



MEMO

Date: February 18th, 2026
To: Project Review Committee
From: Sam Lash, Climate & Energy Planner
Re: Updates on Recent Section 248, and Section 248a Permit Applications

Summary: This memo includes a variety of updates on ongoing projects.

General Updates:

- 1. Monthly Report on Small Scale Distributed Energy Generation Projects:** As noted last meeting (January 2026) we saw a declining number of proposals for solar projects (of which most are residential) as anticipated with the early ceasure of the federal solar tax incentives. We saw on average 250kW per month (20 projects) in the summer, 350kW (29ish projects) in the fall, and are now We were seeing on average 350kW and 29projects a month (September-November) and are now seeing approximately 180kW (7 projects) this winter. Throughout 2025, the region saw approximately 1.6MW of solar projects proposed across all 23 municipalities as 143 projects (average size a little over 11kW skewed larger by only a handful of commercial projects). See regional total by town, along with January and February monthly tracking updates in the table at the end of this memo.

248 Updates (Electric Infrastructure)

- 2.** One new solar project in Montpelier is a 100kW rooftop project- this qualifies automatically as a preferred site- no review required.

- 3. Update: GMP Irasville Substation Upgrade, Waitsfield & Fayston (25-2468-PET)**

The petition was filed for the GMP Irasville Substation Upgrades in Waitsfield/Fayston. Staff and the Project Review Committee previously reviewed this project, which can be found in the memo from **May 22, 2025, pages 9-12** https://centralvtplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/25-05-22_PRC-Packet.pdf and an update from our **October 23, 2025 meeting** [2025-10-23_PRC_Meeting_Packet.pdf \(item 2 on page 12\)](#). Staff was set to attend a site visit on December 11th, 2025 which was canceled due to inclement weather. Staff continue to monitor proceedings as it goes through discovery rounds.

On 2/11/26 The Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets submitted comments, which found, pursuant to 30 V.S.A. 248(a)(4)(F)(ii) that, as proposed, the project has the potential to

impact less than one acre of primary agricultural soils as defined in 10 VSA 6001(15) and thus is under the two acre *de minimis* threshold. Any future projects at this site must take into consideration the total impacts including this project's proposed impact when reassessing the *de minimis* threshold in the future. **They conclude with the request that the Commission finds that the Project will not have an undue adverse impact on primary agricultural soils under 30 V.S.A. 248(b)(5).**

248a Updates (Telecommunications)

4. De Minimis Cases: 2 reviewed & met criteria¹

5. Moretown T-Mobile Tower Petition, [25-3123-PET](#)

The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) received the petition from T-Mobile Northeast, LLC, pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 248a(e), proposing to request a certificate of public good authorizing the installation of wireless telecommunications equipment at 373 Hoover Hill Road, Moretown, Vermont. This project is proposing to collocate telecommunications antennas and equipment with an existing facility (97' monopine tower). We previously received the 60-day advanced submission and reviewed it at the October 23, 2025 meeting- petition was compared to earlier review and no changes have been made, this was also summarized in the January 2026 meeting:

- Extending the existing monopole by 15' (max height 115' above ground level),
- Install 3 new antennas (not above the top of the tower, some of the fake branches will be),
- Install 6 new reverse radio head units; all proposed equipment camouflaged by monopine;
- 10'x20' for base equipment entirely within existing equipment compound; impervious surface remains at 200sqft;
- Utilizing existing access to the tower compound- no clearing nor excavation outside current tower site and existing fence line.

Staff found at the January meeting that after initial and secondary review, that this project will likely meet the definition of a project of limited size and scope and be in compliance with the *Central Vermont Regional Plan, readopted July 9, 2024*. **No Anticipated Action. See previous review for details (#6, page 15-17) https://centralvtplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2025-10-23_PRC_Meeting_Packet.pdf**

Update: The Moretown Select Board filed comments on January 30, 2026, alleging that the existing monopine has been shedding plastic pieces from the conifer disguise portions of the tower and requesting it be addressed. The Public Utilities Commission has requested that T-Mobile Northeast, LLC file a response to these comments before February 27, 2026. Staff awaiting the response. No anticipated action at this time.

6. Update: Marshfield Cell Tower ([25-1543-PET](#))

¹ Project qualifies as a *de minimis* modification under 30 V.S.A. § 248a(b)(2) as long as: Excluding equipment, antennas, and ancillary improvements, the Project does not involve increasing the height or width of the existing structure. The Project will not increase the total amount of impervious surface by more than 300 square feet. The Project will not result in any new antennas or equipment on the support structure that will extend more than 10 feet above the structure or more than 10 feet horizontally from the structure. Finally, the net increase in surface area from new equipment on the structure will be less than 75 square feet. The project as proposed does not conflict with any existing permits.

Staff continue to follow the case and all activities logged. Notably, the **Vermont Department of Public Service submitted an Aesthetic & Orderly Development Analysis Report on 1/30/2026:** <https://epuc.vermont.gov/?q=downloadfile/796647/205750>.

Below is a summary of key findings:

- The findings of the Quechee Test Part I- Evaluation of Adversity found that it would be considered to result in an adverse impact on the aesthetics and natural or scenic beauty of the area:
 - the proposed Project would be visible from portions of the surrounding area- notably along the segment of US Route 2 immediately adjacent to the Project Parcel, where the Tower extends above the background vegetation and is visible against the sky.
 - In most other locations, including views from within the Village of Marshfield, The Tower would be seen midway up the ridge, with higher vegetation providing a background.
- Quechee Test Part II- Evaluation of Undue Adversity:
 - Community Standards: summarizes community scenic-quality standards in the Regional Plan, 2024 CVRPC Regional Plan Readoption Assessment Report with Appendices, The Town Plan, and the Marshfield Wireless Telecommunications Facilities Bylaw (pages 16, 18-19)- would not violate any clearly written community standard as the Project site is not defined as a scenic resource; none of the natural and scenic areas are located within the project study area not have visibility of the proposed facility.
 - Mitigating Elements (page 20): the selected location is midway along the hillside, set back from US Route 2 and has a surrounding of mature forest; in addition finishes are intended to reduce contrast; these measures demonstrate reasonable mitigation steps.
 - Shocking and Offensive: not considered shocking nor offensive to the average person based on site location (see above) to reduce apparent prominence and appearance of this and other infrastructure in landscape more generally.
- Part IV Details Municipal and Regional Plans and Substantial Deference pages 21- 27:
 - Project does not comply with the following components of the Town Telecommunications bylaw:
 - Project is located in the Forestry and Conservation district, just outside the Agricultural and Rural Residential zoning district (which is the only district the bylaw allows telecommunications facilities that are not “small scale”,
 - Access road (existing) is located just beyond 50ft from a delineated wetland, portions of the equipment compound are approximately 70ft away and the tower itself is sited roughly 100ft from the wetland (closer than the Tower’s 140ft height),

- Portions of the equipment compound are located approximately 57ft from an intermittent stream, the tower itself is sited roughly 90ft from the stream- closer than the 140ft height although the bylaw setback standard applies specifically to perennial streams.
 - Petitioners provide a survey of nearby trees with an average height or AGL of 77ft- the tower AGL is 140ft, 63ft taller than average tree, although the top elevations of the same surrounding trees are only 30ft lower than the top elevation of the tower.
- Project does comply with the Bylaw's other setback requirements:
 - Required distance from property lines,
 - Nearby residences and structures,
 - Archaeological resources,
 - Historic districts;
- Tower is located approximately 750ft from the edge of US Route 2, which is not designated scenic road or highway.
- More broadly the Project's siting and design appear to support key restrictions and goals embedded in the municipal and regional plans- which emphasize minimizing aesthetic and visual impacts while ensuring that essential wireless telecommunications service can be provided.
- Petitioners demonstrated a documented, site specific coverage necessity, minimized visual and environmental impacts through thoughtful siting and design choices, and reasonably exhausted less intrusive alternatives while complying with most bylaw standards. Although, the Project does not conform to certain municipal setbacks from wetlands and streams, it remains subject to, and must comply with, applicable state standards and protections for these resources.
- ***Based on this review, it appears the Project meets the substantial deference" standard, with appropriate consideration given to the recommendations of the municipal and regional plans*** (page 27)

Other Testimonies included (and can be found here [Case Details | Vermont Public Utility Commission](#))

- Alice Peal on behalf of the Intervenors notes 3 areas of concern including 1) application process, PU Review, and Substantial Deference; 2) Marshfield's Town Plan emphasis on Rural Character and Scenic Beauty; and 3) Wetlands, Water, Habitat and Siting.
- Michael Xenakis and Robin Gomez on behalf of the Intervenors (they are 2 of 5) also submitted testimony focused on the visibility of the tower and the perceived inadequacy of the approximation of this visibility with the balloon test. Concerns also include proximity to village, as well as at least one conflict with the Telecommunication

by-laws as noted above in the Aesthetics analysis, including the height above the surrounding trees.

Background:

The Project Review Committee has discussed the proposed Cell Tower at 2264 U.S. Route 2 in Marshfield, Vermont (Advanced Notices 24-2988 on 9/23/24 and 25-0925 on 5/8/2025) several times including:

- January 22, 2026 Project Review Committee Meeting: [1.-26-01-22_PRC-Pacet.pdf](#)
- October 23, 2025 Project Review Committee meeting: https://centralvtplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2025-10-23_PRC_Meeting_Packet.pdf
- February 27, 2025 Project Review Committee Meeting: <https://centralvtplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/25-02-27-PRC-packet.pdf>
- May 22, 2025 Project Review Committee Meeting: https://centralvtplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/25-05-22_PRC-Packet.pdf

Key resources:

- 25-1543-PET case landing page <https://epuc.vermont.gov/?q=node/64/205750/FV-Case%20Summary-Portal>
- Marshfield Town Meetings;
 - Selectboard (Public Comment- Special Meeting) February 12, 2025: https://marshfieldvt.gov/vertical/sites/%7BDE838A07-5D57-4E6F-95DF-7C05B7FB1126%7D/uploads/sb_minutes_021225_approved.pdf
 - Appears in many minutes, e.g. September 2, 2025 https://marshfieldvt.gov/vertical/sites/%7BDE838A07-5D57-4E6F-95DF-7C05B7FB1126%7D/uploads/sb_minutes_090225_approved.pdf
- The balloon test and tower photo simulations are included in Exhibit LH-4 and each are date and time stamped to the right of the photos **12/31/24 10:04-11:19am** ([Case Details | Vermont Public Utility Commission](#))

On 1/2/2026 the Public Service Department requested an extension for non-Petitioner pre-filed testimony and exhibits which was granted 1/8/2026. The new Schedule is as follows:

	Old Schedule	New Schedule
Deadline for parties to submit unavailable dates for evidentiary hearing	January 30, 2026	February 20, 2025
Deadline for non-Petitioners to respond to discovery	February 6, 2026	February 27, 2026
Deadline for completion of depositions	March 2, 2026	March 23, 2026
Deadline for dispositive motions	March 20, 2026	April 10, 2026
Deadline for prefiled rebuttal testimony	March 30, 2026	April 20, 2026
Evidentiary Hearing	Week of April 6, 2026	Week of April 27, 2026

