

# Addison County Regional Planning Commission

## Full Commission Meeting

Wednesday, April 10, 2002

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission Meeting was held on April 10, 2002 at Middlebury College's Kenyon Lounge with Harvey Smith presiding.

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### ROLL CALL:

|                     |                   |                    |                 |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Addison:</i>     |                   | <i>Orwell:</i>     | David King      |
| <i>Bridport:</i>    | Edward Payne      | <i>Panton:</i>     |                 |
|                     | Kent Wright       |                    |                 |
| <i>Bristol:</i>     | William Sayre     | <i>Ripton:</i>     |                 |
|                     | Jim Peabody       |                    |                 |
|                     | Peter Grant       |                    |                 |
| <i>Cornwall:</i>    | Donald Shall      | <i>Salisbury:</i>  |                 |
|                     | William McQuillan |                    |                 |
| <i>Ferrisburgh:</i> | David Shlansky    | <i>Shoreham:</i>   | William O'Neill |
| <i>Goshen:</i>      |                   | <i>Starksboro:</i> |                 |
| <i>Leicester:</i>   |                   | <i>Vergennes:</i>  | Randy Friday    |
|                     |                   |                    | April Jin       |
| <i>Lincoln:</i>     |                   | <i>Waltham:</i>    | Thomas Yager    |
| <i>Middlebury:</i>  | Fred Dunnington   | <i>Weybridge:</i>  |                 |
|                     | Karl Neuse        |                    |                 |
| <i>Monkton:</i>     | Thea Gaudette     | <i>Whiting:</i>    | Peg Allen       |
|                     | Charles Huizenga  |                    |                 |
| <i>New Haven:</i>   | Harvey Smith      |                    |                 |

### CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

*AC Chamber of Commerce:*  
*AC Community Action Group:*  
*AC Economic Development Corp:*  
*Otter Creek Audubon Society:*

### STAFF:

Kevin Behm  
Brandy Saxton

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## Public Hearing

The Public Program began at 7:35 pm. Guests included Scudder Parker, Director of the Energy Efficiency Division of the Vermont Department of Public Service and leader of the Wind Siting Consensus Building Project. Also present was David Blittersdorf, the owner of NRG Systems Inc., a manufacturer of wind measuring equipment based in Hinesburg.

David Blittersdorf started the evening with an overview of renewable energy. He explained that there are several reasons for decreasing our dependence on fossil fuels: they are finite and dirty; and the supply will not keep up with demand; world oil production will peak in 1-15 years; the United States imports over 60% of its oil; and Vermont imports 90% of our energy. Renewable energy, on the other hand, is clean, infinite, safe, secure; it is available in Vermont; and it's getting cheaper.

David also discussed small wind systems versus large wind systems. Small systems range from 0.3 to 100 kW in output. They're more expensive, but they're more valuable in terms of the power generated and they require less wind. Large wind systems range in size from 100 kW to 2 MW. They provide wholesale bulk power and require 16 mph average wind sites or higher. Projects operate at 35% capacity factors at good wind sites. Select projects are delivering power at about 3 cents/kWh, which is competitive with natural gas production.

David then examined ways that communities could allow for small wind generators as permitted uses. He suggests that communities could require: a maximum height of 80 ft. for 5 acres or less and a maximum height of 100 ft minimum for greater than 5 acres; setbacks equal to the tower height; no lights; turbines and towers painted neutral white or gray colors; and noise should not exceed 50 db at 300 ft.

Scudder Parker then spoke to the commission about energy issues and how they affect the state. The state is concerned about the diversity of electric generation in New England over the next 10 years. The best way to diversify, he said, is to develop our renewable energy systems.

We need to think about renewable energy in a new way, Scudder explained. Fluctuating fuel prices has always been the big variable in the energy market. For renewable energy, however, that fluctuation does not exist. The state is trying to assess the wind potential as a whole. They are in a consensus-building process to get project developers, land owners and land users together. There are four or five projects currently being looked at or in development in the state. Vermont is very active in developing Biomass energy sources. Farm methane digestion systems are currently being experimented with thanks to a federal grant. Solar is also being used on a smaller scale, but it's more costly. However, the best solar generation period coincides with the time of greatest demand in New England (summer).

Scudder then discussed S.264, Promotion of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Electric Generation. The bill has six impacts. First, consumers would have the option to purchase electricity that is generated by renewable sources. Second, it requires that companies selling electricity at retail own enough tradeable renewable energy credits to meet the RPS. Third, it describes a regulatory approach that relies on financial incentives and disincentives to induce desired outcomes. Fourth, it allows for group net metering, especially for farms or groups of homes. Fifth, it expands the sales tax exemption for renewable generation equipment. Last, it provides financial support for development of renewable generation and combined heat and power generation projects.

Harvey asked about fuel cell technology and whether the state has considered it. Scudder answered that it will be considered a renewable fuel technology for the purposes of the bill.

Peter Grant asked about the need for power generated by fossil fuels when and if the renewable energy sources don't produce. Scudder answered that current power generation always produces more than it uses because it produces to meet peak demand. Intermittent technologies can be integrated into the existing power grid. You put capacity in place and then manage it for high reliability.

David said that the new version of the future is efficiency first, renewable second, then backstop with fossils. Those fossil technologies should only be used during peak times or when renewable sources can't produce.

Scudder pointed out that we take for granted the vulnerability of the current system. These renewable technologies will increase the reliability of the system as a whole.

Bill O'Neill asked about federal incentives to the states in this regard. Scudder said that Sen. Jeffords has a national portfolio standard in the works. That would be significant. He believes that production tax credits are the most effective in helping Vermont's plans come to fruition. It helps create additional value for renewable energy and may be the difference needed to make it feasible.

Ed Payne asked about how these plans will gain approval considering the opposition by citizen groups that don't want wind turbines littering the landscape. Scudder said that it's a difficult problem, but the consensus-building project has been very helpful. Interest level and participation is high. He thinks that windmills will become accepted if done carefully and thoughtfully. People will come to value them or eventually see them as normal. The systems in Searsburg have become more accepted now that they've been installed.

Karl Neuse asked if the Senate bill will be taken up in the State House. Harvey answered that they're working on it, but there are some sticking points, particularly with regard to the group net metering aspect of the bill. David said that the crux of the matter is that utilities don't like net metering because they lose money. The key is to help them continue to make money in those situations. Scudder said that microgrids are a great way to go and would reward utilities.

Harvey asked whether there's a cost benefit analysis for these future systems. Scudder said that he wants to see new generation integrated into the grid. The grid acts like a battery. It keeps costs down and helps the system become more reliable. He said the rate impact potential if market prices for power stay the way they are now is about 1%. If fossil prices go up, that number becomes positive.

Tom Yager asked the cost to a homeowner or farm to install a small wind turbine. David said one tower might generate \$1000/year worth of electricity and cost \$35,000 to install. The price would come down drastically if manufacturing efficiencies were enhanced. Because it's a cottage industry, the costs are so high. We need to create an industry to make this cost effective, he said.

Bill O'Neill asked about maintenance expenses. David answered that turbines are very simple devices. They're very reliable over 20 years. They usually recommend 5 to 10 year maintenance intervals.

Bill Sayre asked about small-scale hydro versus large-scale hydro and why large-scale systems aren't considered a renewable energy source under the bill. Scudder said the goal of the portfolio standard is to look to new standards but the bill states that hydro can be considered. The idea is to encourage new emerging technologies not give incentives for existing technologies.

Harvey thanked the speakers and closed the public hearing at 8:51 pm.

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## Business Meeting

### Approval of Minutes: March 13, 2002

**Peter Grant moved to approve the minutes from March 13, 2002. Don Shall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.** David King asked that we correct paragraph 10 of the minutes to say: it turns out that surfaces closer to the soil do a better job of filtering than do deeper soils.

### Discussion of Executive Board Minutes: no discussion

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### Treasurer's Report

**Peter Grant moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Bill McQuillan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

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### Committee Reports

TAC: no report.

Local Government: no report.

Act 250: no report.

Natural Resources: Harvey said the commission received a reply from the Natural Resources Council in response to the questions posed to it regarding TMDLs. Kevin suggested the committee review the responses and meet to discuss.

Housing: Brandy said the housing survey has been completed. A housing forum for the county will be held in May to discuss affordable housing in the region. It's a needs assessment forum, she said.

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## **Joint Partners Report**

No report.

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## **Staff and Delegate Recognition**

Harvey welcomed William (Bill) O'Neill, a new delegate from Shoreham.

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## **Old Business**

### **Voting Requirements to Amend the Regional Plan:**

**Vote on Amendments of the Population and Housing Section of the Plan:** no vote due to lack of quorum.

**Vote on Re-adoption of the Plan:** no vote due to lack of quorum.

**Annual Meeting, May 8, 2002:** Kevin said the annual meeting would be forestry oriented and would likely be held at Mary's Restaurant. He also noted that the commission is proposing paying for the meal.

**Jim Peabody moved that the commission shall not pay for the cost of meals and/or facilities and/or entertainment for the attendees at the commission's annual meeting, except that these costs shall be paid for any special guests invited by the commission. Kent Wright seconded the motion.**

Kevin said that the reason for the suggestion was to entice members to attend so we could hold a vote on the amendments to the plan. Karl commented that the state reimburses its other employees for their out-of-pocket expenses while performing their duty. **Peter moved to vote on the motion. Kent seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**A vote was held on Jim's motion: 3 votes in favor, 11 votes opposed. Bill O'Neill and Tom Yager abstained. The motion failed.**

### **Other:**

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## **New Business**

**Report of Nominating Committee for Executive Board Elections and other nominations:** The committee nominates Harvey Smith for Chair, Thea Gaudette for Vice Chair, Ellen Kurrelmeyer for Secretary, and Don Shall for Treasurer. The committee also nominated Tom Yager, Karl Neuse and David King for "At Large" members. The floor was then opened for additional nominations; none were made.

**Proposed Budget for 2002-2003:** Kevin handed out a proposed budget and discussed some of the specifics of the budget. He said the commission needs to spend the grant funds in this next fiscal year because they may not be extended. Charles Huizenga asked what happened to the money from ....??? Kevin answered....

Randy Friday asked whether the commission's rent is going up. He also asked about repair expenses and what they are. Kevin answered that those expenses are for minor things like replacing light bulbs and de-icing outside. Randy asked about the jump in public officials insurance and why that's such a large increase. Kevin said he would look into it. Randy asked about equipment maintenance. Kevin said that they experienced a large expenditure recently for the projector, which broke.

Bill asked about reports for the project impact grants? Harvey said they will ask for an update from Tim.

Randy asked about equipment depreciation and why nothing was allocated. Kevin said...

Fred said it looked like money was available from the contingency funds. Kevin answered that....

Randy asked about the salary increase. Kevin answered that Hillary's part-time employment has affected that number, although there may be some salary raises as well.

**Other:**

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## **Adjournment**

**Peter Grant moved to adjourn. Fred Dunnington seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:26 pm.**

*Submitted by Ursula Jones*