



## Project Review Committee Meeting

March 26, 2015 at CVRPC Offices; 4:00-6:00PM

### ATTENDEES:

- Bob Wernecke, *Town of Berlin*
- Laura Hill-Eubanks, *Town of Northfield*
- Sam Andersen, *CVEDC*
- Larry Hebert, *Town of Williamstown*
- Dick Payne, *Town of Cabot*
- Byron Atwood, *Barre Town*
- Emily Nosse-Leirer, *CVRPC Staff*
- Gail Aloisio, *CVRPC Staff*
- Kim McKee, *CVRPC Staff*
- Alex Bravakis, *Novus Energy Development*
- Tom McArdle, *City of Montpelier*
- Dan Burke, *Public Service Dept.*

### SUMMARY:

**Section 248: Alex Bravakis of Novus Energy Development, LLC** discussed his firm's proposal for a facility on Morrison Rd (Barre Town) and their general process for siting commercial solar.

- Novus Energy Development approaches municipal, school and institutional partners (i.e. hospitals) as partners for net-metered solar developments, typically 500kW.
- Novus has not been pursuing community solar projects at this time because they are more difficult to finance, but they're working on a program with GMP that will allow them to build a system that residents can buy into.
- Novus' typical project size is about 3.5 acres; the panels are anticipated to have a lifespan of 40 years.
- CVRPC can anticipate another several proposals from Novus for net-metered solar projects in Montpelier and Barre this spring. The municipalities will get net-metering credits on their bill and save 10%.
- The Booth property in Barre Town is one site, the other is the Valsangiacomo property (old ski area). The latter will require more land clearing/more issues with ANR.
- Novus tries to site their projects in close vicinity to where its energy will be consumed/or benefits received.
- Their process is typically to start their conversations with the Town first; considerations in siting include the proximity of 3-phase power, that the site is relatively flat and doesn't have ledge, and open enough so that there's not a lot of shading. Novus' first preference is to use already-disturbed property.
- Building on parking lots or rooftops may become more prevalent in the future, as it is in Europe, but the tax incentives aren't there yet in the U.S.
- Snow-load and the fact that the lifespan of roofs is typically less than that of the panels hinder the ability to put commercial solar on roofs.

- The owners (investors) are responsible for decommissioning after the useful life of the array. Municipal partners are given the option to “buy” the facility also.
- The Committee agreed to provide a support letter to the Novus-Morrison Rd Project.

#### **Act 250: Montpelier Bike Path project, Montpelier (Tom McArdle, Dir. of Public Works)**

- We recently received an Act 250 application for construction of a multi-use pathway between Granite Street and the Montpelier Civic Center on Gallison Hill Road. The path will consist of a combination of widened shoulder/bike lanes, shared use and 10-foot paved path on new alignment. **An Act 250 hearing is scheduled for Thursday, April 2 at 6:30pm at Montpelier City Hall.**
- Tom gave an overview of the project site plans along the length of the path segment. The proposed segment is about 2 miles in length.
- The alignment was the subject of an in-depth alternatives study which identified the currently proposed alignment as the preferred alternative. This alignment follows existing Barre Street, existing Old Country Club Rd, existing railroad embankment and existing Gallison Hill Rd.
- In the vicinity of the Winooski River, the path will use the existing roadbed of Old Country Club Rd.
- Project will involve culvert replacement along Old Country Club Rd, where several undersized culverts along the existing roadway will be replaced with adequately sized culverts.
- Wetland and stormwater permits received. The City has been in communication with ANR about the SFHA and River Corridor to address any related issues.
- It’s to-be-determined whether or not the City will plow the full length of the path for winter use; will depend on how the public wants to use it (x-country ski vs. walking)
- Larry made a motion to provide a letter stating the project is in conformance with the Regional Plan and Bob seconded. All voted in favor.

#### **Section 248: Section 248a process and VTel tower proposals in Calais and Cabot**

- Dan Burke, Telecom Special Counsel with the Public Service Dept. gave a brief overview of the Section 248a process.
- The Public Service Dept. (PSD) also files comments with the Public Service Board (PSB) on each petition. The PSD encourages municipalities to get involved in the process as early as possible if plan to raise issues with the proposals. The PSD will give a lot more scrutiny to the proposal if this is the case.
- The PSD can also commission an independent review of aesthetic impacts and bill it back to the applicant.
- A town can also require that the applicant attend a public meeting. The request for the meeting should come within the 45-day pre-file comment period, even if the meeting itself can’t be scheduled within that window. The town can make a similar request for PSD staff to attend.
- It’s recommended that towns or the RPC copy the PSD and the PSB on any correspondence with the applicant.
- VTel is proposing facilities that offer Wireless Internet Service, not cell service, with these recent tower proposals.

- Kim offered a brief overview of the VTel proposals in Calais and Cabot and made a recommendation that the Committee request more information regarding feasibility of co-location. Bob made a motion to do so and Laura seconded. All voted in favor.

#### **Berlin Mall, LLC/Kohl's update**

- Bob made a motion that CVRPC concur with the applicant and oppose the petition by Ed Stanak to participate as a Friend of the Commission.
- The two reasons are that it is untimely and that the issues raised were already discussed at length at the hearing in February.
- Larry seconded the motion. Four voted in favor and one abstained.

**Wrap-up:** Staff will draft letters regarding VTel Cabot, VTel Calais, Kohl's, the Montpelier Bike Path and Novus Morrison Solar and circulate to Committee to solicit comment before submittal.

The next Committee meeting will likely be scheduled for the end of May.