMP's grid through the Nathan Road substation and will be provided
10 under a program to provide solar power to low- and moderate-income ratepayers.

11
12 B. Buermann asked if the project was associated with the Georgia Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). R.
13 Meima stated that it was not, although Encore has developed BESS systems in other areas of the state.

14
15 B. Irwin asked where the deer wintering yard was on the site. R. Meima stated it was on the northeast corner
16 of the site. There may be restrictions on construction during winter to avoid disturbing the deer. H. Demars
17 asked if there would be sufficient time to construct between restrictions for the deer and restrictions during
18 bird nesting season. R. Meima stated that the applicant may apply for a takings permit to allow for
19 construction during the summer months, the site will be regularly mowed prior to construction to prevent
20 birds from nesting on the site.

21
22 H. Demars asked how long construction would take. R. Meima stated it would take roughly 1 year, depending
23 on when the certificate of public good was received. B. Buermann asked if the project would be phased. R.
24 Meima stated that pre-construction would be phased, but that the panels would be installed as one phase.

25
26 B. Irwin asked if the applicant had considered clover or another low-mow ground cover. R. Meima stated it
27 would be a local meadow mix and that the landowner is considering having grazing sheep.

28
29 *B. Irwin motioned to find the project in conformance with the Regional Plan and that it does have a substantial*
30 *regional impact.*

31
32 The Committee briefly discussed the definition of substantial regional impact. B. Irwin stated it the project has
33 two or more possible constraints, although the applicant had made efforts to mitigate them.

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35 *H. Demars second. The motion carried.*

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37 **Review of Project Review Policies**

38 E. Klofft reviewed draft changes to the Project Review Policies. E. Klofft stated that the majority of changes she
39 proposed are in the staff review section including updates to staff review policies for co-location on
40 telecommunication towers where the overall height will increase, size of residential development and adding
41 a policy for small-scale solar facilities. Additionally, she recommended removing the phrase moderate from
42 the phrase "moderate to substantial regional impact" as projects are either of substantial regional impact or
43 are not.

1 B. Irwin asked to clarify if battery electric storage systems would fall under “improvement to infrastructure
2 regulated by the PUC” in staff review. He stated that it was important that the Committee review those
3 projects to ensure fire safety. E. Klofft stated that she would add clarifying language.
4

5 **Minutes**

6 *B. Irwin motioned to approve the minutes of the January Project Review Committee meeting. B. Buermann
7 seconded. The motion carried, H. Demars abstained.*
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9 *H. Demars motioned to approve the minutes of the February Project Review Committee meeting. B. Irwin
10 seconded. The motion carried.*
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12 **Updates**

13 None.
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15 **Commissioner Announcements**

16 None.
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19 **Adjourn**

20 *H. Demars motioned to adjourn. B. Irwin seconded. The motion carried. The Committee adjourned at 6:45 PM.*
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