

Chen, Zachary

From: Redacted
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2016 2:17 PM
To: Chen, Zachary
Subject: Fwd: FW: VCE Solar Update - 10/19/15 - BENNINGTON CRAFTING RULES FOR SITING OF SOLAR ARRAYS

Categories: M-Files

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject: FW: VCE Solar Update - 10/19/15 - BENNINGTON CRAFTING RULES FOR SITING OF SOLAR ARRAYS
Date: Tue, 3 Nov 2015 11:28:33 -0500
From: Redacted
To: Redacted

From: vce@vce.org
Date: Mon, 19 Oct 2015 12:00:31 -0400
Subject: VCE Solar Update - 10/19/15 - BENNINGTON CRAFTING RULES FOR SITING OF SOLAR ARRAYS
To: vce@vce.org

Plenty to do this week and next:
NOW, VPR's Vermont Edition on the state energy plan
Tuesday Oct. 20 in Rutland, Comment on Vermont's Office of Public Advocacy
Wednesday Oct. 21 in Morrisville, Comment on Vermont's Office of Public Advocacy
Wednesday Oct. 21 in Montpelier, Comment on the Comprehensive Energy Plan Update
Thursday Oct. 22 in Montpelier attend the Solar Siting Task Force
Monday Oct. 26 in Bellows Falls Comment on the Comprehensive Energy Plan Update
Wednesday Oct. 28 in Montpelier attend VLCT's forum on land use and energy
Thursday Oct. 29 in Rutland Comment on the Comprehensive Energy Plan Update

VERMONT SUPREME COURT DECISION In re Application of Beach Properties, Inc. d/b/a Basin Harbor Club, for a Certificate of Public Good for an Interconnected Group Net-Metered Photovoltaic Electric Power System
<https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/LC/Supreme%20Court%20Published%20Decisions/op15-083.pdf>

VERMONT EDITION NOON TO ONE TODAY

<http://digital.vpr.net/post/assessing-plan-vermonts-energy-future#stream/0>

Assessing The Plan For Vermont's Energy Future

By JANE LINDHOLM & SAM GALE ROSEN

The state of Vermont is holding hearings on a draft of its updated Comprehensive Energy Plan.

WILSON RING AP

The state of Vermont is asking for public input on a draft of an updated Comprehensive Energy Plan for how to get to 90% renewable energy by 2050. It's a chance for Vermonters to weigh in on where the state is heading on energy, and how we can get there. What sources do we want in the mix, and what policy and infrastructure do we need?

To talk about the plan, we're joined by Dr. Asa Hopkins, state director of energy policy and planning. We're also talking to William Driscoll, Vice President of Associated industries of Vermont.

Post your questions and comments for the show here or email them to vermontedition@vpr.net <<mailto:vermontedition@vpr.net>>.

A schedule of hearings on the plan can be found here, and written comments on the plan can be left here.

Also on the program, it's not the first time that Vermont has faced an opiate-addiction crisis. In 1900, it was estimated that Vermonters consumed a staggering 3.3 million doses of opium every month. Historian Gary Shattuck joins us to discuss his research into the subject.

IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC INPUT ON HOW THE PUBLIC SERVICE DEPARTMENT'S

OFFICE OF PUBLIC ADVOCACY OPERATES. This is a sleeper issue, folks, and one that would benefit from your input

Report to the Legislature – Public Comment Opportunity

<http://publicservice.vermont.gov/announcements/parpt_public_comment>

The Department of Public Service (DPS) was asked by the Legislature to provide a report by December 15, 2015, analyzing the structure of its Public Advocacy Division and whether alternate structures could result in improved benefits for utility ratepayers. The Department will be holding public hearings on this topic on the evenings of October 20 and October 21. DPS also welcomes comments from any Vermont residents who may provide them directly to the Department at the email or postal address below.

Hearings will be held from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm on Tuesday, October 20 at Rutland Regional Hospital, Community Health Education Center, 160 Allen Street and on Wednesday, October 21 at River Arts, 74 Pleasant Street, Morrisville.

Comments should be received by October 30, 2015. The purpose of the report is to examine the /structure/ of the public advocacy function of the DPS, rather than any specific positions that the DPS has taken.

Comments directly addressing the structure of the public advocate's office will be most relevant and helpful.

Comments may be provided by mailing them by October 30, 2015 to the address below, or by email to Wayne.Jortner@vermont.gov

<mailto:Wayne.Jortner@vermont.gov>.

Vermont Department of Public Service

112 State Street

Montpelier, VT 05620

***1. ATTEND ONE OF THE PUBLIC HEARINGS NEXT WEEK*:**

***TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20th IN **RUTLAND**:** *6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. at the Rutland Regional Hospital in the Community Health Education Center

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21st in **MORRISVILLE**: 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at RIVER ARTS, 74 Pleasant Street, Morrisville

2. SEND COMMENTS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE, THE SENATE AND HOUSE COMMITTEES, AND THE GOVERNOR:

Here are a few ideas for things you might say:

- *The Public Advocate Office must be truly independent!*****No matter where a Public Advocate Office is located (e.g. within DPS, at the Attorney General's Office, in a stand-alone agency or an independent nonprofit), the Office must be free from utility and political influence. The budget of the Office needs to be protected, and employees of the Office must be required to abide by a code of conduct and ethics that prohibits ties to utilities and has strict financial disclosure rules. They should also benefit from whistleblower protections so that they feel safe to voice concerns or report problems.

- *The Public Advocate Office should be responsible for helping the public understand and participate in utility cases.***Instead of acting as a gatekeeper that keeps the public out of the Section 248 process, the Public Advocate Office should be required to produce plain-language materials that explain not only the Section 248 process but also their rights as ratepayers, landowners, and the public AND the rate design and ratemaking process. Right now, it's nearly impossible for ratepayers to understand or participate in decisions that will affect their wallets, their health and safety, or the environment. Vermont needs a Public Advocate Office that respects our need for understandable and accessible information AND our right to participate in determining exactly what our interests are with respect to a given project or policy.

- *All Vermonters should have an equal right to assistance from a Public Advocate Office. *Not all "public interests" are the same for all groups in any society. If different groups (e.g. ratepayers, property owners, small businesses) have differing interests, advocates should be assigned to represent the interests of each group, and/or funding should be provided to individuals and organizations, who want to intervene in the Section 248 process.

- *The Public Advocate Office should advocate for more than just lower rates!*It's a myth that ratepayers only care about the cost of energy.

- *The Public Advocate Office should be required to share complaints and communications received from ratepayers and members of the public with the Board and other parties during the course of Public Service Board proceedings. *

- *Improving the structure and effectiveness of the Public Advocate Office should start today - with a reasonable schedule for accessible public hearings and a comment process that makes sense!*

Until an effective and independent Public Advocate Office can be established, the Vermont public deserves to have Independent Counsel appointed for all large pending utility cases.

VERMONT SOLAR TASK FORCE MEETINGS

<http://solartaskforce.vermont.gov/announcements-meetings>

Announcements

10/12/15: The third meeting of the Task Force will be held October 22, 2015 from 1-3 p.m. in Room 11 of the Vermont Statehouse, Montpelier (directions to the Statehouse can be found here

<<http://legislature.vermont.gov/the-state-house/visiting-the-state-house/hours-map-and-directions/>>,

and the location of Room 11 here

<<http://legislature.vermont.gov/the-state-house/visiting-the-state-house/state-house-floor-maps/>>)

Thereafter, the schedule for the meetings is as follows:

Tuesday, November 3, 2015 from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Friday, November 13, 2015 from 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Thursday, December 3, 2015 from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Thursday, December 17, 2015 from 1:00 – 3:00 PM

<http://www.vlct.org/events-news-blogs/event-calendar/fall-planning-and-zoning-forum/view/2015-10-28>

Fall Planning & Zoning Forum

OCT. 28, 2015

<<http://www.vlct.org/events-news-blogs/event-calendar/ics/1895/20151028T083000-20151028T153000>>

- * *Location:* Capitol Plaza, Montpelier
- * *Time:* 8:30am — 3:30pm
- * *Sponsored by:* VLCT Municipal Assistance Center, VLCT PACIF
- * *Contact:* Lisa Goodell
- * *Contact Email:* info@vlct.org <<mailto:info@vlct.org>>
- * *Contact Phone:* (802) 229-9111
- * *Contact Fax:* (802) 229-2211
- * *Cost:* Early Bird - \$60 VLCT PACIF Members; \$90 VLCT Member; \$160 All Other Attend
- * *Registration Deadline:* Wednesday, October 21, 2015.

Description:

From solar panels sited on open farmland to wind turbines on ridgelines to the Public Service Board process, energy issues are front and center in Vermont and municipalities are trying to deal with them. This workshop is geared towards zoning administrators, planning commissioners, selectboard members, town attorneys, town administrators and managers, municipal planners, town energy committee members, and regional planning commission staff as it will offer a mix of legal information, practical solutions, and policy discussions, as well as the opportunity to discuss pressing issues in municipal planning and zoning with knowledgeable officials from across the state. AICP Certification Maintenance and CLE credits are being sought.

*Click Here to Register

<<http://www.vlct.org/events-news-blogs/event-registration/?eid=1895>>*

Agenda:

- *8:30 Registration *(coffee and light breakfast provided)
- *9:00 Welcome and Overview of the Day*, Abby Friedman, Director, VLCT Municipal Assistance Center
- *9:05 Getting from “NIMBY” to “Due Consideration” before the Public Service Board*

The Commissioner of the Public Service Department (PSD) and the attorney who recently represented the Town of Newark in a very important case before the Superior Court will discuss the recent litigation, with a broader discussion focusing on the Public Service Board (PSB) permit process. The speakers will discuss what the Newark case’s outcome means

to Vermont municipalities and how local officials can best communicate the town plan's "clear community standard."**/Speakers: Brooke Dingledine Esq., Valsangiacomo, Detora & McQuesten, P.C.; Geoffrey Commons, Esq., Director of Public Advocacy of the Department of Public Service; Adam Lougee, Executive Director, Addison County Regional Planning Commission; Jeannie Oliver Esq., Special Counsel, Public Service Department/

10:35 Break

10:45 Roundtable Discussion on the Public Service Board Process

This session will give attendees an opportunity to engage in discussions with a variety of "players" who will provide insight and perspective about the PSB process, how to participate effectively, and more generally how the PSB Certificate of Public Good process works. As the session expands upon the previous discussion, participants will be encouraged to ask questions, share experiences, and connect with other municipal officials who may be working through the PSB process, are updating local bylaws to better comply with state law, or are updating their town plans to communicate their town's "clear community standard."**/Speakers: Adam Lougee, Executive Director, Addison County Regional Planning Commission; Cindy Hill, Esq., Law Offices of Cindy Ellen Hill; Richard Saudek Esq., Diamond & Robinson, P.C.; Jeannie Oliver Esq., Special Counsel, Public Service Department; Geoffrey Commons, Esq., Director of Public Advocacy of the Department of Public Service/

*12:00 Lunch *(provided)

1:00 Legislative Update and the Outlook for 2016

In this session, we will review the 2015 legislative session, including how Act 56 pertains to solar siting. We will also update participants on the Solar Siting Taskforce, the Department of Housing and Community Development and PSD report on new screening requirements, the report from the agencies of Natural Resources and Agriculture, Food and Markets and Public Service Department on land use and environmental impacts of renewable energy generation siting, and the legislative Joint Energy Committee, which was scheduled to meet on September 30, 2015. Finally, we will look ahead to possible legislation in the 2016 session./ Speaker: Karen Horn, Director, Public Policy and Advocacy, VLCT/

1:45 **Template for Group Net Metering Agreements

The Municipal Assistance Center coordinated a collaborative effort to create a Template for Group Net Metering Agreements to help guide municipal and school district officials through the process of "going solar." This session will review the process to develop the Template and how it is intended to be used./ Speaker: Abby Friedman, Director, VLCT Municipal Assistance Center/

2:00 Break

***2:15 **How to Write Effective, Shorter and Clearer Town Plans**

*A whopping 92% of Vermont's 262 municipalities regularly prepare and adopt a municipal plan. How can we improve these plans to better serve as a practical guide for local decision making? Staff from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and its partners are working to address this question and invite you to preview the state's new Planning Manual. Learn how to develop more targeted town plans with measurable implementation objectives to achieve community goals. /Speaker: John Adams AICP, Planning Coordinator, Agency of Commerce and Community Development/

3:30 Complete evaluations

3:35 Conclusion

Three more Public Hearings on the draft Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan
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

<http://vtdigger.org/2015/10/13/bennington-crafting-rules-for-siting-of-solar-arrays/>

BENNINGTON CRAFTING RULES FOR SITING OF SOLAR ARRAYS

OCT. 13, 2015, 11:45 AM BY BENNINGTON BANNER
<<http://vtdigger.org/author/bennington-banner/>> LEAVE A COMMENT
<<http://vtdigger.org/2015/10/13/bennington-crafting-rules-for-siting-of-solar-arrays/#respond>>

/Editor's note: This article is by Keith Whitcomb Jr., of the Bennington Banner <<http://www.benningtonbanner.com/>>, in which it was first published Oct. 13, 2015./

BENNINGTON — The Select Board will be reviewing an ordinance that gives it greater control over the siting of ground-mounted solar arrays.

Last week the Planning Commission met to discuss a draft of the ordinance before forwarding it to a board committee which will make its

own recommendations before the full board, likely on Oct. 26.

In Vermont, Act 248 gives all permitting authority over power plants to the Public Service Board, a group appointed by the governor. The PSB's authority supersedes all local zoning laws. This has led to no small amount of controversy in communities across the state over the years regarding all manner of projects from biomass, to wind, to solar.

In Bennington, people are upset over what are legally two solar arrays set to be built next to one another on forested land east of Route 7 near the Apple Hill neighborhood.

Together they will be about 27 acres. Neighbors have been largely at odds with the developer over how the projects will be screened from view.

This past session, the Legislature passed a law giving towns the authority to create solar screening ordinances that would apply only to ground-mounted solar arrays like the ones planned for Bennington.

Bennington Planning Director Dan Monks said Monday that because the solar arrays' permits were filed for last year, it's not likely the new ordinance, if passed, will apply.

He said that while the ordinance would give the town some power regarding solar projects, there's a number of "catches."

For one, the ordinance can't effectively ban such projects. Monks said it's not clear if that means some projects can be allowed and not others, or if all projects must be allowed just with enough screening.

The ordinance also cannot place more restrictions on solar than it would other commercial properties, said Monks.

The Planning Commission has recommended that it be made to review each solar project as they are proposed, then make screening recommendations to the board.

The board will then make a decision on what it wants for screening and send that to the PSB.

Monks said the board has always been able to make such recommendations to the PSB, but with this new law the PSB will be bound to enforce them, provided they comply with the law.

If the board passes the ordinance, like any ordinance it will go into effect after 60 days.

St. Albans Messenger, Oct. 17, 2015

Developers explain Highgate solar plan

Developers explain Highgate solar plan

<mailto:?Subject=Read%20this%20interesting%20article%20from%20St%20Albans%20Messenger&body=Click%20on%20the%20link%20below%20to%20read%20the%20article%20sent%20to%20you%3A%0A%0A%20http%3A%2F%2Fdigital.edition.samesessenger.com%2F%3FIIID%3D130247%26startpage%3D1%26ArticleTitle%3D899183%0A%0A%20Sent%20from%20St%20Albans%20Messenger%20via%20Realview%20Digital.>

By MICHELLE MONROE Messenger Staff Writer

Aaron Svedlow of Ranger Solar explains the location of a portion of a proposed 99-acre solar project at Thursday night's Highgate selectboard meeting, held in the elementary school library.

MICHELLE MONROE, ST. Albans Messenger

HIGHGATE — If approved, a proposed 20-megawatt solar project in Highgate would be the largest in the state.

At Thursday night's selectboard meeting, a representative of the developer, Ranger Solar, addressed concerns about the project's impact on electric rates, property values and wildlife. Approximately 40 people attended the meeting, which was held at the Highgate Elementary School library to accommodate the crowd.

The project — not cost estimates have been released -- is planned for 99 acres, 57 acres on the west side of St. Armand Road and 42 acres on the east side. It consists of approximately 95,000 panels. R.J. Fournier and Daniel Nadeau have each leased land to Ranger.

The company anticipates it will file a petition with the Public Service Board (PSB) requesting a certificate of public good in November. The certificate is the only permit required for an energy project in Vermont; no local permits are needed.

Aaron Svedlow, of Ranger Solar, said the company is seeking a long-term supply contract with Vermont utilities at the avoided cost rate. The avoided cost rate is defined as the costs the utilities would avoid paying to another generate of electricity, such as Hydro Quebec, by purchasing from the Highgate project.

Thus, utilities would pay the same for this power as they would for power purchased from other sources.

This is different from small-scale net meter solar projects, for which the producers are paid a rate above that paid to other electricity producers.

Svedlow also addressed the question of whether upgrades would be needed

to the electric lines to enable them to handle power from the project. A previous story from VT Digger, published by the Messenger, stated the cost of any needed upgrades would be split between Ranger Solar and ratepayers.

Svedlow said that is not accurate. "We're required to pay for any upgrades associated with our project," he reiterated several times.

An analysis is currently being done by a third party to determine what kinds of upgrades, if any, are needed, according to Svedlow.

"The reason why we chose Highgate is because of the electrical infrastructure here," he said. That infrastructure includes a sub-station and high-capacity kV power lines.

An additional step-up station will be installed, but its final location has not been selected. That location will be chosen based on which location will have the least impact, said Svedlow.

Minimizing impact

Svedlow also extended an offer to work with neighboring landowners to shield the project from view. "We'll plant trees on your property or whatever you'd like," he said.

There will be a 100-foot setback between the project and St. Armand Road. However, a sight line analysis by T.J. Boyle Associates found it will be visible from both the Highgate Elementary School and the Highgate Arena.

Ranger is willing to purchase land near the arena and donate it to the town for a future expansion of the arena or sports fields, said Svedlow. How much land is something Ranger would negotiate with the town.

Ranger has hired an historic architecture firm to document any potential impacts on historic structures.

Company representatives have met with the state architect and are currently doing preliminary surveys. The locations of panels and lines will be adjusted to avoid impacting any potential archeological sites identified in the surveys, explained Svedlow.

Arlene Gagne asked about possible impacts on her property values. "From my house, there's no way to hide it," she said, explaining a representative of Ranger Solar had already visited and agreed the project would be visible from her home.

She asked what the glare might do to her siding or roofing.

Svedlow answered that the glare from the panels is minimal, roughly equivalent to the reflection off of water on a hot day, and that any glare will be to the south, and not toward her property.

"I just want to make sure this isn't going to mess with my property values," Gagne said.

Svedlow said he understood her concerns and the company would be in touch to discuss the plans for the field near her home.

There were also several questions about the impact of the project, which will be fenced, on wildlife.

The area is a turkey and deer habitat, said Highgate Selectboard member Chris Yates, who asked about the fence.

The project will use a wildlife fence, Svedlow replied, saying, "The intention is not to ensnare wildlife in it."

Svedlow said all wetlands will be protected by a 50-foot buffer and the buffers would be marked during construction to prevent any accidental encroachment on the buffers. In addition, there will be little clearing of trees, he said.

"How are wildlife going to the wetlands?" to get asked Dave Gagne, who said the area is a wildlife crossing.

Svedlow said connectivity between the wetlands would be maintained, although he never clarified to what extent wildlife would lose access to the wetlands.

Ranger Solar is developing the project, but once all the permits and necessary agreements are in place the company will sell it.

Svedlow said when asked that he could not specify whom the purchaser would be. "It could be to a variety of different companies," he said.

would be experienced with solar He added the purchaser energy and would have to abide by the terms of the leases signed by Ranger Solar with the sites owners, any agreements reached between Ranger and the town, and the certificate of public good.

Asked about what happens when the leases end or if the purchaser goes bankrupt, Svedlow said the terms of Ranger's lease with the landowner and Vermont regulations require the company to set aside the funds to remove the panels and restore the land to its previous condition.

In addition, the owner will have to have an escrow fund for maintenance.

Maintenance of the land, such as the cutting of the grass, will be done mechanically and not with chemical herbicides. "We will do all mechanical maintenance, no spray,"

said Svedlow. "It's not necessary, frankly, and it's damaging to the environment." The maintenance plan will be part of Ranger Solar's

petition to the Public Service Board, he added.

Svedlow said the project will need three to five fulltime employees for maintenance. "We intend to hire those staff locally," he said.

In addition, if the project is approved, a job fair will be held in Vermont to hire subcontractors for the construction work and he expected about 60 percent of the construction work to be done by Vermonters, Svedlow said.

Ranger estimates the project will provide \$100,000 annually in property taxes to the town, although he did not say if that was all municipal taxes or included both municipal and education taxes.

The process

Although Highgate has no permitting authority over solar projects, the town is a party to the PSB proceedings and neighboring landowners may seek to become parties.

The town could support or oppose the project. "There's a hundred different ways you could go about doing that," said town attorney Ed Adrian. The town could also negotiate with Ranger, placing requirements on the company in exchange for the town's support.

The Vermont Public Service Dept. and the Agency of Natural Resources are also parties to the proceedings. "These two entities are supposed to act on behalf of the people of the state of Vermont," he said, noting that includes Highgate residents.

Town administrator Heidi Britch-Valenta said the Public Service Dept. is interested in hearing from people in the community about the project. She urged residents wishing to share their views on the project to contact the department.

In addition, adjoining landowners can petition to be made parties to the proceeding.

After Ranger files the petition next month, the PSB will hold a hearing and gather evidence about the project, said Adrian, who compared the process to a judge conducting a trial. Once they've gathered the evidence, the members of the PSB will apply Vermont law to that evidence in determining whether or not the project qualifies for a permit.

The selectboard has not yet formed an opinion on the project, indicated chair Jeff Towle.

-- -- For those wanting more information about the process, the PSB publishes Citizens' Guide to the Vermont Public Service Board's Section 248 Process, which can be found at its Web site (<http://psb.vermont.gov>).

<http://addisonindependent.com/201510town-new-haven-gets-hearings-solar-projects>

Town of New Haven gets hearings on solar projects

Posted on October 15, 2015 |

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By Gaen Murphree

<<http://addisonindependent.com/category/reporter-author-name/gaen-murphree>>

NEW HAVEN — The state’s utility regulators will give the town of New Haven a voice in their consideration of three separate proposed solar power projects. The town, which boasts open fields and a proximity to a main power transmission line, has been the target for many solar array proposals.

Town officials are glad to get a chance to protect their interests.

“It’s relatively uncommon for the Public Service Board to grant hearings on these petitions,” said Geoff Commons, director of the Public Advocacy Division of the Vermont Public Service Department. “It does happen, but it’s relatively rare.”

The hearings are likely to take place in November, but are not yet on the Public Service Board’s publicly accessible schedule. These are usually posted about 12 days before a hearing date, according to PSB Deputy Clerk Judith Whitney.

These upcoming hearings on three proposed solar projects are not New Haven’s only filings currently before the Public Service Board — the town has submitted to the PSB concerns over at least eight applications currently or recently pending for a Certificate of Public Good to build new solar arrays in the town. But at present three of these are significant enough in the eyes of the PSB to have warranted a hearing.

At issue for New Haven, as for towns across Vermont who have similarly felt unheard on PSB decisions about renewable energy projects — is the town's ability to regulate development within its borders. While Vermonters see and understand the importance of embracing solar and other renewable energy sources in the battle against climate change — and by law 55 percent of utility sales must be from renewable sources by 2017 — the Certificate of Public Good process has led many to feel that town plans have been trampled and that towns have been disempowered in their ability to make critical land use decisions.

In addition to this overarching concern, the town of New Haven has differing concerns about each of the three installations that range from best use of prime agricultural soils, to the effect on the historic and aesthetic aspects of a given location, to impacts of decommissioning. They also wonder if solar developers might be gaming the system by installing a series of smaller arrays that are subject to less stringent regulation and less scrutiny than a single, larger solar installation would be.

The PSB has scheduled a hearing for Nov. 23 on the proposed 2.2 megawatt (MW) Next Generation Solar project proposed by Waitsfield's Green Peak Solar to go in along Field Days Road. It has set a tentative date of the week of Nov. 1 for a hearing on the proposed addition of 350 kilowatts — issued as a new and separate Certificate of Public Good — to an existing 150 kW array on Route 7 behind the Vermont State Police barracks.

And the PSB has granted a hearing but set no date for a proposed 150 kW installation on South Street.

Act 56, the renewable energy legislation signed into law by Gov. Shumlin on June 11, includes some changes intended to address towns' concerns. The law gives all town selectboards and planning commissions "the right to appear as a party in any Section 248 proceedings." It also stipulates that solar installations must comply with municipal screening requirements and, if greater than 15 kW, be set back 50 feet from property boundaries and 100 feet from the edge of state or municipal highways.

But it's not yet clear to what extent Act 56 will be effective in addressing towns' concerns or are just window dressing by a Legislature wanting to appear to be responsive, according to experts interviewed for this article.

For New Haven town attorney Cindy Hill the PSB's new automatic recognition of towns as "parties" may bring subtle yet potentially powerful changes to the process. Previously, towns had to petition to be recognized as "interveners" in the Certificate of Public Good process and the Public Service Board could limit which of a town's issues as an intervener it would choose to address. Being automatically recognized as "parties" could help towns present the breadth of their concerns about a particular project.

“The difference may well be subtle in terms of what a nonlegal person might perceive of it,” said Hill. “A statutory party is by law they have a legal vested interest in participation in the process. An intervener is only by permission. So it’s a difference of by right versus by permission. The granting of party status to all towns in these proceedings appears to not limit the issues that a town can raise in the course of that party status, whereas interveners can be limited by the Public Service Board in what they can attest to.

“Basically, an intervener is by the discretion of the Public Service Board and therefore more limited and only subject to their permission, whereas a party means that by law you have a seat at the table.”

One thing Act 56 does not change is the language regarding how the PSB is to weigh a town plan when evaluating a solar generator’s petition for a Certificate of Public Good. The current language of “due consideration” still stands. Section 248 instructs the Public Service Board to give “due consideration” to the “recommendations of the municipal and regional planning commissions, the recommendations of the municipal legislative bodies, and the land conservation measures contained in the plan of any affected municipality.”

To what extent “due consideration” is a meaningful standard depends on which stakeholder you talk to.

In New Haven, the town plan, in effect since 2011, limits utility projects such as solar arrays to 300 kW. Yet the Public Service Board gave the green light to the 2.2 MW Cross Pollination project along Route 7 north New Haven junction, which was installed in 2013.

Of the eight proposed projects currently pending before the Public Service Board, four are larger than allowed by the town plan: the 350 kW SSE New Haven Solar II near the state police barracks, the 500 kW BDE Lazar Solar on Main Street, the 500 kW New Haven GLC Solar off Route 7, and the 2.2 MW Next Generation installation on Field Days Road.

/Reporter Gaen Murphree is at gaenm@addisonindependent.com
<<mailto:gaenm@addisonindependent.com>>./

<http://vtdigger.org/2015/10/08/renewable-energy-advocates-acknowledge-public-pushback-on-wind-and-solar-development/>

RENEWABLE ENERGY ADVOCATES ACKNOWLEDGE PUBLIC PUSHBACK ON WIND AND SOLAR DEVELOPMENT

OCT. 8, 2015, 9:15 PM BY MARK JOHNSON

<<http://vtdigger.org/author/markjohnson/>> 68 COMMENTS

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Darren Springer

Darren Springer, chief of staff for Gov. Peter Shumlin, gives a speech at the Renewable Energy Vermont conference. Photo by Mark Johnson/VTDigger

SOUTH BURLINGTON — Advocates for renewable energy in Vermont said Thursday they have much to celebrate, but that significant challenges lay ahead.

More than 350 people attended the Renewable Energy Vermont annual conference in South Burlington. Outside, approximately 25 protesters lined the sidewalk in front of the Sheraton Conference center to demonstrate against wind power projects either already built or planned for their communities.

Darren Springer, Gov. Shumlin's chief of staff and the former deputy commissioner of the Department of Public Service, told the audience inside that the amount of renewable energy in Vermont, through solar and wind projects, as well as through conservation efforts, has exceeded projections. (Springer filled in for Shumlin, who was slated to speak, but had to help the family of a friend who died yesterday.)

Despite successes, Springer said challenges remain to convince public policy leaders, particularly in Washington, to extend tax credits to boost the renewable energy sector, in the face of global warming, which he noted some politicians still doubt.

Springer touted the accomplishments of the industry during the Shumlin administration: 16,000 jobs currently in the clean energy sector and 100 megawatts of power from wind projects since 2009 and 10 times the solar capacity in Vermont since the governor was elected in 2010. Vermonters are using 13 percent less power than had been projected since 2000, thanks to efficiency programs, and electric rates in Vermont are the second lowest in New England, he said.

Listen to interviews with Mark Johnson and audio from the conference

Keith Ballek on wind development

Tony Klein on local siting

Darren Spring on the threats to renewables

“There’s a lot to celebrate. There’s also a moment of challenge,” Springer said, noting he had attended the “compelling” presentation on global warming at UVM this week by former Vice President Al Gore.

Springer said the success behind the expansion of renewable energy in Vermont is in part attributable to state incentives for renewable projects, as well as net metering programs that allow residents and companies that create more power than they use to sell it back to utilities. He also applauded the work of the utilities with a variety of programs to help customers cut back on use.

However, Springer said federal tax incentives were critical and that their future was “constantly under threat.” He said no energy source would be viable without subsidies. Springer said the federal government was on track to provide subsidies of \$100 billion in the next 10 years for nuclear, coal and other fossil fuels. If renewable programs were extended, the subsidies would amount to \$35 billion over the next 10 years, he said.

“We are on schedule to put \$100 billion into fossil fuels, yet we refuse as a country to extend the tax credits for renewables to help level the playing field,” Springer said. He also noted renewable energy received a smaller share of federal research and development funds than nuclear power and fossil fuels.

He also acknowledged local opposition to renewable energy projects. He said legislation passed this year should make it easier for opponents to be heard, including a provision in the review process that gives towns an automatic right to be a part of the case. That legislation also changed how “renewable energy credits” are sold between utilities and states trying to reach renewable energy goals. Vermont, for example, is seeking to get 90 percent of its energy from renewables by 2050.

“We know there are some folks who are reacting to the idea we’re going

to see energy produced in our communities instead of being brought in via powerlines from some large plant out there somewhere, whether it's coal or a nuclear plant or whatever it might be. And we have to be smart in responding to those concerns," he said.

Anti-wind Protestors

Anti-wind protestors demonstrate outside the Sheraton Hotel during the Renewable Energy Vermont conference. Photo by Mark Johnson/VTDigger

Sally Collopy and Penny Dubie, the wife of former Lt Gov Brian Dubie, were among the protestors in front of the conference center holding signs opposing wind turbine construction on ridgelines. In Swanton, there is a proposal for a project with seven 499-foot tall turbines.

"It just makes no sense at all," said Collopy, holding a sign that said "We are victims of industrial wind."

Opponents, including Keith Ballek of Sheffield, say the wind turbines cause health problems because of the noise vibrations they create, while other opponents were more focused on aesthetics and keeping Vermont ridgelines pristine. Several said they felt the regulatory process was slanted toward developers and that opponents didn't have enough say or sway.

"This is a statewide issue and I just feel people need to speak up now because what's right happening now is a runaway train the way this policy is set up right now," Ballek said. "It's a feeding frenzy and the word's out there's not much oversight here... it's like they're prospecting."

Springer said the Legislature this year called for more regulations for siting solar panel projects to "try to bridge the gap between those opposing projects and those trying to build them. I think we should give those things a chance to work," he said and that it was worth the "time and effort" to have communities and developers work together.

"This is not an industry that can fail," Springer said, "we have to get renewable energy right."

Rep Tony Klein, the chair of the House Natural Resources and Energy Committee, said "the state's come a long way."

"Along with those successes are challenges and the challenges are sometimes unintended consequences that nobody has even thought about or at the speed that you're developing that you run into things that maybe shouldn't happen and you have to address that," he said. "Right, wrong, indifferent, there are people who are upset with some of the placements of some of the larger solar installations, and I think some of that is legitimate, and we have to find ways to address that and to find the real cause of the problem before you can address that."

He said wind projects went through a "full blown, not overnight" regulatory process with the Public Service Board.

In an interview, Klein said the Public Service Board had powers “to incorporate some of the problems and wishes in certain areas and towns who want to have their voices heard better” and that they were “not doing that” but instead claiming they were following the guidelines set down by the Legislature. For example, on solar projects, he said the PSB had the power to have a developer move, reduce the size or require screening.

“When I hear the chair of the Public Service Board make statements that they are only doing what the Legislature is telling them to do and if you don’t like what we’re doing go talk to the Legislature, I react negatively to that because that’s just not necessarily so,” Klein said. “And what I’m fearful of is that if people are going to really turn on the Public Service Board and me knowing they already have existing authority to be more nimble, to be more helpful and if they’re not going to to that, then eventually there is going to be a lot pressure put on the Legislature to tell them exactly what to do.”

He said the PSB will not like that and the Legislature may not be capable of setting those parameters. “I worry about that,” Klein said.

Klein, who expressed concerns about the anger of some renewable project opponents, said the PSB needs to use its existing powers to make people feel more included in the process or there could be a backlash that threatens to have “a positive regulatory process that we’ve seen for the past 40-plus years undone willy-nilly because of emotion.”

<http://vtdigger.org/2015/10/11/bray-housing-vermont-and-audet-honored-at-renewable-energy-vermont-conference/>

BRAY, HOUSING VERMONT AND AUDET HONORED AT RENEWABLE ENERGY VERMONT CONFERENCE

OCT. 11, 2015, 9:39 PM BY PRESS RELEASE

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News Release — Renewable Energy Vermont
Oct. 8, 2015

Contact:

Gabrielle Stebbins, Executive Director

gabrielle@revermont.org <mailto:gabrielle@revermont.org>

Office: (802) 229-0099

Mobile: (802) 595-5373

Burlington, VT — Renewable Energy Vermont (REV) recognizes a Vermont real estate development company and two Vermonters for their outstanding contributions to the progress of a sustainable energy future at Renewable Energy 2015: “Leading the Energy REvolution”, an annual conference hosted by REV taking place on October 8-9 at the Sheraton Hotel & Conference Center in Burlington. The 2015 Renewable Energy Awards are generously presented by VLITE as part of their continuing commitment to building an energy secure Vermont.

This year’s awardees include:

The Renewable Energy Legislative Award, awarded to an elected official who worked to advance energy policy in the state in the prior year, is awarded to Senator Christopher Bray from Addison County. In his first year as Chair, Senator Bray passed a Climate Change Resolution, initiated a Water bill that did become law, and – critically – oversaw the passage of Vermont’s Act 56, the Renewable Energy Standard. Act 56 focuses on the balance between rate impact, renewable goals, alignment with regional policy, helping Vermonters lower their total energy costs, economic development and greenhouse gas emission reductions. This Act brought Vermont into compliance with the regions’ RPS policies thereby preventing a \$40 million rate increase, set forth renewable energy requirements through 2032, and also made significant changes in solar siting requirements while also establishing a Solar Siting Task Force. For those who experienced the last three weeks of the 2015 Legislative Session, Chair Bray provided a fair and balanced approach to governing and an example of true leadership. Not surprisingly, this will not be the first energy-related honor for Senator Bray, who was the recipient of the Vermont Natural Resources Council’s Legislative Leadership Award in 2009.

The Renewable Energy Industry Award, celebrates a Vermont company who went above and beyond its core mission to increase the deployment of renewables. This year the recipient is Housing Vermont, a non-profit real estate development company that creates permanently affordable rental housing for Vermonters through public-private partnerships. Since its founding in 1988, Housing Vermont has produced almost 5,000 affordable apartments for Vermonters. For the past five years Housing Vermont has been involved in trailblazing work to integrate renewable energy in their buildings. Housing Vermont has installed solar hot water in 650 units, solar electric in over 120 units and modern wood central heating systems serving 342 affordable apartments throughout the state. By the end of 2016, Housing Vermont will have developed 650 kW (AC) of photovoltaic system that will be net metered to over 300 affordable housing units. As noted by Housing Vermont, “in order to be good at our core mission of providing affordable housing, we have to be great at this energy work.”

The 2015 Jim Grundy Award, is named for Jim Grundy, one of the founders of REV, a renewable designer and businessman, and beloved husband, family and community member. Jim was known for his integrity of spirit, kindness of soul and ingenuity and craftsmanship in renewable energy

technologies, as well as a willingness to personally invest in advancing renewable energy in Vermont through his daily actions and throughout his community. This year's Jim Grundy award will be presented to Marie Audet and the Audet Family of Blue Spruce Farm and Audet's Cow Power in Bridport, Vermont. Marie Audet and the team at Blue Spruce farm are true pioneers in what they refer to as "Cow Power" on their third-generation farm that produces milk for Vermont's famous Cabot Cheeses. Producing almost 4,500,000 gallons of milk each year and with 3,000 acres of land to feed the cows, Blue Spruce Farm generates electricity by feeding cow manure into an anaerobic digester which produces a biogas which in turn spins an electric generator creating electricity. The farm also boasts a Northwind 100 Turbine and hosts a solar array. Marie and her family are truly a model for many, opening their farm to thousands of tourists annually to show visitors what a true working Vermont landscape looks like – from food to renewable energy to community.

"For REV members and the Board, it's a sincere pleasure to take a brief moment out of every year to thank a few of the Vermonters that quietly work towards making renewable energy and efficiency happen in their communities, homes and businesses. These awards show the breadth and scope of who makes energy work here in Vermont – from housing entities to farmers, to legislators and town energy committee members. Truly, this works takes all of us collaborating together", says Jeff Forward, Chair of the Renewable Energy Vermont board.

To learn more about the Renewable Energy Awards, the recipients and RE2015: Leading the Energy REVolution visit, www.revconference.org/

<http://www.rutlandherald.com/article/20151019/NEWS01/151019375>

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Renewable energy forum planned for Tuesday
By Emily Cutts <mailto:emily.cutts@rutlandherald.com>
STAFF WRITER | October 19, 2015

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<http://www.rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20151019/NEWS01/151019375?template=printart>

FAIR HAVEN — The Fair Haven Select Board is holding a public forum on renewable energy Tuesday. The forum is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. in the Fair Haven Grade School gymnasium on North Main Street. The board will use the meeting as a chance to discuss with residents possible renewable energy projects related to solar and hydro, according to a news release. "We hope to see a lot of people there. We want to hear a lot of

different opinions," Chairman Robert Richards said. "We'd love to hear and see several hundred people there that we could get a consensus from and give us direction."

Richards said the meeting will be run as a special Select Board meeting and he expects it to last for about an hour and a half.

Several solar companies have given presentations to the board in the past few months looking to install solar panels in town. Most recently, Fred Bova, president of Stella Power, made a presentation to the board with a proposal of a 3.4 acre solar array at the south end of the Air Park, according to Sept. 15 meeting minutes.

According to the minutes, Bova told the board the project would potentially generate enough power for the town and \$170,000 in revenue in the first year.

The board is also considering the construction of a small-scale hydroelectric generating plant on the Castleton River. The dam would be constructed most likely at the site of the former Depot or Water Street dam, as it was deemed most suitable, according to the Fair Haven Low Impact Hydro Feasibility Study.

Last month, the board voted to offer to pay \$2,500 to Vermont Structural Slate to relinquish all their rights to the Water Street dam, the Slate Factory dam and the Shirt Factory dam, according to Sept. 15 meeting minutes.

Following the presentation from Stella Power and the agreement reached with Vermont Structural Slate, the board instructed the town's Energy Committee to make a recommendation.

Mike Stannard, chairman of the Energy Committee, read the committee's recommendations from a letter to the Select Board at their Sept. 29 meeting. In the letter Stannard wrote on behalf of the committee, the committee wrote a favorable opinion of both a potential solar project and a hydro project, but raised questions and concerns about both.

The letter states "We believe that the overall long-term benefits of profit and ownership of capital from the proposed hydro project trumps the approximately \$30,000/year (\$900,000 over 30 years) of savings to the town from said solar development."

The committee unanimously recommended that the town should take advantage of the "unique type of opportunity" in respect to a solar net metering project. The committee also raised concerns about the proposal given by Stella Power, especially in regards to the location of a project at the Air Park.

"This committee agrees that Fair Haven needs to stop losing opportunities from inaction and that there is a place for a solar project in our town," Stannard wrote in the letter to the board.

Members of the Town Energy Committee are expected to attend the meeting to help with the discussion.

<http://www.gmoutlook.com/news/2015/oct/16/solar-looks-bright-charlotte/>

Solar looks bright in Charlotte

While some residents of New Haven are resisting more solar-power projects in their community, Charlotte town officials—and many residents—are eager to utilize solar power, plugging in new state standards and revamping existing regulations. Pictured: Solar-power project in Ferrisburgh, Vt.

[<http://www.gmoutlook.com/photos/2015/oct/16/53174/>](http://www.gmoutlook.com/photos/2015/oct/16/53174/)

While some residents of New Haven are resisting more solar-power

projects in their community, Charlotte town officials—and many residents—are eager to utilize solar power, plugging in new state standards and revamping existing regulations. Pictured: Solar-power project in Ferrisburgh, Vt. Photo by Louis Varricchio
<<http://www.gmoutlook.com/staff/louis-varricchio/>>.

By Gail Callahan

First Posted: Friday, October 16, 2015 -8:45 a.m.

<<http://www.gmoutlook.com/news/2015/oct/16/solar-looks-bright-charlotte/>>

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<<http://www.gmoutlook.com/news/2015/oct/16/solar-looks-bright-charlotte/#h240976-p1>>Charlotte

While some residents of New Haven and Hubbardton are resisting more solar-power projects in their communities—complaining of permanent changes to their town's rural appeal, akin to adding arrays of billboards to the landscape—Charlotte town officials are eager to utilize solar power, plugging in new state standards and revamping existing regulations.

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<<http://www.gmoutlook.com/news/2015/oct/16/solar-looks-bright-charlotte/#h240976-p2>>While

the state is seeking to use 90 percent renewable energy by 2050, Vermont is experiencing a solar boom with the help of taxpayer-funded incentives which are set to expire in 2016. The Vermont State Legislature has crafted and passed new energy regulations, but with that comes a new layer to take closer looks at projects.

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<<http://www.gmoutlook.com/news/2015/oct/16/solar-looks-bright-charlotte/#h240976-p3>>Locally,

the Charlotte Planning Commission is discussing how the Town Plan can include regulations, enabling the town to have more say in the location of solar projects. The current document contains no such language. That goes hand-in-hand with a state-created committee, kicking off in three months, is tasked with studying how project locations are determined.

#

<<http://www.gmoutlook.com/news/2015/oct/16/solar-looks-bright-charlotte/#h240976-p4>>Charlotte

officials are considering a list of goals as a starting point for writing documents on how to look at proposed solar projects. At the same time, areas that are off limits to development, such as wildlife habitat, will also be included in the work.

<<http://www.gmoutlook.com/news/2015/oct/16/solar-looks-bright-charlotte/#h240976-p5>>Updating

town plans and zoning regulations must pass through public hearings and a voting. Any such action could be coupled with a possible vote on the town charter.

<<http://www.gmoutlook.com/news/2015/oct/16/solar-looks-bright-charlotte/#h240976-p6>>

Retooling the 2008 Town Plan, renewed by local voters, two years ago, is still ongoing.

<http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/articles/2015/10/gmp-solar-to-play-lead-role-in-vermont-re-standard-compliance.html?cmpid=renewablesolar10172015&eid=318385716&bid=1206130>

Solar to Play 'Lead Role' in Vermont RE Standard Compliance

October 13, 2015

By Jennifer Delony

<<http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/content/rew/en/authors/a-f/jenniferdelony.html>>

Associate Editor

New distributed generation solar power

<<http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/content/rew/en/solar-energy.html>>
facilities

of 5 MW or less likely will play a "lead role" in Green Mountain Power's

<<http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/articles/2015/09/green-mountain-power-to-install-2-tesla-powerwall-energy-storage-systems-at-state-park.html>>

(GMP)

compliance with Vermont's new renewable energy standard (RES), according to Doug Smith, director of power planning for the utility.

"Solar right now, with the cost and performance improvements

<<http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/articles/2015/09/berkeley-lab-utility-scale-solar-project-costs-down-50-since-2009.html>>

that

we've seen, is a relatively low net cost, new renewable resource, and with some exceptions, it can be sited a lot more easily" than other renewables, Smith said during the RE2015 Conference & Expo in Burlington, Vt., on Oct. 8.

During the conference, which was hosted by Renewable Energy Vermont, Smith participated in a panel discussion on Vermont's Act 56 – an act relating to establishing an RES.

Passed on June 11, Act 56 requires the state's utilities to meet a 75 percent by 2032 total renewable energy requirement, with an interim goal of 55 percent by 2017. Before passing the RES, Vermont ran a renewable goal program called Sustainably Priced Energy Enterprise Development (SPEED). The SPEED goal, enacted in 2005, set a target of 20 percent renewables by 2017.

Under the new RES, utilities also must meet 10 percent of sales with distributed generation in 2032 and 12 percent of sales with "energy transformation projects" in 2032. Interim goals include meeting 1 percent of sales with distributed generation in 2017 and 2 percent of sales with energy transformation projects in 2017.

Smith said that while GMP sees a significant role for solar under the distributed generation requirement, the company does not "envision all solar" for that segment. In order to meet the distributed generation goal, the company would need 30 MW of new generation in 2017, and an additional 20 MW yearly through 2032, he said. GMP serves about three quarters – or 4.5 million MWh – of Vermont's electric load.

According to Smith, GMP's compliance with the energy transformation projects requirement will come from collaborative projects that can include space and water heating-focused pumps, weatherization, electric vehicles and biomass heating. Biomass projects that produce electricity can count toward a utility's energy transformation requirement only if the plant produces both electricity and thermal energy from the same biomass fuel, and the majority of the energy recovered from the plant is thermal energy.

In order to determine eligibility and the application of an energy transformation project to a utility's annual requirement, the utility must convert the net reduction in fossil fuel consumption resulting from the energy transformation project to a MWh equivalent of electric energy.

Smith said that fulfilling the energy transformation project requirement will require GMP to work with third parties to create product offerings.

"This is not a situation where GMP will take over that sector," he said.

"We don't have all the details, but collaboration is the primary theme."

Speaking during the Act 56 panel session, Vermont Rep. Tony Klein, sponsor of the original RES bill and chair of the Vermont House Natural Resources Committee, said that the energy transformation project requirement was the most "exciting" and "innovative" part of the RES.

"I hope it will be the key to kicking down the barriers that have existed in this state that keep more Vermonters from weatherizing their homes, weatherizing businesses, partaking in self generation, and partaking in more efficient products that heat and cool their homes and businesses," he said.

<http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/news/2015/10/14/vt-lands-15-million-usda-energy-grants/73925938/>

VT lands \$1.5 million in USDA energy grants

Free Press Staff 2:59 p.m. EDT October 14, 2015

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(Photo: GLENN RUSSELL/FREE PRESS)

COMMENTEMAILMORE

Twenty-two small rural businesses and farms in Vermont have received a total of \$1,555,448 for energy and efficiency upgrades, according to a new release Wednesday from Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Projects receiving the grants include photoelectric arrays, energy-efficient reverse-osmosis maple sap pumps and milk chillers; and a wood-fired furnace, the release states.

Eight of the 10 largest grant recipients are developing grid-tied solar power arrays.

The largest of the projects, Barton Solar LLC in Barton, proposes a 1.89 MW solar system, for which it received \$500,000.

In the most modest of the grants to Vermont, Michael D. Quinn received \$5,231 to install a high efficiency evaporator and flue pan at his maple syrup operation in Middlebury.

Also noteworthy: A grant of \$300,000 to Applegate Housing Limited Partnership to help fund the replacement of an oil boiler at a multi-family housing project in Bennington with a wood-chip device.

The total energy contribution in generating and efficiency will equal the approximate electricity needed to annually power 676 homes, according to the USDA release.

Grants from the department's Rural Energy for America Program fund 25 percent of the total cost of energy upgrades, up to a maximum grant of \$500,000 — with a \$250,000 cap for energy efficiency projects, according to department guidelines.

Application for the next round of the REAP grants are due Nov. 2, the news release added, with funding of up to \$20,000 available per project.

For more information about the upcoming grants, visit www.rd.usda.gov/vt <<http://www.rd.usda.gov/vt>> or call (802) 828-6000.

<http://timesargus.com/article/20151019/OPINION02/151019481>

Opinion <<http://timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=OPINION>>
| Letters <<http://timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?Category=OPINION02>>
Pollica: A tough sell
October 19, 2015

A recent commentary about electric energy by David Blittersdorf should boggle the mind of average ratepayers.

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.

Blittersdorf wants to mandate all Vermont-produced wind and solar output be forced 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.

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 to energy. As a native Vermonter, I have had to accept Act 250 and its useful protection of the land, no billboards, and no houses built over a certain elevation, reasoned growth and so forth. Blittersdorf 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 renewal 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

http://w

<http://www.manchesterjournal.com/letters/ci_28963574/solar-placement-is-problem>ww.manchesterjournal.com/letters/ci_28963574/solar-placement-is-problem

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Solar placement is the problem

The Manchester Journal

POSTED: 10/13/2015 04:55:43 PM EDT0 COMMENTS

<http://www.manchesterjournal.com/letters/ci_28963574/solar-placement-is-problem#disqus_thread>

To the Editor:

I generally agree with Andrew McKeever, but I do take exception with his reasoning in his editorial titled "Solar Nymbyism" whereby he makes reference to those opposed to solar farms popping up in Vermont by stating, "It would have seemed difficult to have found these benign objects "objectionable," but apparently a lot of folks do." The opposition is not to the function of solar panels and the benefit they provide, but to their ill-considered placement along our scenic byways and in residential neighborhoods.

Every community in our state has sites that would be well suited for placement of solar farms with minimal aesthetic impact. In Manchester there are several that might hold promise: the Dana L. Thompson Memorial Park, the Municipal Complex, Hunter Park and others.

This would be a non-issue had the Public Service Board reached out to every community to identify those sites and the respective size of each. When a solar farm developer conveyed an interest in locating a facility in Vermont the Public Service Board could direct them to every available predesignated parcel within the state.

Jim Kardas

Manchester

<http://timesargus.com/article/20151013/OPINION02/151019853>

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

Person: Goals of illusion

October 13,2015

- *
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<<http://timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20151013/OPINION02/151019853?template=printart>>

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. 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 electric 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 that have little say, and only able to make comments.

Out-of-country owners of Green Mountain Power have control over our state's Legislature, in-state electrical company, and take no real responsibilities for damage to our environmental, social and economic systems, which is 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

<http://www.rutlandherald.com/article/20151015/OPINION04/151019667>

Opinion

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| Commentary

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Solar fakery is not so green

By Roland Marx

Commentary | October 15, 2015

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<<http://www.rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20151015/OPINION04/151019667?template=printart>>

The lead editorial In the Sunday, Oct. 4, Rutland Herald questioned whether incentives for solar energy are encouraging the behavior and actions that Vermont really needs. When it comes to the selling of renewable energy credits, we agree that is not what Vermont needs. Here's why: Can you believe that only some Vermont solar is truly green? How's that? All solar is green — that's obvious isn't it? Well, is a solar project that sells RECs green?

RECs are renewable energy credits. They represent the environmental attributes of the net-metered electricity produced by a solar facility. Solar is renewable as the power of the sun doesn't diminish; coal, oil and gas are not renewable since once used, they're gone. RECs can be sold separately from the electricity output and for a ton of money. The catch is when you sell RECs, you can no longer claim to be green or renewable. You've sold that right. Now, only the buyer can use those rights, and they do to support or offset their pollution. So selling RECs supports pollution.

Almost all large-scale solar projects in Vermont (and the proposed new giant solar developments) sell RECs to out-of-state buyers. These commercial projects, which are gold mines for their developers, still make green energy claims, and their output is still counted toward Vermont's renewable energy goals.

That shouldn't be. That's double counting and unethical if not fraudulent. That is not in the best interests of the state. That is not the behavior and action Vermont needs.

Solar energy can be produced at low cost and at great benefit to the local community — and without selling RECs. There is such a solar farm in West Rutland that has been recognized by Vermont Natural Resources Council and Vermont Law School and is currently being replicated in other communities in Vermont.

This farm pioneered a distinctive concept that's VGVG — Vermont Grown and Vermont Green — a designation that's truly green, as RECs are held, not sold. So its energy output credibly and legitimately counts toward Vermont's renewable energy goals. And this model still has low, low costs for big energy savings.

So let's do solar energy in Vermont, but let's not accept solar that sells RECs. Let's insist on VGVG — Vermont Grown and Vermont Green. Let's insist on solar being truly green. That's the behavior and action Vermont needs.

Roland Marx is a resident of Mount Holly.

<http://vtdigger.org/2015/10/18/peter-shumlin-beyond-panels-and-turbines>
<http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/opinion/my-turn/2015/10/15/opinion-beyond-panels-turbines/74003406/>

Opinion: Beyond panels and turbines

Gov. Peter Shumlin 3:21 p.m. EDT October 15, 2015

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(Photo: GLENN RUSSELL/FREE PRESS)

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When we talk about renewable energy, the focus is often on the project – the solar panel or the wind turbine that allow us to harness local, Vermont-grown energy to power homes and business around the state. But if we dig deeper we find that renewable energy projects are about more than the panel or the turbine. Below the surface there is much more – an entire supply chain that supports 16,000 Vermont jobs, efforts to preserve Vermont’s heritage and culture, and hundreds of thousands of Vermonters who are saving money on their energy bills.

Take for example the solar tracker made by AllEarth Renewables in Williston, which is a component affixed to the base of a solar panel that allows it to change positions throughout the day, following the sun’s movement to capture maximum solar energy. Follow the sourcing of materials and installation process in Vermont for this product and you get a good sense of how the local renewable energy industry is truly a statewide engine of job growth and economic opportunity.

Here’s how it works: Components for the tracker are sourced from

companies like Grennon Solderworks in Bristol, PCM Precision Manufacturing in Springfield, and NSA Industries in St. Johnsbury. Those components all get put together in Williston by a team composed mostly of graduates from Randolph-based Vermont Technical College. Those trackers are then sold and installed by companies like Nuñez Electric in Franklin County and Solar Pro in the Northeast Kingdom. Once sold, the trackers are installed by companies like Smith and McClain in Bristol and ECI Inc. and Timberline Electric in Williston.

That type of economic activity is replicated at Vermont companies statewide and is why over 16,200 Vermonters – or one in every 20 working Vermonters – are employed by the clean energy economy.

Renewable energy is also helping to preserve what makes Vermont what it is, giving landowners and farmers the ability to bring in some additional income from their land without having to subdivide it and sell it off for commercial development. The Whitcomb Farm in Essex is a good example. I was proud to join the Whitcomb family at a grand opening for the solar project they are hosting at their farm, which has been in continuous operation since 1867. They have leased 15 acres of their 400 acres to host one of the largest solar farms in Vermont, with 12,000 panels. The benefit for the Whitcombs, a seventh-generation dairy farming family, is to diversify their income and help keep their land productive for future generations.

Or look at the Audet's Blue Spruce Farm. Their third-generation dairy farm in Bridport was purchased by the Audet family in 1958 and has well over 1,000 cows. The Audet family has pioneered the use of renewable energy on their farm, being the first farm in Vermont to host a cow power biodigester that puts renewable electricity on to the grid. Their digester also provides heat for farm operations.

The Whitcombs and the Audets are two of the many families in Vermont who are proving that renewable energy and working lands go hand-in-hand, and offer a vision for a more sustainable economic and environmental future.

Then there are the literally thousands of Vermonters who are collecting another source of income through Vermont's net metering program, which allows Vermonters to set up small scale renewable energy projects at their homes or businesses and get paid for the power they produce. As one example of the over 5,000 net-metering projects generating electricity in Vermont, Crossett Brook Middle School in Waterbury partnered with Suncommon and Green Lantern Capital, both based in Waterbury, on a solar project through which they are meeting nearly half the school's energy needs and saving an estimated \$12,000 annually. At a time when upward cost pressures have made the job of putting together sustainable school budgets a growing challenge for Vermont's school boards, net metering has provided a great opportunity for schools to reap financial savings, often while providing a great educational opportunity for students.

Every Vermonter, whether they participate in net metering or not, is

benefitting from renewable energy. By locking in long-term, stably priced contracts for energy including from hydro, biomass, wind, and solar projects, our utilities have helped Vermont be the only state in New England whose electric rates for residential, commercial, and industrial customers have all decreased in the last few years. Just this year, Vermont's electric rates fell from 14.79 to 14.34 cents per kilowatt hour. In Connecticut they rose from 16.73 to 16.99 cents per kilowatt hour.

All that is to say that renewable energy is much more than what you see when you see a solar installation or a wind turbine. So as we have the important discussions about how to move forward with renewable energy in Vermont, we need to remember that renewable energy is about much more - it's about jobs, about economic opportunity, about preserving what makes Vermont special, about saving Vermonters money, and about doing what is right to ensure a livable planet for future generations.

/Peter Shumlin, of East Montpelier, is the governor of Vermont./

<http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/story/opinion/my-turn/2015/10/13/opinion-involve-community-energy-plan/73880200/>

Opinion: Involve community in energy plan

Sara Jane Luneau-Swan 3:18 p.m. EDT October 13, 2015

windfarm-25-c7

(Photo: AP File)

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What would happen if our Legislatures examined our "renewable energy" goals and strategically created a plan that encouraged local control? I believe that local planning boards as well as regionally planning boards could collaboratively work with the community, Agency of Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife as well as the Public Service Board at achieving our Vermont state "energy" goals and our national goals.

This local collaborative approach would allow towns to research the most efficient "green" energy with the least amount of environmental impact while maintain the quality of life for our community including the animals, birds and our water quality. The economic benefits as well as renewable energy credits would be kept locally within our community and state. We have been stewards of Vermont's environment and this would allow us to continue in an ethical manner.

Alternative energy needs to be a collaborative effort and it needs to look at all facets such as reducing the emissions of fossil fuel and gas. Conservation needs to become common practice as well as continuing

research on the viability of alternative energy while protecting the health of our citizens.

Research and time is needed to create a systematic plan that unites community members and works to keep Vermont green on all fronts. This needs to be the priority. The priority does not need to be quickly erecting projects to meet a future goal without careful deliberation of how it will impact our state. It is time that we realize how special Vermont is and work together to keep it that way for future generations.

Large out-of-state corporations should not dictate what land is desecrated. Preserving our community, environment and our Green Mountain state can be achieved with careful planning in regards to "energy" projects. We should not sacrifice our Vermont environment for big corporation profits or out-of-state Reusable Energy Credits. I believe RECs should be locally controlled with state oversight and expertise recommendations, upholding standards that puts our green environment number one.

Careful planning by the community will achieve responsible energy projects as the local supply dictates, and with the least impact on our community members. We can sustain our environment and utilize sustainable energy in a responsible manner with research, future innovations, and careful planning. Our legislators need to take a leap of faith and trust that the communities can work together to achieve our state renewable energy goals. Our community Energy Planning Boards would work with our agency standards for appropriate land use, protecting our health and the wealth of our environment.

I encourage (Swanton wind project developer) Mr. Travis Belisle to become a part of our community in the systematic planning of renewable energy projects by becoming a part of this plan. I urge him to think about creating the Travis Belisle Woodlands area at the current Rocky Ridge sight. While he may not reap the same profits as his current project, his return would be leaving a responsible legacy not cement pads and decommissioned wind-turbines in a pristine wetland area. I believe he could find other spaces to have his energy projects when the time comes. Once a clear plan is created with "standards" that don't infringe on the quality of life for our community members.

Projects involving community involvement and transparency from inception would be a component of future energy plans. Our community can be strong and we can work together to maintain our green mountain state.

/Sara Jane Luneau-Swan lives in Swanton/
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Dear Annette,

Save the Date!!

2.22.2016

Vermont Climate Economy Summit: IDEAS TO ACTION

Vermont Technical College, Randolph VT

Save the date for VCRD's "Vermont Climate Economy Summit: IDEAS TO ACTION" on February 22, 2016. Join us to review a platform of action developed by the Vermont Climate Change Economy Council

<[consider action to create jobs, build national reputation, and attract young people to our rural communities.](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001eM2qa2Y0r2oHV_zJAKivjbdUnMqGX3ISr7yCoBtIHUbeE3wwQsG0keHVHzcUz7cbAhUJRQIFWQQz9RFw9L1MpNjGfxWaSGiloVRWEaDMDUjvDrj4JutH8stFiOqXN9V5Y9yw7-FdMcfLONQBc9aI5zQp0NOBYtiTgwL5QosHPdTXAQ_4C0K9BPomDh8Cqf9rIAhiEg_RH28vd42Zi6E60nA==&c=aorqLCxoDqQ3YI9kCCge9s0jAwWfZZ-rLPfV1zTskXVgkXnFhIJ59g==&ch=5o85xTUCRTMIJUU_sluMdTu2WhZZpO4FbiRfZSuF7n0BnT31FJZZGQ==>
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To find out more about the VT Climate Change Economy Initiative, visit <http://vtrural.org/programs/climate-economy>

<[We look forward to seeing you on February 22nd!](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001eM2qa2Y0r2oHV_zJAKivjbdUnMqGX3ISr7yCoBtIHUbeE3wwQsG0keLe4dmIPYsFtH_W8Ei3iILQzhPAWePT_P-rEGqVSoiY8riy1iCcTppqXCnxUvYRj49ivwH49yU0qrmxhEMMRtQpLHrg0E8uO_DTzENexHtzUN4nz89NvffgNGIbWEORL_qU-ZUAKbvt-wWRj8oAURFel=&c=aorqLCxoDqQ3YI9kCCge9s0jAwWfZZ-rLPfV1zTskXVgkXnFhIJ59g==&ch=5o85xTUCRTMIJUU_sluMdTu2WhZZpO4FbiRfZSuF7n0BnT31FJZZGQ==></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Sincerely,

Paul Costello, /Executive Director/
Vermont Council on Rural Development
PO Box 1384, Montpelier VT 05601-1304
802-223-6091

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is a non-profit organization charged by the federal farm bill to act as a neutral convener at both the local and policy level supporting the progress of Vermont communities.