

# CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

## Project Review Committee

November 2, 2022 5:00pm

*Remote Participation via Zoom*

## Draft Minutes

### Project Review Committee Members

x	Lee Cattaneo, Orange Commissioner	1
x	John Brabant, Calais Commissioner	2
	Bill Arrand Commissioner (Alternate Seat)	3
	Vacant	4
x	Janet Shatney, Barre City Commissioner	5
x	Robert Wernecke, Berlin Commissioner	6

7

8 Staff: Jon Ignatowski, Clare Rock (present in person)

9

10 Guest: Thomas Hand, Ralph Meima, Kelsey Applegate

11

12 L. Cattaneo called the meeting to order at 5:02pm

13

14 Public comment: No public comments

15

### 16 Act 250 / Section 248 Applications & Projects of Substantial Regional Impact

17

#### 18 Lowery Road Solar Project

19

20 T. Hand from MHG solar gave a short presentation about the project. He provided a quick summary, and  
21 explained that the site is very well screened, which was a primary reason why it was chosen for the  
22 project.

23

24 C. Rock asked about the direction the utilities will be routed to the GMP grid. T. Hand replied that they  
25 are exploring an above-ground and below-ground strategy. They are coordinating with WEC to ensure  
26 that they were not impacting their infrastructure.

27

28 J. Brabant asked if the farmland that will be developed upon is prime farmland. T. Hand stated that the  
29 land is likely prime ag land.

30

31 J. Brabant asked how the project will be financed, specifically if the project will be a bundled project that  
32 is sold as an investment. T. Hand stated that the project will behave like other projects in the electricity  
33 industry, and it will be part of a publicly traded corporation.

34

35 J. Brabant asked if it was possible to have the land return to agriculture through a land trust when the  
36 project decommissioned. T. Hand stated that they are leasing the land and do not own it, thus they can't  
37 require the landowner to bequeath the land to another entity. T. Hand explained that their lease  
38 agreements are typically 35 years.

39

1 J. Shatney asked if the corn field is being reestablished somewhere else. T. Hand stated that they don't  
2 have anything in their agreement to mitigate the loss of the corn field. He explained that it was the  
3 landowner's economic decision to pursue the lease with the solar developer. Act 250 and farmland  
4 mitigation was discussed.

5  
6 R. Wernecke asked to see the site plan. The site plan was displayed, and T. Hand described the plan. T.  
7 Hand also explained the orientation of the proposed road.

8  
9 L. Cattaneo stated that he was told that Washington Electric has too much solar power and is raising  
10 rates for folks that connect to the grid. T. Hand explained that most of WEC's power comes from the  
11 Coventry Landfill, and described how GMP sources their power. He then described the economics of  
12 solar power in Vermont and that different company's operate in different ways.

13  
14 The conversation returned to the project's impact on the Region, and if it reached the threshold of  
15 substantial regional impact. C. Rock stated that there were potential impacts on natural resources,  
16 aesthetic resources and energy resources in the region.

17  
18 J. Brabant asked how the project would impact rates for customers in the region. T. Hand described how  
19 power pricing worked and how it was difficult to state price at any given time. But it was his estimation  
20 that the solar project would reduce rates.

21  
22 J. Brabant felt that the project would provide positive regional impacts for electric rates, but he was  
23 troubled by the impact to prime ag land.

24  
25 *J. Brabant moved that the project is regionally significant and that it is net positive project that is in*  
26 *conformance with the regional plan. R. Wernecke seconded the motion. All members in attendance*  
27 *voted in favor.*

28  
29 Members stated that it was their preference to bury the lines connecting the solar array to the grid.

#### 30 31 I Love Cows

32  
33 R. Meima provided an introduction to the project, and explained that Encore Power had bought the  
34 land. The project is 2.2 MW since they were originally going to pursue the standard offer program, but  
35 now they are going into direct negotiations with Green Mountain Power. The parcel that they bought is  
36 landlocked since wetlands prevent the development of access. A wetland permit will be needed to use a  
37 right-of-way to access the development site.

38  
39 J. Brabant asked if it would be best to wait until the wetland permit is attained before CVRPC making a  
40 determination. He didn't feel comfortable issuing a determination as to create undo pressure on the  
41 ANR analysts.

42  
43 R. Meima stated that the solar array will be placed on soils that are prime and are of statewide  
44 importance. R. Meima then explained that if solar arrays do not include concrete footers, the project  
45 does not have any adverse impacts on the land. R. Meima mentioned the possibility of planting  
46 pollinator mix on the project site.

47  
48 C. Rock asked if there was any screening proposed. R. Meima mentioned that a visual impact study is in

1 process. Sound studies and archeological investigations were performed. No artifacts were found during  
2 the archeological study, and the sound study concluded that no one would be impacted by inverter  
3 noise. The aesthetic study will be included in the CPG study.  
4

5 J. Shatney stated that Barre City does not have an enhanced energy plan, so they do not have the  
6 substantial deference standing before the PUC, and anticipates there will be some concerns from the  
7 city regarding visual impacts as the array is proposed on a farm field which is in view from a public road.  
8

9 *J. Brabant B makes a motion to table the conversation about the solar project until the wetlands*  
10 *determination and visual impact study with any proposed screening were provided. R. Wernecke*  
11 *seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of the motion.*  
12

### 13 **Approve meeting minutes**

14  
15 *R. Wernecke made a motion to approved the minutes, L. Cattaneo seconded. All members voted in favor.*  
16

### 17 **Next Meeting Date**

18  
19 C. Rock will follow up with R. Meima about when the additional information might be available and then  
20 staff will look to schedule the next meeting.  
21

### 22 **Project Review Summary Sheet**

23  
24 C. Rock briefly discusses the Route 100 medical office, the Route 2 dealership expansion and the 40 lot  
25 subdivision in Williamstown.  
26

### 27 **Adjournment**

28  
29 *L. Cattaneo made a motion to adjourn, J. Brabant seconded. All members voted in favor.*