

Addison County Regional Planning Commission Full Commission Meeting

Wednesday, November 14, 2001

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission Meeting on November 14, 2001 was held at the Kenyon Lounge at Middlebury College with Harvey Smith presiding.

ROLL CALL:

Addison:

Bridport:

Kent Wright
Ed Payne
Tom Vanacore

Bristol:

Peter Grant
Jim Peabody

Cornwall:

Don Shall

Ferrisburgh:

Goshen:

Leicester:

Lincoln:

Middlebury:

Fred Dunnington
Karl Neuse

Monkton:

New Haven:

Harvey Smith

Orwell:

David King

Panton:

David Raphael

Ripton:

Jeremy Grip

Salisbury:

Shoreham:

Starksboro:

Vergennes:

Randy Friday
John Emerson

Waltham:

Weybridge:

Whiting:

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES

AC Chamber of Commerce:

AC Community Action Group:

Otter Creek Audubon Society: Judy Kowalczyk

AC Economic Development Corp:

STAFF:

Adam Lougee

Public Program

Presentation on Preliminary Plans to Improve the VELCO Transmission Corridor in Addison County

Harvey introduced Tom Dunn from VELCO and invited him to speak concerning VELCO's preliminary plans for upgrading the Electric Transmission corridor in Addison County. Tom introduced the other employees of VELCO represented tonight including Tom Wies, the company's general counsel, Tonia Karnedy, an environmental engineer, Gary Parker the head of

the engineering division and Richard Watts, a private consultant helping VELCO to organize meetings.

Tom explained that VELCO is a transmission only company. They are the poles and wires that serve the generators and are required to provide access to the grid. VELCO's focus is to maintain reliability of the bulk power system. They are responsible for maintaining the system at an operational level even if some segments are knocked out.

Randy Friday asked whether GMP or VELCO owned the transmission lines. Tom explained that VELCO operated the large transmission lines in the state, GMP operated the smaller local transmission lines. Since the power grid is linked, VELCO's system will affect all other transmission lines in the state. Tom explained that all the transmission lines in New England, New York and Pennsylvania are linked and must work in balance.

The Vermont grid was built in the 60's and 70's and has not been upgraded substantially since that time. VELCO is particularly concerned with Northwest Vermont because of the load growth in the area. Four lines on the system converge in Burlington. If one fails the system is much more vulnerable. Tom noted that the line in from Quebec to Highgate, the largest line currently operates equipment similar to that which has failed in other states.

Tom also noted that not a lot of new generation exists in Vermont. Yankee and McNeil are the only two significant generating plants in Vermont. New plants are coming on line in Maine and Massachusetts, but those are too far away to help Vermont. Load peak grew by 7% this summer in Vermont.

Jeremy Grip of Ripton asked how significant are transmission costs in relation to generation costs. Tom explained that on a dollar of energy purchased transmission costs are about 3 cents.

Another member of the audience present stated that Amory Lovins, an energy expert, recently spoke in Vermont regarding the viability of wind and small-scale hydro and energy cells. Why should we build large-scale transmission lines instead of investing in small-scale transmission? Tom responded that fuel cells are not currently viable. He also noted that wind power in Vermont is generally on the ridgeline and still needs transmission.

Tom showed a growth forecast that had been prepared with the public service department projecting a 2% growth rate. He noted the projection will not be perfect, but this is the department of public service's best estimate.

Peter Grant asked how standard voltage levels were selected? Gary Parker stated that you start with initial design and it is very hard to change. Some of the standards date back years.

Tom Dunn noted that New England generating capacity is currently and projected to be in good shape, largely because of new generation in Maine.

Tom continued that VELCO's strategic plan involves a number of different platforms to improve transmission capabilities. Increase the Essex transmission station, improve line in Rutland, tie into other transmission lines and finally look at reliability in Northwest Vermont by extending a new 345 kV line from West Rutland to New Haven, a new substation in New Haven and a new 115 kV line along existing Green Mountain Power corridor to Burlington. It will not involve a new corridor, but will be side by side in the existing corridor with the existing line.

Judy Kowalczyk asked Tom to describe the scale of the structures VELCO is proposing. Judy followed by asking why one needs two lines in the same corridor after the new line is built. Tom explained that it is a cost issue of several million dollars involving keeping utilization of existing substations and an express line with no substations from here to Burlington.

Henry _____, a selectman from Monkton, asked about building the new line over the existing structure. Tom Dunn noted that this has some negative aesthetic impacts and also creates a less reliable system. Duplicate towers can help preserve viability.

Judy Kowalczyk asked about using smaller structures. Tom noted that the voltage dictates the size of the structure. One needs certain isolation distances with increased voltage to keep energy from jumping from the lines and taking down the system.

Karl Neuse asked if it will be necessary to do new condemnation to accommodate the new system. Tonia Karnady noted that VELCO already had a 300-foot ROW through most of the county and would not need to acquire land in most areas. In several areas of New Haven and Monkton VELCO may need to acquire property.

Judy asked if there were alternatives bigger than 115 but smaller than 345kV. Tom noted that 230 kV is an option, but it is not economically feasible because VELCO is already at 345kv in Rutland and would need to be at that level on this line or VELCO would need to rebuild its substation in Rutland.

Peter Grant asked where the power came from. Tom explained that most power comes in from Hydro Quebec, but VELCO wants to make sure that power can flow north from Rutland as well.

Fred Dunnington asked why not merely ensure the line from Hydro Quebec by upgrading Highgate. Tom explained that buying spares for Highgate would cost \$15 million dollars. Although the line upgrade would cost \$85 million, it will bring a lot more benefits to the stability of the grid.

Karl Neuse noted that as planners we want to make sure our system will support the economic viability of the area. Tom noted that as a company one of VELCO's primary responsibilities is to ensure the reliability of the grid.

Ed Payne noted that wind generation has not fared well in Act 248.

Adam Lougee asked about VELCO's timeframe for moving forward.

Tom noted that VELCO planned to finish alternatives analysis in 2002. If transmission option is the best alternative going forward they will submit an application in 4th quarter 2002 and have the line in service in 2006.

Tom concluded that load growth will continue to increase. The 115kv line from Vergennes to Burlington is the weakest link in the system in this area and needs to be upgraded to help Northwest Vermont.

Tom thanked the commission for having them. Harvey thanked Tom for coming and noted that this is the first of many public outreach meetings and encouraged interested towns to invite VELCO to their meetings to discuss its plans.

Business Meeting

Approval of Minutes: October 10, 2001

Peter Grant moved to approve the minutes from October 10, 2001. Fred Dunnington seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. David Raphael abstained.

Treasurer's Report

Adam distributed the treasurer's report and announced that the commission is in good shape. **Karl Neuse moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Fred Dunnington seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Committee Reports

TAC: John Emerson noted that Dufrense Henry had an outline of the final draft of their study of traffic in the Vergennes area and would finish their study shortly. The TAC met with Bob Hall, the administrator from the Town of Bristol, to craft an RFP for a parking study in the Village area. The Bike/Ped Study is finished, it is being distributed to the public and should be ready for a last meeting for public comment very shortly.

Local Government: No activity since last meeting

Act 250: Fred noted that we had received several new applications for Act 250 permits including several for antennas for telecommunications on existing farm silos, one from the town of Starksboro to amend its permit on the Colton gravel pit and a couple to extend construction timelines. None had regional significance.

Housing: Please see below.

Natural Resources: David noted that the Natural Resources Committee had met two weeks ago to discuss the TMDL and also the Opportunities for Action from the Lake Champlain Basin Program. The Committee drafted a letter noting that the opportunities For Action comment period was very short and noting some concerns. The committee shall meet again shortly.

Joint Partners Report

None.

Staff and Delegate Recognition

None.

Old Business

Part-time Watershed Planner Position. Adam noted that the timeframe in the advertisement to submit applications expired tomorrow. To date we have 9 good applicants. Adam stated he will be holding interviews shortly and should have some one in the position by the end of the year.

Other: None.

New Business

Summary of FY 2001 Audit Results: Adam distributed the letter from Miller Deverell containing their findings on the financial health and procedures of the Commission. He noted that no problems were discovered and offered copies of the audit to any Commissioner desiring one.

Housing Committee Presentation of the Amendments made to the Population and Housing Section of the Plan: Peter Grant presented the work of the Housing Committee to the entire planning commission. Peter noted that he felt the proposed amendments were fairly presented and constituted a good compromise of principals reflecting the best interest of the region. He agreed to answer any questions other members of the commission might have. Fred Dunnington asked about the table on page 3-33, and specifically about the housing projections for Middlebury and New Haven. Are they accurate? Why is New Haven decreasing? How was table compiled? Fred noted that in the decade with the highest amount of growth ever, Middlebury had increased by 400 units. This table predicts 944 units in five years, which appears to be very high. Fred questioned the accuracy of the projection. **Adam pointed to Footnote 15, which described the sources of the information and noted that he would investigate and respond to Fred. After some further discussion, Karl Neuse moved to accept the work of the Committee and to warn the proposed amendments for public hearing immediately prior to our December and January Full Commission meetings. David King seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Municipal Planning Grant and Enhancement Grant Applications: Adam distributed a summary of the Towns in the region that had submitted municipal planning grants. He noted 6 towns had submitted applications for a total of approximately \$72,000 and that Addison County's allocation was approximately \$53,000. Adam also noted most of the applications were to create Town plans or zoning bylaws.

Announcement of Deputy Secretary Micque Glitman's visit to the region: Adam announced that Tuesday, December 11, 2001 Deputy Secretary of Transportation Micque Glitman would visit to the region. Adam stated that the TAC would be working an agenda for her visit at its next meeting and anyone with suggestions should contact Garrett Dague or the TAC.

Other: None.

Members Concerns/Information

David Raphael asked about the proposed commuter train to Vergennes and Middlebury. Randy Friday responded that it was moving ahead on schedule and should be operational to Vergennes in the fall of 2002. Karl noted that he has seen people buying real estate in Ferrisburgh anticipating commuting on the train. Fred Dunnington also noted that the Commission and Middlebury are also working on locating a train station in anticipation of the commuter train.

Adjournment

Peter Grant moved to adjourn. Don Shall seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.
The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Submitted by Adam Lougee