



Energy Committee

Town of Hinesburg
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Meeting Minutes - March 15, 2016

- Draft -

Attendees: Richard Whitaker, Dick Van Vleet, Nikki Kuhn, Richard Watts, Chuck Reiss, Carrie Fenn, Richard Hopwood, Zoe Dawson, Linda and Tim Isham, Brian Thibault, Martyha Ellerman, Durwin Ellerman, Chad Farrell (with Encore), Derkik Moretz, Tim Brown

1. Additions to agenda

- None

2. Review minutes 2/16/16

- Minutes approved with no discussion

3. Discuss the community solar project on South Wind road

- 6 rows of panels, 42 panels per row
- Committee reviewed site, floated balloons to check visibility with neighbors, neighbors so far have not objected
- Screening planned on NE corner, possibly NW too
- Scrim – fabric that gets attached to panels and improves how they look to neighbors, may keep animals from getting to wires. Consider whether this would be necessary at this project.
- GMP – single phase underground line; confirmed that GMP line can handle
- Chuck Reiss– Update on status of GMP solar allotment:
 - Dottie Van Schnoor, all projects 15k and under are a go. Anything larger is on hold.
 - GMP has applied to Public Service Board for additional 7.5 MW, expect to hear any day whether approved
 - Josh Castingay & Kirk Shields, GMP, hoping to put together how allocation will be distributed because expecting a large pool of applicants, not clear what that process will look like at this time.
 - If it is an LLC owning the array, will need to be the LLC applying
 - Recommended Boardman Hill webinar; willing to share all info about project, retired RECs, made project work by making LLC members the people in charge of executing the project

- Followed legal document from VT Law School
 - Set aside \$ for maintenance for 20 year life of projects
 - Because they owned the project, could take federal credit for project
 - Chuck Reiss recommends we follow this model
 - Carrie Fenn will send Dick Van Vleet hard copy of Boardman Hill project info
- 4. Open discussion with Encore concerning the VEC solar project on Magee Hill Road
 - Schedule overview from Encore:
 - Encore is developer, VEC is customer
 - Encore has not filed certificate of public good (CPG)
 - 45 days in advance of filing CPG, Encore needs to file 45 day notice – also not yet filed, but plan to file in the next couple of weeks and then will file the CPG 45 days after that
 - Thus this is in very early stage, expect that things will change
 - Have done site, environmental, civil engineering surveys
 - PSB will collect comments, merits of project, design, etc. to inform decision
 - Intention is to have open, transparent communications with all stakeholders
 - Target to have project operational by end of calendar year
 - Encore’s intent is to engage stakeholders in design and impact prior to filing notice, will be more opportunities to provide input
 - 45 day notice – project description with approx. # of panels, details don’t need to be as solid
 - By the time the CPG is filed, details are much more solidified; significant changes are then more complicated
 - Suggest we move forward the current plan with the 45 day notice and finalize plans over the next couple of weeks before CPG is filed
 - Neighbors – (1) How much is Encore going to consider the plan put forward by the neighbors? (2) Talk about what this is going to look like over the next 20-30 years – what plans/recourse does the town/neighbors have for maintenance, land management, etc.?
 - Responses from Encore –
 - (1) Most developers start process by sending 45 day notice, so Encore believes they are ahead of the curve. At most recent meeting of neighbors, Encore didn’t hear many specific suggestions, just complaints about how project can’t go forward. Willing to consider and react to any suggestions for making the project work better for neighbors. VEC is sensitive to these issues and wants to work with community.
 - (2) Maintenance, decommissioning are requirements of the project. Understand that screening/landscaping is important and ask subcontractors to warrantee their landscaping materials.

- HEC expects Encore to consider changes proposed by the neighbors to be incorporated or reacted to in advance of filing with the PSB
- Discuss options for screening that may be more acceptable to neighbors
 - Neighbors – proposed screening option is to move the visual impact down the field about 200 feet; incorporate trees (up to 15 ft), clusters and berms
 - Intent to minimize aesthetic impact and potential impacts on property values
 - Consistent application of projects in the community (100 feet for development of other projects)
 - Encore – idea is to optimize solar production from a technical perspective for the lowest cost possible; concern that the further down the hill, the more space will be taken away from the most productive areas; looking to avoid wetlands and cutting maple trees that are being farmed
 - Other responses from Encore:
 - Solar scrim – good product, but only for smaller-scale projects; Encore proposes agricultural style fence
 - Biggest concern with trees is shading, but willing to look at the recommendations
 - Neighbors proposal would decrease the production; VEC would not likely be willing to accept it
 - Neighbors – Code B says you don't need fencing; is this true?
 - Encore – Electric code adopted in 2015: any voltage of 1k DC volts needs to have 7 foot fence; this is true for any 3-phase inverter; Also lenders will require that sites are secured
 - Discussion regarding vegetative screening
 - Encore – plantings go in at 5-6 feet tall and they grow at about 1 ft/year; certificate of public good requires maintenance of screenings, any vegetation that has deteriorated would be replaced
 - Neighbors – not just maintenance of screenings, but also the land itself (e.g., poison parsnip or other invasive species being managed on land).
 - Encore – there are avenues to bring violations of CPG; SoCor is the owner and would be liable
 - Richard Hopwood – there are significant rules for maintenance of solar sites that the O&M contractor that is working for SoCor would need to be following
 - Steps forward
 - Encore - Any immediate abutter would get a letter/notice of CPG; Encore willing to send notifications to other interested parties, or depend on neighbors to keep each other informed
 - Suggestion to take photos of site and photoshop in the screening proposed; 3D view of screening

- Encore will be going back to the drawing board based on suggestions and develop a counter-proposal

5. Update on the VT Gas line through Geprags Park (approximately 8:50 PM)

- Hinesburg's attorney signed agreement last year but outside of the meeting, so may be in violation of open meeting laws, and thus questions exist regarding the legality of the agreement
- Next select board meeting will take it up (March 21)

6. Set agenda for April meeting

Agenda for April

1. Report on South Wind Solar Project
2. Discuss solar sites identified
3. Discuss ideas about comprehensive energy plan
4. Update on solar pv screening
5. Update for Magee Hill solar proposal