## **Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission**

Minutes of Tuesday, September 22, 2015 Martin Memorial Hall, Ascutney, VT

<u>Commissioners Present:</u> Tom Bock (Chair), Chester; Etienne Ting, Cavendish; Joe Fromberger, Andover; Walter Martone, Springfield; Logan Nicoll, Ludlow.

Others Present: Adam Cohen, Liz Peyton, CJ Walsh (Ranger Solar).

<u>Staff Present:</u> Tom Kennedy, Jason Rasmussen, Allison Hopkins, Cynthia Porter, Chris Titus. Tom Bock opened the meeting at 12:15 PM.

- 1. Presentation on proposed Ranger 20 MW solar project in Ludlow
  - a. Adam Cohen, Liz Peyton and CJ Walsh of Ranger Solar presented the proposed 20 MW ground-mounted solar project for a location off Barker Road in Ludlow near to the existing Coolidge Substation.
  - b. Ranger recently filed a 45-day notification regarding this project and they anticipate filing a petition in November 2015.
  - c. This is one of 6 solar projects in Vermont that is being considered by Ranger.
  - d. The proposed Ludlow project represents a \$29 million investment.
  - e. The maximum project footprint is approximately 100 acres.
  - f. Not much transmission line work is needed since the project is very close to the Coolidge Substation.
  - g. The length of the project is anticipated to be 30 years. The company has a 40-year agreement with the landowner.
  - h. Ranger Solar representatives highlighted what they consider the four main benefits of this project:
    - i. Production of green jobs (i.e. 79 construction jobs, 4 operations jobs);
    - ii. It helps the State to meet renewable energy goals;
    - iii. The project's power is to be purchased as a "Qualifying Facility", meaning the power is delivered to Vermont utilities at their avoided cost;
    - iv. This represents one big project, as opposed to many smaller sites scattered in many different locations.
  - i. The project is anticipated to result in \$3 million in new tax revenues over the life of the project to the Town of Ludlow.

Tom Bock recessed the regular meeting in order to open a public hearing.

1. At 1 PM, Tom Bock opened the public hearing on whether to approve Chester's municipal plan and confirm the municipal planning efforts of the Town of Chester under 24 V.S.A. §4350.

- a. No members of the public were present.
- b. No public comments were received.
- c. Tom Bock closed the hearing at 1:04 PM.

Tom Bock reopened the regular meeting of the SWCRPC at 1:05 PM.

- 2. Approval of 2015 Chester Town Plan and confirmation of Chester's local planning process per 24 V.S.A. §4350
  - a. Jason Rasmussen reported that the Town Plan Review Committee met earlier in the day to review Chester's Town Plan as adopted on July 15, 2015. Carol Lighthall and Norm Vanasse were unable to attend the meeting, but both completed the review matrix and both indicated that they agree with recommending approval and confirmation.
  - b. Chester's Town Plan was set to expire in July 2015. Therefore, they readopted the document with two changes in order to have a plan in effect and to maintain confirmation of their local planning process. These two changes include adopting their All-Hazard Mitigation Plan by reference to serve as the new flood resilience element and adopting the Economic Development Chapter from the Regional Plan by reference as their economic development element in the Town Plan.
  - c. Chester's Planning Commission is currently working on updates to this Town Plan. This readoption allows them to continue with that process, while maintaining an effective town plan.
  - d. The Town Plan Review Committee found that Chester's Town Plan meets all of the basic requirements and recommends approval under 24 V.S.A. §4350. The Committee also found that Chester's planning process meets the criteria for confirmation in 24 V.S.A. §4350, and recommends confirming Chester's local planning process.
  - e. Joe Fromberger made a motion to approve the 2015 Chester Town Plan and to confirm Chester's local planning process in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4350. Second by Walter Martone. Motion passed.
- 3. Secretary's Report
  - a. Tabled until the next meeting
- 4. Treasurer's Report
  - a. Tabled until the next meeting
- 5. Municipal Planning Fund Sponsored by the RPC
  - a. Tom Kennedy discussed an idea to create a shared funding arrangement with towns to help pay for work that is not funded through the Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) Program. There is generally not sufficient MPG funding levels to meet the level of need in the region. It is very common for the more routine but necessary work to lose out on funding. It is also common that the smaller towns

- lose out on funding to larger towns or communities with State-Designated Downtowns or Village Centers.
- b. Jason Rasmussen offered, as an example, that the region gets about \$25,000 a year in total MPG funding. This year we are aware of \$33,000 in requests, and two additional applications were being discussed.
- c. Tom Kennedy suggested that perhaps \$10,000 in reserve funds might be used for this purpose and projects would cost-share with towns.
- d. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

## 6. Update on Section 248 Projects

- a. Clean Power Link (TDI) Transmission Line: Tom Kennedy reported that hearings on the TDI transmission line begin in October.
- b. Windsor Solar Project: Tom Kennedy reported that the application for the ground-mounted solar project at the Windsor prison was withdrawn.

## 7. Miscellaneous/Other Business

- a. Monthly Board Meeting Schedule: Tom Kennedy asked if the Board should change the regular meeting schedule to the fourth Tuesday of the month, as has been the last few meeting dates. Joe Fromberger indicated that it is the Chair's prerogative to do so.
- b. Climate Change Meeting: Tom Kennedy indicated that a joint meeting is being organized for regional organizations in this bi-state area (NH and VT) to discuss climate change planning issues. The organizations include SWCRPC, TRORC, UVLSRPC and Vital Communities. The meeting is anticipated to be in White River Junction during January 2016.
- c. Brownfields Consultant Short List: The Brownfields Steering Committee has met and selected a short list of consulting firms to assist with our assessment program for the next five years. Letters to the firms are going out today.
- 8. *Joe Fromberger made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Second by Walter Martone. Motion passed.* The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:00 PM.