

Natural Resources Committee

DRAFT Minutes

Nov 25, 2013

Committee Members: Lynn Bisbee, Peter Grant, David Hamilton (Vice-Chair), David Ludwig, Andrea Ochs (Chair), Ed Payne, Mark Pumiglia, Paul Wagner, Kent Wright

Present: Ed Paine, Mark Pumiglia, Paul Wagner, Peter Grant

Staff: Kevin Behm

Guest:

Since neither Andrea nor David was in attendance, Kevin called the committee to order at 7:05.

The Committee members were provided copies of VT Gas's 45 day filing notice for Phase 2 which included the proposed route map sheets.

Paul noted that he had attended several landowner meetings of property owners that would be subject to an easement for the transmission pipeline. He is not eligible for natural gas service however. He stated that only approximately 60 Cornwall residents and about 120 Shoreham residents would be eligible for gas service. Mark thought that the cost of natural gas for the paper plant would be quite a bit lower than the fuel oil and wood they are currently burning. Kevin said that the paper plant would still need to be able to burn oil and wood since the plant would be considered an 'interruptible' user if regional gas supplies were depleted. Residences would have priority. Paul stated that the Town of Shoreham will likely be voting on whether to accept gas distribution lines to the town center.

Paul asked about the possibility of a Vermont natural gas power plant. He felt a gas plant could provide baseload electrical generation to the region. Kevin noted that there were several proposals for electricity to be transmitted via DC cables from Canadian hydro plants down Lake Champlain to New York and Vermont. The New York proposal is the Champlain Hudson Power Express Project – a 1,000 MW DC cable.

Kevin mentioned that there is no guarantee that the price of natural gas will stay low. The economics of energy sources tend to force prices to equalize. The availability of natural gas has created an opportunity for more industrial and commercial users which could push prices upward. Also, once pipelines reach major ports, the gas can be sold to other markets in Europe and Asia where prices are higher. Peter mentioned that natural gas can be stored in floating tanks which he recalled seeing.

Peter said that the 50 foot cleared corridor that is required for the transmission line would be a problem for wildlife when it cuts through a wooded area. Animals will be hesitant to traverse a cleared swath which used to be forest. Paul stated that the proposed 50 foot easement across his property allowed for annual cropping, but nothing else.

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The Committee briefly reviewed map sheets concerning the pipeline segment under Lake Champlain. The pipeline depth under the lake sediment appears to be a maximum of about 15 feet. Members recalled that a depth of 30 to 40 feet was mentioned at one of the meetings with VT Gas. Members noted that the depth would be about 30 feet below some areas of the shoreline. Peter felt that the depth below the lake should be verified, especially in light of the underwater power cable that is proposed.

Ed said that David has been attending the Act 250/248 and Energy Committee hearings and has provided questions on behalf of the NRC concerning the lay-down area and constituents of the natural gas. Members felt that the natural resource concerns raised under the Phase 1 application were also pertinent to Phase 2. Under the Phase 1 proposal, the agreement between ANR and VT Gas addressed most of those concerns and the Committee agreed that ANR will likely address the same concerns under Phase 2.

The Committee adjourned at 8:50.