Chen, Zachary

From: Redacted
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2016 2:15 PM
To: Chen, Zachary
Subject: Fwd: FW: VCE Solar Update Oct. 7, 2015 - Jim Kenyon: Town an Afterthought in Windsor Solar Plans
Attachments: 8302 PFD.pdf; ATT00001.htm

Categories: M-Files

-------- Forwarded Message --------
Subject: FW: VCE Solar Update Oct. 7, 2015 - Jim Kenyon: Town an Afterthought in Windsor Solar Plans
Date: Tue, 3 Nov 2015 11:25:15 -0500
From: Redacted
To: Redacted

From: vce@vce.org
Date: Wed, 7 Oct 2015 13:19:35 -0400
Subject: VCE Solar Update Oct. 7, 2015 - Jim Kenyon: Town an Afterthought in Windsor Solar Plans
To: vce@vce.org

--Attached: Proposal for Decision in Chelsea Solar, Bennington upper project
--PSB Site Visit and Public Hearing Oct. 19 for 4.99 MW solar project in Hartford
http://psb.vermont.gov/sites/psb/files/orders/2015/2015-10/8580%20PHCmemo%26schedORD.pdf

<http://psb.vermont.gov/sites/psb/files/orders/2015/2015-10/8580%20PHCmemo&schedORD.pdf>
—Richmond VT GMP Solar PSB Public Hearing Sept. 24, 2015
https://youtu.be/lBxKUu_CrZ0
— No posting yet for the third meeting of the solar siting task force
http://solartaskforce.vermont.gov/announcements-meetings
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http://www.vnews.com/opinion/featuredvoices/jimkenyon/18905568-95/jim-kenyon-town-an-afterthought-in-windsor-solar-plans

Jim Kenyon: Town an Afterthought in Windsor Solar Plans

Wednesday, October 7, 2015
(Published in print: Wednesday, October 7, 2015)

On Aug. 28, 2014, state officials met behind closed doors in Montpelier to talk about the "potential for a large scale solar installation at the Southeast Correctional Facility in Windsor."

For the next 10 months, the proposed public-private partnership with Green Mountain Power, the state's largest utility, remained one of Montpelier's better kept secrets.

Town officials in Windsor didn't hear about the proposal until this summer. State Rep. Donna Sweaney, D-Windsor, wasn't privy to the behind-the-scenes discussions, either, even though she is chairwoman of the House Committee on Government Operations, which by its very name suggests she should have been clued in.

I'm not surprised that the state and GMP wanted to keep their talks hush-hush.

When you're planning to mar the Windsor countryside with 19,000 solar panels, the fewer people who know about it, the better.

In June, GMP and groSolar, a White River Junction-based company that designs and builds solar arrays, finally went public. The 4.25-megawatt array could power as many as 1,200 homes, and would be one of the largest solar projects in the state.

The 19,000 solar panels would be spread across 35 acres of former prison farmland. Since the state owns 900 acres around the Southeast State Correctional Facility, maybe the thinking was that no one in Windsor would notice if a small portion was sacrificed on the altar of Almighty Solar.

Apparently, it escaped their attention that the vast open fields and forestland were the nesting grounds of several uncommon bird species, including the golden-winged warbler. Or that the large tract of state-owned land with panoramic views was a natural asset that birdwatchers, hikers, hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts have enjoyed for decades.

After initially being caught off guard, some people in Windsor quickly came together to organize the opposition. John MacGovern, John Mayo, Mike Quinn and Cassie George were among the residents who formed a grass-roots organization called Protect Your Land.

In August, I attended one of the group's meetings at MacGovern's house, a couple of miles away from the proposed solar site. Everyone made it clear that they recognized the need to develop renewable energy sources.

But they didn't appreciate not hearing what the state, GMP and groSolar had planned at the prison farm, as it's known around Windsor, until the deal was nearly done.

Protect Your Land argued that Vermont communities should have more say in deciding where solar arrays go. The group pointed out that the way it currently works in Vermont, GMP only had to get approval from the state Public Service Board, not the town.

"This is a statewide issue," MacGovern told me. "Communities need to be involved in a significant way."

MacGovern, 63, was a four-term state lawmaker in Massachusetts before he moved to Windsor in 1999, so he knows how politics work. (Although he hasn't been quite as successful in Vermont, losing bids as a GOP candidate for the state Senate and U.S. Senate.)

With a project of this magnitude, MacGovern was sure there must be a paper trail. In August, he filed public-record requests with the state Agency of Natural Resources and the Department of Buildings and General Services, the two arms of state government most involved in the project. He asked for all documents, starting Jan. 1, 2014, relating to GMP and groSolar's plans to construct a solar array on the Windsor State Prison grounds.

"We're trying to find out how this whole thing started," said MacGovern, who agreed to share the documents with me.

So far, he's received more than 700 pages, many of which are copies of emails exchanged between key players in the deal. That includes former House Speaker Mike Obuchowski, who is now commissioner of Buildings and General Services, and Louis Porter, commissioner of Fish & Wildlife. (The reasons why their departments are doing the heavy lifting on the Windsor project is a topic for another day.)

GMP Director of Government Affairs Robert Dostis, a former legislator, and Bob Griffin, a now-retired vice president with the utility, were also part of the discussions, along with groSolar Executive Vice President Rod Viens.

But no one from Windsor.

"For the purpose of transparency, that's not OK," said Sweaney when I brought the emails to her attention this week.

State officials had ample opportunities in the 10 months to invite Windsor to the table. Sweaney was only a short walk away at the Statehouse. Town Manager Tom Marsh had also made a trip to Montpelier during the 2015 legislative session to meet with Sweaney and Obuchowski about the state's future plans for the prison farm.

Somehow, the GMP proposal didn't come up.

"That's the part I find disingenuous," said Marsh.

Windsor Selectboard Chairman Justin Ciccarelli told me, "We should have been involved from day one. We were kept in the dark until they needed us."

On Tuesday, I talked with GMP spokesperson Kristin Carlson. Shouldn't Sweaney, at least, have been made aware of what was happening?

"That's a fair point," said Carlson. "A lot of people were working on the project. We thought she had been brought in, and clearly she hadn't."

After reading the batch of documents that MacGovern received on Monday, I talked with Obuchowski. He sounded apologetic.

"We were so busy putting together the deal, along with our other duties, that we didn't reach out as much as we should have," he told me.

Public-private partnerships are all the rage. But when the state is doing business with big business behind closed doors, it can undermine public trust in government. And really makes people angry.

Call it solar disarray.

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http://addisonindependent.com/201510opinion-green-energy-views-can-coexist
Home <http://addisonindependent.com/>

Opinion: Green energy, views can coexist

Posted on October 5, 2015 |

* Opinion
<http://addisonindependent.com/category/section/opinion>

By Peter Rothschild

<http://addisonindependent.com/category/reporter-author-name/peter-rothschild>

Rothschild graphic.png
<http://addisonindependent.com/201510rothschild-graphicpng>

Vermonters can feel proud that we are out in front on many environmental issues including climate change. But as the push for more renewable

energy continues, choices among types of renewable energy have been made that may result in the unnecessary scarring of thousands of acres of our landscape. Mercenary armies of solar developers, abetted by special interests, have flocked to Vermont to reap financial rewards from subsidies and Investment Tax Credits.

While there are solar developers who are sensitive to the wishes of communities in which their installations might be hosted, there are those that purport to have "good neighbor policies" which in practice they have not followed. Horrendous conduct by some developers have fanned the flames of discontent so that many new commercial solar energy projects are facing push-back from communities in which these projects are to be sited.

Increasing our solar energy capacity has come at a cost of the degradation of our scenic environment, a schism between state government and municipalities, and a distortion of political process in Montpelier. An unbiased observer must admit that all is not well with the roll-out of renewable energy in our state as we cannot seem to find the right balance between disfiguring our land and responding to climate change.

So if a majority of Vermonters respect the environment, why is there so much conflict over the development of renewable sources of energy that are necessary to get us off carbon-based energy sources threatening to cook the planet? What are the circumstances and issues raising the ire of citizens and municipalities impacted by solar projects? How did this all come to be? What can be done about it?

1) For over forty years Act 250 protected Vermont and Vermonters from the effects of development through an application process that addresses the environmental and community impacts of projects that exceed a threshold in size. But when it comes to energy generation Act 250 is trumped by Section 248, and this difference in the project approval process created our tug-of-war over solar. The root of the problem is that Section 248 was intended to deal with very large public utility energy generation and is inappropriate for regulating small-scale distributed energy projects. The Public Service Board (PSB) is empowered by law in Section 248 to override town plans or zoning laws by stating it is in "the public good" to go forward with an energy generation project that is out of compliance with regulations voted upon by a municipality's citizens or which may be seen as obnoxious by those around it. As the number of solar projects proliferate, this issue alone is sufficient to create a struggle between the state and its local governments since the state is usurping power that used to belong to municipalities. By overriding local zoning laws, Section 248 has removed a property owner's protection against a neighbor's behavior that could negatively impact his or her property values.

2) In response to issues with the previous renewable energy law, the state legislature recently passed Act 56 (H.40), which permits a setback limit of only 25 feet from a neighbor's property line for ground-mounted

solar arrays ten feet tall and covering one acre of land. In my town, a small shed must be setback 75 feet from a property line. The concept that a monstrous commercial solar project should be allowed a lesser setback than a tiny shed is an affront to common sense.

3) Screening requirements for solar installations prior to Act 56 were nonexistent. The jury is still out on how the PSB will react to towns' setting their own screening requirements as are now allowed. But the many loopholes in this law make it likely that poorly sited and screened projects may still get PSB approval.

4) Many solar developers have done a pathetic job at fulfilling their commitments to screen their projects from neighbors and the community, and there is nothing to suggest that they will correct their bad behavior. Completed projects with virtually no screening are not uncommon, and there's one where six foot tall trees were planted 50 feet apart as a token gesture towards screening.

5) Current legislation permits developers of 150 kW solar projects, aka CSA's, to avoid the more onerous approval processes required of larger solar projects. This special treatment allows for a much faster approval time, smaller setback limits, and lack of proper decommissioning sureties and has resulted in numbers of 150 kW projects that often produce more public anger than their relatively small number of kilowatts is worth.

In summary, the improperly regulated solar expansion threatens the esthetic character of towns, and puts property values of homes near poorly sited or screened projects in jeopardy. It is only natural for people to fight to preserve the value of what is likely their largest investment. When folks who want solar-at-any-cost confronted the position of people who felt their homes were being threatened by solar, the battle began, and unfortunately our legislators did next to nothing in the 2015 session to correct the problem.

How were things allowed to get like this?

In response to climate change and its relationship to carbon-based sources of energy, Vermonters responded in a very positive way by adopting a schedule for replacing fossil-fuel energy sources with renewable energy. In their desire to "do the right thing", Vermonters unwittingly ceded control of their towns and esthetic environment to politicians and special interests who were willing to ride the crest of citizens' environmental concern. In 2011 when the Comprehensive Energy Plan was passed and included the goal of reaching 90 percent renewable energy by 2050, it seemed like a good thing. But by 2012 project siting problems were already obvious, and "The Governor's Energy Generation Siting Policy Commission" was created. The results of that commission's work were limited, unimpressive, and not adhered to.

Along the way, our government in Montpelier seems to have developed a preference for solar over wind and hydro projects. Having politicians

picking winners and losers in areas of technology rarely ends well, and in this case raises the question of why there is an emphasis on solar when we live in a state with scant hours of sunshine (Vermont has 2,295 hours of sunshine annually, second lowest of any state in the country).

In my view, much of our situation is political. We have a number of instances in which legislators have moved into positions in state agencies. In 2013 Governor Shumlin appointed Margaret Cheney to the Public Service Board. Ms. Cheney previously was the Vice Chair of the House Natural Resources and Energy Committee and is now in a position to approve projects engendered by legislation she helped write. Ms. Cheney is also the wife of Rep. Peter Welch, who is pushing in Congress for the renewal of solar subsides. In addition, industry lobbyists have had an undue negative impact on policy.

This situation is best represented by an iron triangle involving state legislators, state agencies, industry lobbyists aligned with a powerful environmental lobby, and wealthy investors seeking a subsidized rate of return. The iron triangle is a unique relationship between the bureaucracy, the legislature, and lobbyists that results in the mutual benefit of all three of them. It is only fair to acknowledge that many of the people working in our state bureaucracy are very bright, hard-working and decent public servants, but they are part of the iron triangle. It is what it is.

State Legislature

Representative Tony Klein, Chairman of the Vermont House Committee on Natural Resource and Energy, has put in many years of hard work on energy related matters. However it is a bit troubling that as early as 2007 he was recognized and honored by Renewable Energy Vermont (REV), the solar and wind industry mouthpiece and key lobbying organization. Mr. Klein is primarily responsible for the creation of H.40 which became Act 56, doubling down on the pro-solar policies in place via previous legislation. In spite of promises Mr. Klein made during the past legislative session, his committee did not pass a bill regarding the siting and screening of solar projects.

Senator Chris Bray, is the Chair of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy. His committee did little to change H.40 created in the house, but in March of this year he did initiate a joint Senate-House public hearing on renewable energy siting. Unfortunately the voices of the public were allowed to be drowned out by those in the solar industry. Of the 56 people who spoke at the hearing, twenty-one of them came from SunCommon alone.

Special Interest Groups

REV (Renewable Energy Vermont), a nonprofit trade organization, is the renewables industry major lobbying entity. It is a huge force in bending state energy policy in its favor. Like the big-tobacco lobbies, REV pushes its agenda while dismissing negative outcomes to the community at

large. REV has a seat on the newly formed Solar Siting Task Force headed by Chris Recchia, Commissioner of the Department of Public Service.

VPIRG, the not-for-profit Vermont Public Interest Group, is the state's largest consumer and environmental organization. VPIRG's approach to solar energy is virtually the same as REV's, "solar everywhere at any cost." VPIRG is headed by Paul Burns whose wife, Alyssa Schuren serves as Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation Agency of Natural Resources. VPIRG is where SunCommon was born. It frequently serves as the training ground for future SunCommon employees. Duane Peterson, Co-President of SunCommon, is a Trustee of VPIRG. Matthew Rubin is also a Trustee of VPIRG, and he serves on the SunCommon Board of Advisors and is a Board Member of REV. There are times at which employees of VPIRG and SunCommon seem indistinguishable.

It would be wise if we Vermonters realize the dangers of special interests operating in Montpelier and hold our legislators accountable for the energy policies they enable.

So what can be done to get us back on track to achieve our renewable energy goals without social and environmental degradation? Here are a few ideas:

• Compel each municipality to provide an amount of renewable energy in proportion with its population. This would not only avoid the problems of overburdening certain towns, but it would also be in better alignment with the state's goals for a distributed energy grid. More energy would be produced close to where it is consumed.

• If municipalities are made responsible for providing their share of the state's renewable energy, it should be left to municipal governments to create siting and screening regulations they deem necessary and appropriate.

• If a municipality wishes to produce more renewable energy than its required share, it should be remunerated in a way that brings additional funds into the town.

• Treat the application approval process the same for all renewable energy projects over 50 kW.

• The legislature and state agencies should perform an annual cost-benefit analysis of emerging technologies, such as HVDC cabling. High Voltage Direct Current cabling could bring into Vermont 400 MW of power generated by wind and hydro in upstate New York and Canada at a cost about half of what we pay for the most efficient solar energy while sparing the disfigurement of 4,000 acres of the Vermont landscape.

• In order to stop the current solar gold rush, we should consider a moratorium on new solar installations until the Solar Siting Task Force has delivered its recommendations this coming January and until the legislature passes legislation that corrects most of the defects in our

existing energy policy.

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http://www.sevendaysvt.com/vermont/solar-farm-might-launch-at-alburgh-missile-site/Content?oid=2933544

Solar Farm Might Launch at Alburgh Missile Site

By MARK DAVIS
<http://www.sevendaysvt.com/vermont/ArticleArchives?author=2266653>
@DAVIS7D <http://twitter.com/Davis7D>
click to enlargeFROM A HISTORY OF THE 556TH STRATEGIC MISSILE SQUADRON
<http://media1.fdncms.com/sevendaysvt/imager/u/original/2933543/development1-1-8e49800cde443598.jpg>

* FROM /A HISTORY OF THE 556TH STRATEGIC MISSILE SQUADRON/

Small towns across Vermont are accustomed to looking after parks, libraries, old meeting halls and fire stations. But at the northwestern tip of the state, officials in Alburgh have been struggling to find a use for a peculiar piece of infrastructure.

For decades, the town has owned an underground missile silo that is 17 stories deep. At the height of the Cold War, it hosted an 81-foot intercontinental ballistic missile aimed at the Soviet Union and a five-man crew that was ready and willing to launch it.

Town officials had planned in recent months to put the nine-acre silo site on the auction block and to open the bidding at $50,000. They worried, though, there might be a shortage of buyers for an obsolete military relic.

But it now appears the former hot spot could find a new life as a home for renewable energy: A Jericho businessman has submitted a proposal to turn it into a solar farm.

"It's not a done deal yet, but it sounds promising, that's for sure," selectboard chair Steve Aubin said.

Nestled on a spit of land between Lake Champlain and the Canadian border, the silo site doesn't look like much. A single chain, two feet off the ground, spans the entrance that is no longer guarded. Beyond it, on a weedy lot, two hulking metal Quonset huts stand sentry over concrete floors littered with metal sheets and tubes. The name of the half-mile-long strip of pavement that leads to the site — Missile Base Road — hints at the ominous history buried underground. A historical marker at the adjacent Alburgh Welcome Center spells it out: "First Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Site East of the Mississippi River."

Most of America's missile bases have been located in rural swaths of the West and Midwest. But in the early 1960s, as the perceived Soviet threat

reached its peak, the Department of Defense decided to install 12 Atlas missiles at sites around the former Plattsburgh Air Force base, then one of the largest military facilities on the East Coast. From there, the 135-ton missiles wouldn't have far to go via the Arctic Circle to deliver nuclear warheads to the Soviet Union.

Ten of the silos were built in upstate New York. Vermont got two — in Alburgh and Swanton, where local farmers sold some of their land to the military. The silo designs were all identical.

Constructing the underground structures was dangerous work. According to the Plattsburgh /Press Republican/, a falling bucket plunged through the Alburgh silo and killed a 28-year-old worker from Gouverneur, N.Y. At least three other men died while working in the 12 silos.

Old-timers in Alburgh remember the day in 1962 when an Atlas missile rolled into town on a huge flatbed truck, as dozens of people lined the streets. Some utility poles along Route 2 had to be temporarily removed to make way.

Some locals worried that hosting the silo would cause the Soviets to target the area with their own missiles, according to media reports at the time. But most welcomed the influx of jobs and money that came with the project.

"It's difficult to go back to that day and time," said Jeff Stephens, an amateur historian who coauthored a book about the 12 silos: /A History of the 556th Strategic Missile Squadron/. "This was the day the Reds were out to get us. Either you're an American or commie. There was a lot of paranoia and fear. It was a frenzy. 'Oh, my gosh, we've got to do something. We have to make sure we are protected and can retaliate.'"

Once the silos were constructed, their crews worked in an underground launch-control center. They accessed it via a spiral staircase from an above-ground entrance protected by huge blast doors. A tunnel attached the control center to the much deeper silo.

Though each silo cost as much as $18 million to build, their lifespans were short — and today they would probably be held up as a classic example of military waste. By 1967, rocket scientists had come up with a larger, more sophisticated missile, the Titan, that wouldn't fit in the 12 silos. The outdated missiles were taken away, and the local sites, once the focus of so much intrigue, fell dormant overnight. When their sump pumps turned off, water flooded the empty silos and command centers.

In Alburgh, the military welded shut the nine-ton silo doors, removed equipment from the Quonset huts, and gave the site to the town. Local officials eventually decided it would make a fine home for the Alburgh Highway Department.

Most of the other sites met similarly ignominious fates.

In Swanton, Chevalier Drilling Co. bought the Atlas site, stripped most of the metal and other materials from the silo, and sold the remnants of the $14 million facility for scrap.

Other sites have remained untouched, though a few private owners have been more ambitious. In Champlain, Redford and Lewis, N.Y., owners have transformed the silos into livable homes. In Willsboro, N.Y., an artist bought a site and lives in one of the Quonset huts but has not attempted to restore the underground facilities.

The silos fascinate a small but passionate group of buffs, including Stephens, who says they shed important light on the era. "When you look at history, there's a romantic undertone," Stephens said. "Everyone goes, 'Wasn't that the perfect time?' The answer is, 'No.' These were mechanical beasts, and they were here to do a job."

The beasts have a certain allure, though. In Alburgh, volunteer firefighter and certified scuba diver Bill Gett admitted he has schemed for years about how to bust into the silo and dive to its murky bottom.

Gett, who runs an auto repair shop, said that he has studied designs and walked the site, and though the main entrance is sealed shut, he believes he has found a way inside.

He asked a former Alburgh selectman, a friend, for permission. "Don't you even think about it," the man said, Getts recalled. "You dive that, I kick your ass."

A few years ago, Gett got a phone call from Gerald Fitzpatrick, who had just bought the silo in Champlain, N.Y., and wanted someone to explore it before he started pumping the water out.

Gett rushed over that day — and dove in. He made it a little more than halfway to the bottom before turning back. He described the 52-foot diameter hole as "dark and eerie."

"Visibility was an inch if you were lucky," Gett said. "Even with dive lights, it didn't matter, it was too thick."

Officials in tiny Alburgh, with an annual budget of $570,000, have long talked about selling the silo to raise money and get the property back on the tax rolls. The town is struggling economically: Two gas stations and a bank closed in recent years, and a general store is the only downtown commercial enterprise.

A few years ago, the highway department moved to a new facility across town.

Last summer, as the selectboard prepared to go to auction, Will Veve came calling about the solar project. He said he had been quietly scouring Vermont for properties that developers usually shun — brownfields. Veve figured it would be easier to get community support for a project that sits on land that would otherwise be difficult to

develop.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources lists the Alburgh silo site as a brownfield, as a result of minor contamination of some grass and groundwater around it. ANR investigators ascribed no blame for the contamination but noted that former workers regularly dumped solvents on the ground around the silo.

Working with his brother, Victor, Veve has proposed building a 500-kilowatt solar field, with about 2,000 solar panels — enough to power roughly 100 homes. As part of the deal, Alburgh would receive a monthly lease payment and cheap electricity for town-owned buildings.

"We like to look and say, 'What's the maximum public good?'" Veve said.

Veve, a 38-year-old University of Vermont graduate, acknowledged that he has no experience in solar projects. His current venture — which he declined to discuss in any detail — is a video-production company called Verde Media Group.

In recent years, Verde Media Group announced a new reality show, "Green Rusher," which proposed to follow people involved in the legal marijuana business. It has not been made — the website has been taken down, and its social media pages haven't generated any activity since February — but Verde said it's "in pre-production." Verde Media's quarterly report suggests it owns a subsidiary, Beautyject Inc., which is "the first company to offer needle-free technology adapted to the beauty care and cosmetic markets."

According to Verde Media Group's most recent corporate filing, it has $49,000 in assets and $1.6 million in liabilities and lost $69,000 in the most recent fiscal quarter. Veve is listed as the company's largest shareholder.

Now launching a solar business, he has hired consultants and is talking about the permit process with ANR. The agency verified Veve's exploratory work and was scheduled to send officials to inspect the missile site this week.

Veve said he hopes Alburgh will qualify as one of ANR's net-metered projects, which allow small renewable-energy operations to sell power back to the main electric grid.

Sporting a trimmed beard and stylish eyeglasses, Veve has appeared at a few selectboard meetings, and its members have been supportive. "So far this is only the real offer that came along," Aubin conceded.

Last week, the selectboard unanimously voted to authorize the town attorney to start formal negotiations with Veve, who hopes to construct the facility in 2016.

While Veve said his proposed solar array would fit comfortably on the

site's nine acres, he has no plans to do anything with the underground facilities. He has little interest in their history.

That has given some silo aficionados hope that it might be pumped out and opened up.

Gett promised he'd be first in line.

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http://www.rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20151006/NEWS01/710069895

Brandon eyed as part of massive solar development
By Dan Colton <mailto:dan.colton@rutlandherald.com>
Staff Writer | October 06,2015
BRANDON — State officials say a solar power company wants to construct a large solar field in Brandon as part of a statewide mega-development push.

Officials with the Public Service Department — the state body tasked with representing the public's interest in energy projects — said Ranger Solar LLC's 20-megawatt project far exceeds the electrical generation from other solar projects in Vermont.

"To put it in perspective, the largest project that's on the ground in Vermont has a capacity of 2.2 megawatts," said Jon Copans, PSD deputy commissioner. "So it's 10 times larger than the largest project on the ground."

Florence Solar LLC, a subsidiary of Ranger Solar LLC, is one organization from Ranger Solar's limited-liability portfolio. The Florence branch was created solely for the Brandon project, according to Ranger Solar documents.

The company is interested in six sites across the state, including an undisclosed Brandon location being pursued by Florence Solar.

Ranger Solar's power-purchase petition to the Public Service Department does not detail the precise location or size of the proposed Brandon solar field.

Adam Cohen, Ranger Solar LLC's president, declined to comment Monday when asked for project specifics.

Details for a similar Ranger Solar site, in Ludlow, require 125 acres for its solar array, said Howard Barton, Ludlow Select Board chairman.

Barton said a representative from the solar company met with and briefed the board last month.

But Brandon town officials said they haven't heard anything about the Ranger Solar petition.

"That I have not heard," Selectman Seth Hopkins said Monday.

Brandon isn't without its share of solar company courtships, although the town doesn't have a solar field.

Select Board Chairman Doug Bailey said Monday that a 5-acre parcel of land in the town's industrial park is being eyed by several smaller-scale developers, but like Hopkins, Bailey said he hasn't heard a word regarding the Ranger project.

Bailey said the board is open to building photovoltaic infrastructure, at least at a smaller scale.

"The town is looking to go green and generate a bit of revenue," Bailey said.

Ranger Solar has filed preliminary information with ISO-New England, the New England power grid operator. It imports and transmits power to Vermont's 17 electric distribution companies, such as Green Mountain Power.

Last month, ISO-New England said it received six confidential requests to link into the region's electrical grid. The proposed Brandon development would connect to VELCO's Pittsford-Florence electrical substation.

Kerrick Johnson, spokesman for VELCO — which operates the Florence-Pittsford substation, among others — said that substation can withstand a large influx of power associated with large developments.

Ranger Solar still has to wade through several layers of oversight and permitting.

Susan Hudson, clerk of the quasi-judicial Public Service Board, said last week Ranger Solar has not filed for a certificate of public good permit, or CPG, which is required to begin construction.

Before a CPG permit, a 45-day comment and local review period must be completed, Copans said. The review process has not opened for the Brandon project.

"That's why information is a bit sparse," he said.

Vermont's new renewable energy legislation, Act 56, requires electric utility companies to generate 75 percent of all power from renewable sources by 2032.

"A 20-megawatt (array) would only help Vermont utilities meet this goal if the renewable energy credits are purchased or retained and retired by one of Vermont's facilities," Copans said.

He said RECs can be sold to surrounding states to help achieve their renewable standards.

Chris Recchia, commissioner of the Public Service Department, said the state would have to adapt to the large-scale proposal, taking a special approach.

"I think we can deal with it," Recchia said in an interview last month. "It's certainly a different animal."

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http://www.rutlandherald.com/article/20151006/NEWS01/710069939

Solar project antes up
By Gordon Dritschilo <mailto:gordon.dritschilo@rutlandherald.com>
Staff Writer | October 06,2015
GroSolar expects to begin work on its solar project on the former poor farms property later this year, but will start paying for the property now.

The solar developer made an agreement with the city in 2013 to lease the property and build an almost 1 megawatt solar array there. The project got all its permits last year, and then nothing happened. In an email last week to the Board of Aldermen, City Attorney Charles Romeo wrote that the city had reached out to the developer on the status of the project and gotten them to begin making lease payments.

"Despite the lease payments not being due until the project goes online, they have offered to pay the city the rents which have accrued since 12/30," he wrote — Dec. 30 of last year being when the company reported the project would commence.

Romeo said the lease payments total $16,692 a year, though the $5,000 the company paid to option the property would be applied to the first year's payments.

The letter goes on to indicate city officials may have considered breaking the lease due to a lack of movement on the project.

"Given that the lease does not set forth a specific timeframe in which to begin construction ... I do not see a potential default at this time," Romeo wrote.

Board of Aldermen President William Notte said there had been no detailed discussion, just a notion floated by Aldermen Ed Larson, who asked Romeo to look into the situation. Notte said he was not especially surprised by the delays to the project.

"Perhaps this is unfair — I'd be surprised if a GMP-driven one sat this

long, but this is a smaller company with more hoops to jump through," he said. "I don't want to imply they haven't been good partners with the city, but I think it was a fair question of Alderman Larson to ask."

Larson said he wanted clarification on the city's ability to end the lease because he did not think the company should be able to sit on the property indefinitely without making payments to the city.

"If the lease had expired, technically, I'm sure there are a multitude of other firms out there that would like to lease that property," he said.

Rod Viens, GroSolar's executive vice president, said the company had hoped to start construction back in the spring but had some trouble securing financing for the project and was stretched because it had a number of similar projects underway around the state.

"We expect to get started on the site in the next three or four weeks, clearing brush on the site," he said, adding that the project should come online in February or March. "It's a little later than we wanted. We're trying to balance our construction schedule with permits and financing."

Viens said the company had no issue with beginning the lease payments.

"We wanted to make sure the city was kept whole," he said. "We like to be a good business partner and we were fine with that."

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http://www.reformer.com/latestnews/ci_28921262/new-solar-array-kurn-hattin-property

Here comes the sun: Whitney Blake Company, Kurn Hattin christen solar

array

By Domenic Poli

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POSTED: 10/04/2015 09:56:45 PM EDT0 COMMENTS
<http://www.reformer.com/latestnews/ci_28921262/new-solar-array-kurn-hattin-property#disqus_thread>|

UPDATED: ABOUT 12 HOURS AGO

Jahnney Mane and Riley Daniels cuts a ribbon in front of the new solar array for the Kurn Hattin Homes for Children on Friday, Oct. 2.
<http://www.reformer.com/portlet/article/html/imageDisplay.jsp?contentItemRelationshipId=7120677>
Jahnney Mane and Riley Daniels cuts a ribbon in front of the new solar array for the Kurn Hattin Homes for Children on Friday, Oct. 2.
(Kristopher Radder Reformer Staff)

WESTMINSTER — Kurn Hattin Homes for Children has been changing lives since 1894.

Its campus is well-known and sits peacefully off Interstate 91. But travel just beyond the academic buildings and dormitories and you'll now find a steep gravel road, which leads to a new solar array made possible through a collaboration of the Whitney Blake Company and financial partner New England Kurn Hattin Homes, Inc. It was constructed by Integrated Solar. People associated with all interested parties met at the site at 12:30 p.m. on Oct. 2 for a ribbon-cutting at the new array.

Katrina Wilson, Integrated Solar's vice president of operation and sales, spoke to the crowd, which included recently retired Kurn Hattin Executive Director Connie Sanderson and her replacement, Stephen Harrison. Wilson later told the Reformer the new array takes in 200.88 direct-current kilowatts that are turned into 144 alternating-current kilowatts, which is what is used to power homes. Those alternating-current kilowatts, Wilson said, will produce 256,000 kilowatt hours, which is 38 percent of Kurn Hattin's consumption.

Wilson explained this first phase of the project will save Kurn Hattin $144,000 over the course of 25 years — or $5,760 per year. Wilson said the school will save $25,000 a year in the second phase.

"This is just a win-win," she said.

Wilson said permitting for the array took eight months, which was followed by one month of groundwork and three weeks of installation. She said the array sports 648 panels, which have 310 watts apiece. The panels sit on more than an acre of land, though seven acres were cleared for the project.

According to Wilson, Integrated Solar installed a separate array for the Whitney Blake Company a year ago.

"Whitney Blake is a local company with ties to the school. Hardy Merrill brought the concept and knowledge of how to get it done to (the late) Tom (Fahner), Connie and the Kurn Hattin Board. The rest is history," Wilson said at the site, reading a statement prepared by colleague Andy Cay. "Kurn Hattin desired to save operating costs, limit the impact of future electricity price increases and pursue renewable technologies. Whitney Blake was a willing financial partner that helped make these desires a reality.

"This kind of transaction has become commonplace in Vermont as non-profit municipalities and schools have sought to fund solar projects," she read.

Harrison told the Reformer the array is an exciting way to start off his tenure as Kurn Hattin's executive director.

A newly constructed solar array for the Kurn ~~Hattin~~ Homes for Children could save thousands of dollars in energy cost each year.
<http://www.reformer.com/portlet/article/html/imageDisplay.jsp?contentItemRelationshipId=7120678>
A newly constructed solar array for the Kurn Hattin Homes for Children could save thousands of dollars in energy cost each year. (Kristopher Radder Reformer Staff)
Contact Domenic Poli at 802-254-2311, ext. 277.

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http://vtdigger.org/2015/10/06/mark-whitworth-vermont-needs-turnaround-in-energy-policy/

MARK WHITWORTH: VERMONT NEEDS TURNAROUND IN ENERGY POLICY

OCT. 6, 2015, 7:05 PM BY COMMENTARY
<http://vtdigger.org/author/opinion/> 11 COMMENTS
<http://vtdigger.org/2015/10/06/mark-whitworth-vermont-needs-turnaround-in-energy-policy/#comments>

/Editor's note: This commentary is by Mark Whitworth, who is on the board of directors of Energize Vermont, where he was formerly executive

director. VisitEnergizeVermont.org <http://energizevermont.org/> to see a map of Vermont's Energy Rebellion./

Vermont has adopted some ambitious energy goals. The state could have engaged its communities in achieving these goals, but it did not. Instead, it has turned things over to energy developers, many of whom are running roughshod over our communities. They are poisoning the well of public opinion, turning community after community against renewable energy and against state government itself.

I am not going out on a limb by declaring that Vermont will fail to meet its energy goals. The state's policies are anti-environmental and anti-democratic. They empower the developers and disempower communities. They guarantee that there will be a backlash that will capsize the entire energy program. The reaction to the "shove it down their throats 'til they like it" strategy is going to be a huge factor in the 2016 elections.

You might get away with shoving one project down the throat of one community. But Vermont's energy plan relies on distributed electricity generation in all of our communities. Can you shove projects down all their throats? Our state government thinks so.

Poorly sited energy projects and poor treatment by developers have sparked an open rebellion in dozens of communities. These communities resent the state-sanctioned wrecking crews that cut forests, compromise wetlands, abuse agricultural lands, ignore municipal plans, defy town governments, and bully the neighbors. More communities will rebel as the wrecking crews, following scent of free government money, find new places to run amok.

The Northeast Kingdom town of Morgan just joined the rebellion. Their selectboard held an informational meeting to discuss a plan for a 500kW solar facility on a hillside that overlooks Seymour Lake. At the end of the meeting, residents and property owners voted 62-7 to oppose the project. They felt like they were being pushed around and lied to — they didn't like it.

A smart developer would have engaged Morgan in a discussion about project size, siting, screening, and community participation in the project. It may well be that the town would have welcomed such a project as a true community effort and a source of municipal pride.

For over 40 years, Act 250 has protected the Vermont landscape, elevated the importance of municipal and regional planning, and accorded respect to our citizens and communities. We have never needed it more.

But, the developer was David Blittersdorf and that's not how he operates. He told the people in Morgan that he would not respect their vote, would not "buy a hundred trees" to screen the project, and that he might decide to put industrial wind turbines on his recently purchased Morgan ridgeline. He also told them that he had an agreement to sell

electricity from the Morgan project to Jay Peak. The Caledonian Record reports that Blittersdorf has no such agreement.

Mr. Blittersdorf's reputation preceded him to Morgan. He is known for his campaign contributions and for being one of the prime beneficiaries of the state's energy policies. He is known for erecting a wind measurement tower in nearby Irasburg without bothering to apply for a permit. He is known for advocating the depopulation of rural areas (like Morgan) and the destruction of 200 miles of Vermont ridgeline to accommodate industrial wind turbines.

Blittersdorf's history of being a bad neighbor is also well known. He abused the neighbors of his Georgia Mountain wind project by blasting fly-rock onto their properties, obtaining a court order to keep them from using their own land, and endangering them with illegal blasting. Adding insult to injury, Blittersdorf intruded upon an online support group for sick turbine neighbors, where he mocked, and taunted them. On his own Facebook page, he described retrofitting his turbines with "trunk monkeys" and posted a video of the beatings they would administer to people who opposed his projects.

Can you blame the folks in Morgan for being suspicious of David Blittersdorf?

If your town has land and power lines, then you can expect a visit from the wrecking crew. When the wrecking crew comes to your town, you may discover that they've been conspiring for months with the state to surprise you with their project. For some reason, they prefer to surprise your community with a bad project rather than cooperate with you to develop a good one. It is a sad irony that so many of these bad projects contain the word "community" in their names.

What needs to happen in order for us to turn our energy program around? Three things:

First, Gov. Shumlin has to make good on his promise to protect towns. In 2012, the governor told Kristen Carlson (then at WCAX), "I have always said and I will always say I believe that no energy project should be built in a town in Vermont where the residents of that community don't vote affirmatively to host it. We shouldn't send them into towns that don't want them." Since the governor will always say this, he should say it now. And he should call off the wrecking crews.

Second, we need to replace legislators who promote "shove it down their throats." Check the record. If your legislator doesn't respect our communities, then you need a new legislator. Now is the perfect time to start looking for candidates.

Third, energy siting is a land-use issue and it should be subject to Act 250. For over 40 years, Act 250 has protected the Vermont landscape, elevated the importance of municipal and regional planning, and accorded respect to our citizens and communities. We have never needed it more.

Vermont is making a mess of energy. Vermont is making a mess of its overall response to climate change. It doesn't have to be this way.

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http://www.rutlandherald.com/article/20151004/OPINION06/710049959/0/NEWS

Opinion
<http://www.rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=OPINION>
|Perspective
<http://www.rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=OPINION06>
The risk and reward of solar incentives
October 04,2015
There is a knowledge gap in Vermont and the country about tax incentives. When we ask how effective a specific incentive is, do we have a good way to find the answer?

A broad range of incentives for solar power installation began to come into place in the late 1990s, starting with the net-metering law. The law established that a homeowner or business could install power generation, such as solar panels, and connect these panels to the electric grid. Any excess power would be fed onto the grid, and the person or business would receive a credit at an established rate.

Fast forward to today, and Vermonters are installing solar panels at a rapid pace, and several solar installation businesses have started up or moved into the state in the last three years. These actions are arguably the result of tax incentives and a rapid drop in the costs of solar panels.

But in most cases, it is incredibly complicated to draw a straight line between a particular incentive and an intended outcome. Are solar panel installations increasing because of tax credits? Is it just state tax credits, or federal credits, or both? Or is it because of the drop in installation costs? Or because of the access to net-metering, where a solar panel owner gets credit for power generated from the sun? The best answer we've gotten right now is probably some of all of the above.

Having a stronger answer to those questions would help us design better incentives that bring out the behavior we want. At their best, tax incentives will have measurable outcomes and continual analysis that will lead to adjustments making them better and more effective. In some cases, the analysis will lead to the conclusion that the incentive is not worth it.

Many critics of solar power say it is uneconomical if government support dries up. At some level this is true, but it's also true that the hundreds of incentives for solar and other green energy sources across the country have done much to drive the cost of solar down.

Incentives — such as tax credits, loans and subsidies — are put in place to encourage companies and people to do something they wouldn't otherwise do.

In 1953, solar power generated from a 230-watt panel cost $1,785 a watt. By 1977, that cost was still above $1,000 a watt. By 2012, that power cost $1.30 per watt, and in 2015, lab-tested 230-watt panels are making power more than five times more efficiently at a cost below 60 cents a watt.

Is all that change due to incentives? No — but without incentives it would not have happened so fast. The incentives drove demand, which drove research and investment. And the solar panel train is rolling faster, now fueled more by private companies and rising demand in places such as China than by government incentives.

Beyond assessing the effectiveness of incentives, the issue becomes deciding when an incentive has outlived its usefulness. Some, like net-metering, likely should stay in place with some adjustments. It makes sense to have individuals and businesses be able to generate their own power and sell the excess. It may not make sense beyond a certain point to require a price for that excess power that is above market rates.

In other cases, it may be wise to carry on the incentive, even when the business would take a similar action without the incentive — for example, in workforce training and investment where the incentive money leverages private money.

But all too often, incentives become codified and simply outlast their purpose, or don't even really work as intended. Some opponents of incentives frame them as a case of the government picking winners and losers. This can result from flat-out favoritism, or through hastily-written laws. Many federal and state incentives in the form of tax law are the result of effective lobbying.

This risk — the risk that a dollar might go to a useless incentive — needs to be addressed with a systemic way of assessing and updating incentives. By closing the knowledge gap and making continual adjustments, we can encourage the behavior and actions we want and need.

Vermont's solar panel rush has led to some unintended consequences and some resistance. It's led as well to widespread benefits — and these benefits and consequences need to be part of the conversation going forward.

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http://vtdigger.org/2015/10/05/eileen-rodgers-central-planning-comes-to-your-neighborhood/

EILEEN RODGERS: CENTRAL PLANNING COMES TO YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

OCT. 5, 2015, 6:55 PM BY COMMENTARY
<http://vtdigger.org/author/opinion/> 12 COMMENTS
<http://vtdigger.org/2015/10/05/eileen-rodgers-central-planning-comes-to-your-neighborhood/#comments>

/Editor's note: This commentary is by Elaine Rodgers, who is the communications director for the Burlington Republican Committee./

Along with plotting to place wind turbines on 200 miles of ridge lines and scheming to occupy thousands of acres of our fields with solar panels, the central planners in Vermont are busying themselves with projects that are guaranteed to squeeze our cars off the roads.

Right now, in the North End of Burlington, the first stage of a pilot project for the North Avenue Corridor promises to reduce vehicular traffic to two lanes where there are now four. The new configuration will feature a northbound lane, a southbound lane, a turning lane and bike paths on either side.

The guys at the top know what they're doing and they are not shy about making it clear to the rest of us. In fact, they are confident that they occupy the moral high ground, as well.

The same state and federal subsidies that go to fund projects that can't make it on their own, are those payouts that make living in Vermont so expensive for the rest of us.

Climate change has been a very convenient phenomenon. It has given a sense of validity to all sorts of projects the big guys support. Energy from the wind and sun will take care of our electricity needs and our transportation needs will be met with ... bicycles!!

As an addendum, cars must go.

So says the CEO of AllEarth Renewables, David Blittersdorf. But getting rid of the car won't be so hard because people won't need them. According to Blittersdorf, rural life will disappear as people are rounded up into dense cities (they call them human settlements) where all businesses (should there be any employers left) will be happily located, as well.

For whose purpose are these alternative energy and alternative transportation projects advanced? Certainly not for the benefit of the current Vermont homeowner or commuter. The same state and federal subsidies that go to fund projects that can't make it on their own, are those payouts that make living in Vermont so expensive for the rest of us.

Saying that you dislike the idea of the North Avenue Corridor pilot project should make you proud. It's true there are an awful lot of other people who don't share your common sense. But they are the same people who don't want you to know that Vermont already emits less CO2 than any of the other 49 states ... or that, by the way, there hasn't been a smidgen of global warming over the past 18 years.

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http://timesargus.com/article/20151007/OPINION02/151009985

Opinion <http://timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=OPINION>
|Letters <http://timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=OPINION02>
Energy choices ahead
October 07,2015

Vermont needs a competitive, winning energy policy. Every winning team

has to recruit good players. But our "management" wants only "players" (wind, solar) who perform a quarter of the time but take up our precious resources such as mountaintops and open fields all of the time. And there is no room for doing it wrong, either. Ridgeline roads and massive concrete pads will remain for years to come, even after the renewable source has proven to be uneconomical without taxpayer subsidies. The sight of open fields converted to black solar panels does not bring out Vermont pride in our beautiful state.

The renewable industry insists on this landscape makeover because Vermont lacks other in-state options. Yet Vermont Yankee, a compact, well-operated, zero-smog nuclear power plant once made a third of our power. This same industry, and its friends in Montpelier, made it feel extremely unwelcome. They succeeded to get rid of their best energy player. But it is too late to change that decision, no matter how ill-conceived it was. Vermont can, at a relatively low cost, contract for more nuclear power from New England power plants. Also, it can soon get reliable, low-cost power from Canada, through the new cables that will run beneath Lake Champlain and across Vermont. We should demand a good power contract as part of the "toll" for using our land and waters. Every nuclear and Canadian hydro kilowatt is cheaper, more 24/7 reliable, and less destructive than clearing farmland and mountaintops. These choices are better than covering Vermont with ugly, intrusive, expensive energy factories that require taxpayer subsidies. Montpelier should evaluate cost-effective solutions, not just politically correct ones.

Dick Trudell

Grand Isle

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http://www.rutlandherald.com/article/20151007/OPINION02/151009982

Opinion <http://www.rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=OPINION> | Letters <http://www.rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=OPINION02>

Renewables benefit elite

October 07,2015

The green movement in Vermont is guided by fear and greed. To keep this movement, money is used to soften and control people with and around the rural communities which renewables focus upon. The rural communities are the easiest to disharmonize, small in numbers, little money, and not well organized, sleeping communities.

The big flash in the pan is our state's goal of 90 percent or 100 percent renewable producing electricity by 2050.

This make no sense. Where are we at in honest figures in both goals set and what the state uses? The other part is the goal or gold rush of the solar projects along Route 7. Greed to push these projects into communities who have little say, and only able to make comments. What is this all about, controlled power with no input from those who live next to or nearby renewable projects?

Out-of-ountry owners of Green Mountain Power have control over our state's Legislature, in-state electrical company, and take no real responsibilities for damages to our environmental, social and economic systems which are very unjust. Environmental groups and citizen

legislators have been bought with free federal and state money, money we pay for by taxes. The laws are written and overseen to only benefit the few elite who run this from afar.
FRED PERSON
Starksboro
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http://timesargus.com/article/20151005/OPINION02/710059947

Opinion <http://timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=OPINION>
|Letters <http://timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=OPINION02>
October 05,2015
For a fad

Tuesday's commentary about electric energy, by David Blittersdorf, should boggle the mind of average rate payers. This ideologue is quick to assault Joe Benning, who exposed Blittersdorf's radical speech to the Addison County Democrats where he envisions a future of mass construction of solar and wind sites, destructive of our physical surroundings and even worse, advocates that the 10-acre home site in the country is all but eliminated; because to meet Act 56 goals we will all be forced to move into dense city living and thus must eliminate automobiles (refer to bit.ly/vtenergyfuture <http://bit.ly/vtenergyfuture>). Blittersdorf wants to mandate all Vermont-produced wind and solar output be force-purchased by Vermont retailers. After all, he says, this will keep dollars in Vermont. Not so, since about 80 percent of kilowatt cost is the cost of the retail utility and it is already foreign owned. Not only that, out-of-state millionaires own the current wind sites.

This guy is not fact based. For someone trying to change the entire culture of the state against common sense, his reasoning is tragically weak and superficial. He fails to mention our potential use of cheap hydro Quebec power, or other sources of clean energy that are in abundance. He says we are spewing carbon. This is nuts since we are one of the cleanest states in the nation. According to him, destroying our ridgelines and overlaying prime agricultural land for solar is the only alternative for energy.

As a native Vermonter, I have had to accept Act 250 and its useful protection of the land, no billboards, no houses built over a certain elevation, reasoned growth and so forth. Bittersdorf is arrogant enough to want to cast out this decades-old land stewardship for his own benefit, for a fad. It's for his benefit and the benefit of Vermont legislators under his spell, and for no other, since we don't need even one excessively costly wind or solar site. Act 56 needs revision and our Legislature needs to come to its senses and re-evaluate what its bad energy laws are doing to us. None of the so-called clean wind and solar sites are clean, since renewable energy credits are sold to polluters for cash and thus there is no improvement on carbon dioxide pollution. Blittersdorf's plan majors in hypocrisy.

Mike Pollica
Plainfield

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http://www.timesargus.com/article/20151006/OPINION04/710069947/0/-tbecues-twenty-hresults.aspx

Opinion
<http://www.timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=OPINION>
|Commentary
<http://www.timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=OPINION04>
Jones: The cost of our prosperity
October 06,2015
My friend Ed is in his 70s and he's rebuilding his house near Spruce Mountain. To make his life easier in old age, he is laying a new slab and will live on one level. An engineer, Ed claims he can live off the grid using solar panels to charge his impending electric vehicle.

While proclaiming the best of efficiency intentions, Ed admits that his new situation is "not massively" reducing his carbon consumption. The new structure is built with a lot of local materials, but the foam, concrete and roofing have very large carbon and resource footprints. It will surely save some fuel over the next few years, and will be much nicer to live in, but in the last analysis, he admits that "the planet can probably not afford me."

Ed is demonstrating the dueling perceptions that are shared by many of our "green" neighbors spread across the Vermont hillsides. While loving his life upon the land, he is beginning to recognize that his lifestyle exerts a cost upon the earth that will not be sustainable. Until recently, few of us were able to recognize these costs, but now many of us are starting to soberly include them in our personal and collective future planning. We recognize these costs will fall heavily on our children. The emerging debt will be paid in climate disruptions and financial dislocations that, at the moment, are not discussed in polite company. Truth be told, however, these disruptions are about to upset the entire economic system underlying the suburban and rural sprawl which defines a middle class lifestyle.

To explain how this disruption is coming about, I fear I am going to have to take a short dive into economic history. Basically, our entire system of profligate energy use, and our belief in the need for constant economic growth, developed hand in hand. For most of human history, our only energy to do work involved human and animal muscle power (some of it was supplemented by wind in the sails and watermills, but not a lot). Then, a bit over the 200 years ago, we began to create a technological infrastructure powered by steam fires using cheap coal and oil. Rapidly the factories of the Industrial Revolution began to produce trains, then autos, home furnaces and soon a cornucopia of consumer products running on cheap energy. Such exploding new wealth generated a new science — economics — based on an assumption of an endless supply of future productive earnings driven by eternal access to cheap fuel. This, in turn, fed public faith in the promise of increasing collective wealth

provided by constant economic "growth."

In this new world of constant growth we could all participate in the feast of ever increasing consumption purchased with ever increasing debt. We believed that debt was guaranteed to be paid back through ever increasing oil-fueled productivity. As people became more prosperous in the years following World War II, this debt-driven consumer economy allowed them to move out of the industrial cities onto the beautiful countryside. Suburban and rural sprawl soon defined our middle-class lives.

By the mid-'70s, this "rural sprawl" had transformed once rural Vermont farm towns such as Calais, East Montpelier and Plainfield into suburban bedroom communities. Folks from Montpelier and Barre, along with immigrating flatlanders, spread across the hillsides in order to live "close to the land." The idyllic setting of their homes compensated for the hassles of driving long distances and finding parking in the small cities.

But about 15 years ago, social and environmental critics like Bill McKibben noted that there really was a huge long-term cost to this prosperity. They predicted that the world would soon suffer the pervasive costs of climate change and resource depletion (what they called "peak oil"). The economic shocks following 9/11, the Wall Street meltdown of 2008 and catastrophic hurricanes left us feeling kind of rocky. Human beings tend to live in denial that we're approaching an economic and climatic tipping point. Even in the face of the evidence, we usually default to a belief set that assumes tomorrow will look pretty much like yesterday.

Naomi Klein's recent book "This Changes Everything" starkly calls out our consumerist denial over the climate catastrophe. Bernie Sanders, meanwhile, is calling out the takeover of our government by the oligarchs. Their arguments are connected: The "economic growth" demanded by our "free market" debt economy requires constant increased use of fossil fuels. More fossil fuel use means more global warming. More money spent on producing energy means less money to pay back our debts. It's a vicious cycle. The longer we practice our business-as-usual approach to the future, the harder it's going to be to escape this cycle as conditions worsen.

The future isn't all doom and gloom, however. Vermont is privileged to be small enough, and its people educated enough, to make rational choices more quickly than bigger places with deeply entrenched infrastructure and economic ties. Now is the time to imagine how we can shelter ourselves from the overhang of coming energy and economic challenges.

I believe we can build a new Vermont economy based on shared resources of transportation and energy that will ultimately save the $2 billion we now currently send out of state for oil products. I believe we can fashion a more co-operative economy that could keep our wealth working here in our state, rather than disappearing down the Wall Street sewer.

We can do a lot with our local resources — but we first need to reimagine our rural-sprawl lifestyle, and focus on building a more resilient world that will feed and nurture our children, and theirs.

Dan Jones is a managing partner of Net Zero Vermont Ventures and former chairman of the Montpelier Energy Advisory Committee. He lives in Montpelier.

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https://vtdigger.org/2015/10/06/celebrating-a-month-of-energy-events-in-october/

CELEBRATING A MONTH OF ENERGY EVENTS IN OCTOBER

OCT. 6, 2015, 11:31 AM BY PRESS RELEASE
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News Release — Renewable Energy Vermont
Oct. 2, 2015

Contact:
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Montpelier, VT — October marks another great month for progress on renewable energy throughout Vermont. Fresh off of the release of a report by the Public Service Department illustrating rapid renewable energy sector growth, with 6.2% job growth between the first quarters of 2014 and 2015 compared to 1.8% statewide average, Vermont is poised for more good news to follow with multiple events this month. Events include:

Saturday, October 3: "Georgia Mountain Community Wind" Tours, Georgia/Milton
Following up on the success of last year's tours that drew over 600 visitors GMCW is hosting tours from 1pm to 4pm at their 10MW wind farm. To date in 2015, GMCW is producing at 36% capacity factor, making it one of the most productive wind projects in the region. Park at the Husky facility at 288 North Rd. in Milton and take a free shuttle bus from 1-4.

Tuesday, October 6: Al Gore at UVM, Burlington
The 45th Vice-President of the United States who has transitioned into one of the world's most notable climate change activists speaks at University of Vermont's Ira Allen Chapel as part of their Energy Action Seminar Series.

Thursday-Friday, October 8 & 9: RE2015: "Leading the Energy REVolution", Burlington
The region's largest and most comprehensive annual conference and exhibition focused on all things energy related is again hosted by Renewable Energy Vermont, Vermont's non-profit renewable energy trade

association. The two day event, being held at the Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center in Burlington, features over 25 conference sessions with more than 65 expert speakers from throughout Vermont and the region. Topics covered include: wind, solar, bioenergy technologies, transportation, heat-pumps, energy efficiency and renewable energy policy. Conference sessions will look at hurdles to implementing renewables as well as untapped opportunities, technological innovations and tools for financing renewable energy. For more information visitwww.revconference.org <http://www.revconference.org/>

Tuesday, October 13: "Renewable Energy and the Aesthetics of Vermont" Artists Panel, Shelburne
After years of limited, polarizing discussion pitting our desire for local sustainability against a changing local aesthetic landscape, Of Land & Local hosts a panel to discuss ways artists might forge a deeper and more constructive level of conversation as our values of sustainability move us away from reliance on traditional fuels and change the aesthetic of the Vermont working landscape through increased, visible renewable energy projects. Hosted at Shelburne Farms Coach Barn at 6:30 pm. Free but registration is required.
http://www.burlingtoncityarts.org/Event/land-and-local-panel-discussion-new-working-landscape-renewable-energy-and-aesthetics-vermont

Wednesday, October 21: "National Bioenergy Day" In celebration of National Bioenergy Day, Renewable Energy Vermont and local businesses showcase various Modern Wood Boiler systems throughout the state. Go to www.revermont.org <http://www.revermont.org/> for more details.

Five Public Hearings on the draft Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, 6 – 8 pm
Wednesday, October 7: Moore Community Room, Lyndon State College, Lyndonville
Tuesday, October 13: Essex High School Cafeteria, Essex
Wednesday, October 21: Noble Hall at the Vermont College of Fine Arts, Montpelier
Monday, October 26: Bellows Falls High School Auditorium, Bellows Falls
Thursday, October 29: CVPS/Leahy Community Health Education Center, Rutland

The Public Service Department has released the draft Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP) and is holding five Public Hearings. All hearings are from 6 – 8 PM. Plan is available here:http://publicservice.vermont.gov/sites/psd/files/Pubs_Plans_Reports/State_Plans/Comp_Energy_Plan/2015/CEP_Public_Review_Draft_092215.pdf

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http://granitegeek.concordmonitor.com/2015/10/05/study-nh-has-put-up-just-01-of-feasible-commercial-solar-power/

Study: NH has put up just .01% of feasible commercial solar power