

1 STATE OF VERMONT
2 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE

3
4 RE: THE SOUTHERN WINDSOR COUNTY REGIONAL
5 PLANNING COMMISSION'S REQUEST FOR A
6 DETERMINATION OF ENERGY COMPLIANCE
7 PURSUANT TO 24 V.S.A. SECTION 4352

8
9
10 September 4, 2018
11 6:00 p.m.

12 -----
13 Martin Memorial Hall
14 Ascutney, Vermont

15 Public hearing held before the Department of
16 Public Service at the Martin Memorial Hall,
17 5259 US Route 5, Ascutney, Vermont, on
18 September 4, 2018 beginning at 6:00 p.m.

19 P R E S E N T

20 Vermont Department of Public Service:

21 Riley Allen, Deputy Commissioner
22 Anne Margolis, Renewable Energy Development Director
23 Sheila Grace, Special Counsel

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1 MR. ALLEN: Okay. So welcome. This is a
2 public hearing regarding the Southern Windsor County
3 Regional Planning Commission's request for a
4 determination of energy compliance pursuant to Title 24
5 of the Vermont Statutes Annotated, Section 4352. My
6 name is Riley Allen. I am the Deputy Commissioner of
7 the Public Service Department. With me is Anne
8 Margolis, our Planning and Energy Resources Division
9 Analyst, and Sheila Grace from the Public Advocacy
10 Division of the Department.

11 I'll start by offering a little context for our
12 hearing. Act 174 was, created a new energy planning
13 process in Vermont for regional planning commissions
14 and municipalities. Pursuant to this process, a
15 regional planning commission has the option of
16 submitting its duly adopted plan to the Commissioner of
17 the Department of Public Service for an affirmative
18 determination of compliance with the statutory
19 standards of Title 24.

20 When a regional planning commission has received
21 an affirmative compliance determination under the
22 relevant section, the Vermont Public Utility Commission
23 is required to afford substantial deference in Section
24 248 proceedings to the land conservation measures and
25 specific policies contained in such a plan when

1 reviewing any proposed electric generation facility in
2 the region covered by the plan.

3 I'll just jump ahead for a moment and, and suggest
4 that, anybody who wants to offer any comments, please
5 sign in. There is a sign-in sheet here. For purposes
6 of this, or the purpose of this hearing is to gather
7 input from you, the public, regarding the planning
8 commission's request for a determination from the
9 Department of Public Service that the regional plan
10 complies with the energy planning requirements set
11 forth in the statute.

12 If the Department finds the plan complies, the
13 land conservation measures and specific policies
14 contained in the plan will receive substantial
15 deference during any Public Utility Commission siting
16 review of any proposed electric generation facility
17 within the member towns of the Southern Windsor County
18 Regional Planning Commission.

19 We've asked Jason Rasmussen, Director of Planning
20 at the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning
21 Commission, to begin the hearing with a brief overview
22 of the plan, after which we will invite members of the
23 public to provide input. We have a sign-up sheet for
24 you, and I'm also going to encourage you to submit
25 written comments to the Department via an email

1 address: psd.planning.standards@vermont.gov. If
2 anyone needs that email address, just let us know.

3 Um, also, as you can see, we have a court reporter
4 transcribing this evening's events. So, with that, I'm
5 going to turn it over to Jason to lead us through the
6 plan.

7 MR. RASMUSSEN: Okay. So, you know, when we
8 first started this process, we thought it was going to
9 be really contentious, and you can see by the crowd it
10 didn't really turn out that way, but it wasn't easy to
11 come to a consensus. So my intent is just to go
12 through a number of slides and give you a sense of what
13 our plan is trying to do, some of the policies that are
14 in it. It's kind of long. I'm probably going to gloss
15 over a couple of slides. You're welcome to stop me if
16 you want more information, anything like that.

17 So our intent in drafting this plan was to be
18 consistent with state planning goals as they relate to
19 energy and other land use goals and that sort of thing.
20 We also were trying to make sure that it included all
21 of the required elements of a regional plan, including
22 the energy element, and I'm going to kind of skip over
23 that a little bit, but it includes a variety of things,
24 analysis of data and a number of different policy
25 statements.

1 And we also wanted to go for this enhanced energy
2 plan status so we followed, we were trying to follow
3 the guidance that the Department has issued and were
4 trying to be consistent with Title 24, V.S.A. Section
5 4352. Very briefly, those are, this is an attempt to
6 summarize some of those requirements for the enhanced
7 energy plan.

8 So, you know, essentially, we're embracing the
9 state energy goals in this plan. We had to do some
10 detailed analysis of energy data. We had to establish
11 targets for, you know, the electric sector, heating,
12 and renewable energy for the years 2025, 2035, and
13 2050, and then we had to have implementation actions
14 for a number of different things, and we had a lot of
15 resource mapping that was part of this effort as well.
16 So I'm going to try to summarize some of that stuff
17 that's in the plan.

18 So, again, these are some of the state energy
19 goals that we're trying to meet. So, probably, the
20 biggest one of them that, you know, in terms of our
21 discussion on this was really just trying to meet all
22 remaining energy needs from renewable energy sources,
23 90 percent by the year 2050, and that's not easy to do.
24 So our plan is trying to get us moving in that, in that
25 direction at the right speed in which to get there to

1 the extent we have control over that.

2 So I'm going to skip over that a little bit. So
3 our energy plan is not just the energy plan. We did
4 adopt it sort of as a separate document itself, but it
5 is a volume of our broader regional plan. So it is --
6 you know, we do need to look at the land use chapter,
7 for example, and what we're calling Volume 1 of the
8 regional plan. We also have a Volume 2 that's a
9 transportation plan. So sort of all of those things
10 combined is what our energy plan is in terms of meeting
11 the various different requirements.

12 Real briefly, you know, we've made some efforts to
13 get people involved, Julia included. We tried to get
14 our towns involved, specifically many of our local
15 energy committee folks. Julia is one of those. And so
16 we had a number of different outreach efforts that we
17 did, just emails and just letting people know about it,
18 newsletters, etc. But, more specifically, we had some
19 informational meetings, two of them specifically, early
20 on in the process.

21 We had some -- once we had a -- we had a
22 preliminary draft that we asked for a pre-review of
23 that. We got some good comments back. We tried to
24 address those comments, and, at that point, we had some
25 of these presentations with some of the local energy

1 folks back over the winter and with our board, and we
2 were just trying to present our draft at that time for
3 feedback.

4 Got some feedback, made some further changes, and,
5 ultimately, we had our two public hearings later in the
6 spring. It was adopted by our board in June and was
7 submitted to the DPS in July for, for their
8 determination, and so that's that rich process in
9 general.

10 MR. ALLEN: Jason, can you just give me a
11 sense of the kind of level of engagement that, that you
12 were getting? Was it considerable, or has it been
13 pretty light throughout?

14 MR. RASMUSSEN: No.

15 MR. ALLEN: No?

16 MR. RASMUSSEN: No. You know, we expected a
17 lot of people telling us what they thought.

18 MR. ALLEN: Yeah?

19 MR. RASMUSSEN: We really didn't have a lot
20 of people showing up to these things. You know, our
21 first meeting was pretty good. Maybe 30 or something
22 people showed up to it. The second informational
23 meeting was modestly okay, maybe more like 20.

24 MR. ALLEN: Yeah?

25 MR. RASMUSSEN: And the numbers seemed to

1 drop after that.

2 MR. ALLEN: Okay.

3 MR. RASMUSSEN: I don't know why that is, but
4 --

5 MR. ALLEN: Okay, thanks.

6 MR. KENNEDY: If I may, what we thought we
7 were going to be able to do is to get more involvement
8 by the local energy committees, and so we really
9 targeted these local energy committees, and I think,
10 after the FERC meeting, it seemed as though they were
11 in agreement as far as what we were doing, and so I
12 think that, and then we were sending them drafts so I
13 think they felt like we were doing what they wanted to
14 see done, and so they didn't, they didn't come.

15 So that was one of the, one of the things that was
16 happening, but, as you can see, as Jason said, when we
17 first started off, we had quite a number of people, and
18 then, towards the end of it, we really struggled
19 getting the local energy committees to --

20 MR. ALLEN: When you say that you think
21 you're doing essentially what they wanted you to be
22 doing, can you just give me a sense?

23 MR. KENNEDY: There's a really strong
24 emphasis in this area on solar and not on a lot of
25 industrial wind, and, and so I think that was a major

1 concern as far as facilities were, were concerned.

2 MR. ALLEN: Okay.

3 MR. KENNEDY: And so what we did is we tried
4 to straddle. It wouldn't necessarily be industrial
5 wind. We were calling it commercial, commercial wind.
6 There was also some interest in if we could get to the
7 scale, and we didn't try, but, you know, biomass and
8 things like that because we do have a lot of wood in
9 this area, but it was, it's, as you know, that's
10 difficult to do and have it be efficient. So I don't
11 know if you want to add anything to that.

12 MR. ALLEN: Okay. Thanks, Jason.

13 MR. RASMUSSEN: That sounds good. Yeah, we
14 hope that that's part of it is that we were doing a
15 reasonably good job with it so people didn't have
16 comments, which is maybe why they weren't showing up.
17 I don't know if that's the case or not.

18 So I'm going to try to summarize some of the key
19 outcomes of the plan. So, you know, we have some
20 fairly ambitious energy goals as a state. We're not
21 really on the trajectory to meet it in many ways in
22 this region and other places. So we know that we have
23 a tough road ahead of us if we're going to meet these
24 goals. So we're trying to shoot for, you know,
25 essentially decreasing our energy use by half by 2050,

1 and it's also tough to have strategies as a regional
2 planning commission that have real meaningful input
3 towards that.

4 So one of the things -- now, these are just our
5 broad goals, and we're going to get into some other
6 ones later, but a lot of what we're trying to do is to
7 really just support our local energy committees, local
8 energy coordinators in doing what they do, trying to
9 inform folks about these sorts of things. I don't
10 think there's always awareness about what all of the
11 Efficiency Vermont programs and energy codes and all
12 those sorts of things. So part of it is really just to
13 support those local efforts.

14 Heating, so, you know, we have about 11,000
15 year-round residences in the region. Average heating
16 cost, about \$2,100 a year. You know, it's expensive,
17 and so we're trying to do what we can do to bring those
18 things down. Certainly, there's a lot of programs out
19 there. They do weatherization. Hasn't helped as much
20 as we wanted to. We haven't had as many homes
21 weatherized as we'd like. So we're trying to work
22 towards those sorts of things.

23 So, again, increasing awareness of programs that
24 could help folks, educating the state and promoting
25 state energy codes, encouraging stretch energy codes.

1 So that's going above and beyond the state energy code,
2 and those sorts of things are some of the strategies
3 we're focusing on. There's more, but those are sort of
4 the main ideas, and please stop me if there's questions
5 at any point.

6 So in the transportation sector, you know, we
7 drive a lot. We're a rural place. Our people drive a
8 lot to jobs that are not in our region, and so we
9 recognize that. It's not always easy for us to deal
10 with, but it's something that we're working towards,
11 and so, you know, we're looking at things like public
12 transit, ride sharing, park-and-ride lots, walking and
13 biking more to the extent we can, but I think a lot of
14 it really does come down to electric vehicles, having
15 more efficient cars, biodiesel for trucks and those
16 sorts of things for us. Because many of our jobs are
17 in the Upper Valley and places like that.

18 MR. ALLEN: So you have EVs and EV charging
19 as kind of a strategy.

20 MR. RASMUSSEN: Yeah.

21 MR. ALLEN: And is there, are there actions
22 that you're taking to essentially fulfill or ensure
23 that there's success in that strategy?

24 MR. RASMUSSEN: We hope so. I mean, yes. So
25 I think, you know, we recognize that's one of the

1 things that both the state and the region are looking
2 to do. You know, what can we, as an RPC, do? So I
3 think we're trying to help local energy committees and
4 others understand that electric vehicles is a good
5 option. The batteries are getting better all the time.
6 And also to help with sort of that infrastructure, so
7 getting more EV charging stations built out in the area
8 so folks have an ability to charge up their car when
9 they need to.

10 MR. ALLEN: And are communities -- just to
11 hearken back to your prior slide, are there communities
12 that are interested in stretch, stretch codes?

13 MR. RASMUSSEN: Not that I'm aware of at this
14 time.

15 MR. ALLEN: Okay.

16 MR. RASMUSSEN: No.

17 MR. ALLEN: Got your work cut out for you.
18 Okay.

19 MR. RASMUSSEN: I mean, I think there are
20 people who definitely are interested in net-zero homes
21 and net-zero-ready homes and things like that, and I
22 think we want to make people aware that that's a
23 possibility for building homes. I'm not sure that
24 there are towns at this point in time ready to enact
25 some sort of a bylaw or other incentives at this point

1 in time, but we want to work towards that and get that
2 idea in their heads so maybe in the future they will.

3 MR. ALLEN: Okay, thanks.

4 MR. RASMUSSEN: So, electricity, we've been
5 fairly flat-lining in terms of our energy usage. We
6 recognize we need to decrease it, and also part of the
7 challenge with that is electric vehicles and heat pumps
8 and things like that are going to increase demand. So
9 we really do need to decrease other energy usage
10 significantly. So, you know, we realize that.

11 So, again, some of the strategies we're looking at
12 are just, again, just supporting some of those
13 efficiency programs that are Efficiency Vermont, making
14 people aware of what's out there and available to them,
15 encouraging investment in energy-efficient utilities --
16 so, if you're buying a new refrigerator, get an Energy
17 Star one or something like that -- you know, and then
18 some more simple things for people who are building or
19 renovating a house, just the idea of daylighting and
20 other things, lighting upgrades that can save energy,
21 that sort of thing.

22 And, more than anything, that's, we recognize
23 we're probably more just supporting what's already out
24 there more so than creating something new or anything
25 like that and supporting what the towns are trying to

1 do in this regard.

2 So, in terms of renewables, this is a, this slide
3 just tries to explain what we have, more or less,
4 today. This is our baseline. So this is actually the
5 year 2015. You know, we had 276 solar sites at that
6 point in time, a few windmills, a couple of hydro
7 projects, and nothing else, really. So we're
8 generating about 9, almost 9.5 megawatts of energy
9 through our existing, if you will, renewable resources
10 at this time or in 2015.

11 These are our targets. So we, this is just
12 showing how we broke it out for our towns, and that's
13 based on population. The ability of towns, the
14 potential for towns to have solar is what we looked at,
15 and then we also looked at sort of commercial
16 development, existing commercial development, and we
17 tried to break down targets for each town based on
18 those factors, and, you know, the results are what
19 you're seeing there. We need to come up with 194,000
20 and change of megawatt hours for the region, and then
21 we broke it out for each town.

22 Um, so, you know, that's a lot of energy. So this
23 is just one scenario for how we might get there from
24 here, and so, you know, there was interest in looking
25 at a mix of things. So we were looking at, well, let's

1 see if we can maximize rooftop solar, do some
2 residential-scale wind, and then try to do hydro,
3 though we recognize permitting is an issue, and then
4 sort of fill out the rest of it with ground-mounted
5 solar. This was our scenario that we were working
6 within the plan. We're not saying this is what we
7 specifically want, but it's one scenario that would
8 work.

9 MR. ALLEN: On the hydro do you see
10 permitting as the main barrier as opposed to --

11 MR. RASMUSSEN: Permitting and cost, I
12 suppose, both, but permitting is a challenge.

13 MR. KENNEDY: Yeah, we have not been
14 successful in getting anything hydro newly permitted.
15 Existing hydro, we've done, but we've really struggled
16 even with microhydro.

17 MR. RASMUSSEN: Right. So a lot of our
18 energy committees were really interested in these
19 microhydro systems. I'm no expert in the permitting,
20 but my understanding is it's very difficult to get
21 those permitted as well, and so it's difficult.

22 MR. ALLEN: So help me out. What are the
23 kind of permitting issues that are presenting the
24 greatest challenge?

25 MR. KENNEDY: Fish is a huge one.

1 MS. MARGOLIS: You have to get a federal
2 license. You have to get a FERC license, which is the
3 hurdle as opposed to a State 248.

4 MR. ALLEN: But it is administered by the
5 Agency of Natural Resources, is it not?

6 MR. KENNEDY: Yes. We can't even get through
7 state permitting even before we even get to the
8 federal, you know? So there's a real somewhat of a
9 disconnect with that. And then one of the programs
10 that the State has is, actually, they're, they want us
11 to get rid of dams. So we're breaching dams now.

12 MR. ALLEN: I see.

13 MR. KENNEDY: So --

14 MR. ALLEN: All right.

15 MR. RASMUSSEN: So, specifically looking at
16 solar, you know, the image in the bottom picture is one
17 of our local projects that we kind of like because you
18 can't really see it from anywhere. It is a little
19 solar project that's in Cavendish. It's behind a
20 wastewater treatment facility. It slopes away from the
21 road, and on the other side is state land, and just
22 nobody sees it. So it's wonderful. A lot of people
23 say, That's the type of thing that we'd like to see,
24 specifically. So we recognize we have a lot of
25 potential for solar in the region.

1 If you look at that little graphic, the blue
2 represents, or the whole circle really represents the
3 land area in the region. The orange is prime solar
4 potential land area, and then the gray sliver is, if
5 we're to meet our target with solar, that's what that
6 would look like in terms of a relationship of total
7 land area.

8 MR. ALLEN: Can you give me just a sense of
9 magnitude? I mean, it sounds like you have roughly 10
10 megawatts of kind of existing renewable capacity in the
11 region, 9.5 something, I think it was.

12 MR. RASMUSSEN: Yeah.

13 MR. ALLEN: So what is, what is kind of the ,
14 the target, I mean, in terms of ramping that up? Do
15 you have -- can you give me a multiple or sense?
16 Because 10 megawatts for -- I think it's 11,000
17 customers or households, did you say?

18 MR. RASMUSSEN: I didn't say, and I don't
19 remember, actually.

20 MR. KENNEDY: We have 11,000 homes, not
21 residential. So we have a fairly significant second
22 home market as well here.

23 MR. ALLEN: Yeah, that's a lot of renewable
24 power that you have for the --

25 MR. RASMUSSEN: It is.

1 MR. ALLEN: -- the size of the population.

2 MR. RASMUSSEN: So you're right. We have
3 just under 10 megawatts of existing renewable
4 generation, and our target would be roughly 100 and
5 almost 60 megawatts of new.

6 MR. ALLEN: Okay.

7 MR. RASMUSSEN: So that's a big leap forward
8 in terms of new solar.

9 MR. ALLEN: Right.

10 MR. RASMUSSEN: And this is sort of a picture
11 of what that might look like in terms of how much land
12 area in the region would that mean the solar panels
13 cover in order to meet that target? About a thousand
14 acres.

15 And then these are just some of the policies that
16 sort of we came up with as part of this. You know, we
17 strongly support rooftop solar and residential-scale
18 solar. We encourage solar on these preferred sites,
19 and then, you know, solar projects of 150 kW or larger,
20 you know, we want certain considerations to be made for
21 those. You know, is it, is it sort of suitable for the
22 character of the area in which it's located? You know,
23 and we do generally want to see some landscaping that
24 sort of helps the aesthetic between the project and the
25 traveling public on public roads passing by.

1 We do have a number of known constraints which
2 we've identified. They're the same as what the, the
3 GPS, DPS guidance is for our mapping standards, those
4 same things. We're asking that they avoid those
5 places, and we don't want to see undue adverse impacts
6 on certain resources, essentially, the potential
7 constraint on locations.

8 MR. ALLEN: I'm sorry. Could you just expand
9 again on the known constraints?

10 MR. RASMUSSEN: Yeah. I'm just bringing up
11 my list so I can tell you the, I don't miss anything.
12 So known constraints involve vernal pools, river
13 corridors, floodways, state significant natural
14 communities, and rare, threatened, and endangered
15 species. We don't really have any national wilderness
16 areas, but possibly that, and then also Class I and II
17 wetlands. Those are the known constraints.

18 Then the possible constraints, the last bullet
19 would be agricultural soils, prime ag. soils, Act 250
20 agricultural soil mitigation areas, floodplain areas,
21 protected lands -- that's state fee lands and private
22 conservation lands -- deer wintering areas, what's
23 mapped as ANR conservation design, highest priority
24 forest blocks as well as hydric soils. So that's what
25 we're talking about with those two bullets.

1 MR. ALLEN: In the course of your planning,
2 is any consideration given to kind of the capacity of
3 the grid infrastructure to handle or, you know,
4 interconnect, allow interconnection without kind of
5 significant upgrades to the system?

6 MR. RASMUSSEN: To the extent we understand
7 those, yes. I think we tried to address that, but,
8 frankly, there's some unknowns there for us, but, yeah,
9 we recognize there are limitation there and that may
10 not allow us to build out all of this solar.

11 MR. KENNEDY: So that, compared to other
12 parts of the state, that is an issue for us. That is a
13 constraint for intermittent power. Now, with the
14 batteries and so on that they're now, GMP, is
15 introducing, that may help us, but there -- I know in,
16 in Windsor area, for instance, last year so we have
17 never opposed a solar project. Pretty supportive of
18 it, but GMP had some concerns about whether or not they
19 had the capacity with existing transmission or with
20 having to upgrade substations, and so then they got
21 into their whole cost analysis and the like.

22 MR. ALLEN: Okay. And that Windsor project,
23 do you recall how large that was?

24 MR. KENNEDY: So one is, and we're really
25 proud of this one, is they got an initial favorable

1 assessment, and it's on the old former Goodyear plant,
2 and it's on a concrete slab. They actually knocked
3 down part of the building, and so we're going to put
4 500 megawatts on top on the slab. So that got in
5 there, and then there's an adjacent facility called
6 Cone Blanchard, and that one is going to be a little
7 bit smaller, but we have some fairly aggressive solar
8 developers in this area.

9 MR. ALLEN: So I thought I heard you say 500.

10 MR. KENNEDY: It's 500, yeah.

11 MR. ALLEN: 500 kilowatts?

12 MR. KENNEDY: Yeah, kilowatts. Did I say
13 megawatts? Oops. Yeah, that would be pretty big.

14 MR. ALLEN: It's on the record. So I just
15 wanted to make sure.

16 MS. MARGOLIS: It would be awesome.

17 MR. ALLEN: It's only three orders of
18 magnitude above.

19 MR. RASMUSSEN: So that was, that's it on
20 solar, unless there's other questions.

21 MR. ALLEN: Yeah, thanks.

22 MR. RASMUSSEN: Again, wind, we looked at
23 that. You know, we do have quite a bit of wind
24 potential in the region. There's a fair amount of it
25 that's sort of outside of a mile distance of the

1 three-phase power lines so we're sort of taking that
2 into consideration in terms of the cost feasibility of
3 some of that stuff. Again, we definitely support
4 residential-scale wind. We encourage consideration of
5 newer technologies. There's a lot of interest in some
6 of the windmills that do this instead of this.

7 (Indicating.)

8 They may not be as good in terms of power
9 production, but maybe they'll improve. And then, you
10 know, folks wanted to see the possibility of some
11 commercial-scale wind, and, when I say
12 commercial-scale, we're talking, like, up to 50 meters
13 in height as long as it's appropriate for sort of the
14 character of the area that it's in is sort of what
15 we're going for. And, similar to the last one, you
16 know, we want them to avoid known constraints and not
17 to have undue adverse impact on those possible
18 constraints, so the same set of standards that apply
19 for solar.

20 Um, hydro, so we have 6 active facilities. We
21 have 32, actually, maybe 30 now. We just knocked 2
22 down.

23 MR. ALLEN: Oh, okay.

24 MR. RASMUSSEN: About 30 existing dams. The
25 possibility of hydro production is definitely variable.

1 Permitting and cost to do so is, is somewhat
2 problematic. So we recognize that, but we do want to
3 encourage exploration of microhydro, and then, when
4 there are energy dam type projects, we want to evaluate
5 the river dynamics and photoresiliency of those.

6 We want some BMP, best management practices, to be
7 considered, fish passage, moderating ramping rates and,
8 you know, other things that affect erosion and that
9 sort of thing, and we are asking that there's some
10 consideration of mitigation funds for those sorts of
11 negative impacts that can't be sort of dealt with in an
12 operational way. So then those are our policy
13 statements in the plan.

14 MR. ALLEN: So you say 6 hydros are active,
15 so they're generating electricity?

16 MR. RASMUSSEN: Correct.

17 MR. KENNEDY: Right.

18 MR. ALLEN: And are they, are they
19 grid-interconnected, or are they private?

20 MR. RASMUSSEN: So one is owned by GMP, and
21 that's the big one of the 6, and then 5 others are in
22 Springfield, and I think they're all feeding into the
23 grid.

24 MR. KENNEDY: They're on the grid.

25 MR. RASMUSSEN: They're privately owned, but

1 I think they're all feeding into the grid.

2 MR. ALLEN: Okay. And 30 others that are
3 just out there potentially?

4 MR. RASMUSSEN: They're just dams that exist
5 now, and so, again, what we're really looking at is
6 hydro potential is not great. There are issues to
7 create new hydro. So we're sort of focusing in on
8 those existing dams and, maybe, if they get fixed up,
9 maybe possibly consider it hydro, but, again, there are
10 issues to do so.

11 MR. ALLEN: But these are, these are dams
12 that presumably were, like, old dams from mills and the
13 like and have never been kind of energized, at least in
14 terms of producing electricity or --

15 MR. RASMUSSEN: Some have, some have not.
16 You know, so there's a mix. There's a few that had, at
17 one point, I think, generated power. We might like to
18 generate power again there, but it's a big investment.
19 So, you know, you've got to work through those issues.

20 MR. ALLEN: Okay.

21 MR. RASMUSSEN: So we're kind of supportive
22 of that, but we recognize some limitations.

23 MR. ALLEN: Thanks.

24 MR. RASMUSSEN: Then biomass, you know, we,
25 we had a large biomass facility proposed in North

1 Springfield, and that got denied in part due to, you
2 know, greenhouse gas emissions and some other factors.
3 So I think that, you know, we're definitely interested
4 in biomass for heat. A lot of people use wood heat in
5 our region, and we want that to continue. We think it
6 helps the, the forestry economy and so forth.

7 But, when it comes to power, you know, generally
8 speaking, you know, our experience is that large
9 facilities are problematic. So we really ask that they
10 look at, you know, just how they relate again to the
11 character of the area. Is there an adequate and
12 sustainable fuel supply? And those sorts of things as
13 part of that, and we don't have a lot of big farms or
14 other things that would lend itself to a large-scale
15 bio gas kind of operation in our region, but we do
16 support the use of those things at sort of ongoing
17 existing uses, whether it be a farm or a wastewater
18 plant or that sort of thing.

19 MR. ALLEN: Advanced wood heating systems,
20 pellet systems, are those, you know, popular in the
21 region or --

22 MR. RASMUSSEN: Yeah. I mean, there's a lot
23 of wood stoves. I don't know. I'm sure many of them
24 are old, but there's also a lot of pellet stoves, and,
25 you know, obviously trying to get people to have the

1 most efficient version of wood heat is one of our
2 goals.

3 MR. ALLEN: Thanks.

4 MR. RASMUSSEN: Oh, actually, this shouldn't
5 be there. That was from an older presentation. That
6 is not for tonight.

7 MR. ALLEN: Okay, all right.

8 MR. RASMUSSEN: So that's it. Any questions
9 or --

10 MR. ALLEN: Okay. Not from me, but I'll turn
11 to my colleagues or from anyone in the audience.

12 MR. KENNEDY: I don't have anything prepared.
13 I just, so I --

14 MR. ALLEN: Well, so, if you want to provide
15 your comments, do you want to speak extemporaneously or
16 --

17 MR. KENNEDY: So I think, you know, we
18 certainly support what the State is trying to do and
19 also the involvement of the regional planning
20 commissions. I think one of the issues that I see in
21 all this is, Where is the incentive for people to do
22 anything? We have a lot of substandard housing in our
23 region, and you have people that, and, many of the
24 weatherization programs, they want you to have a loan
25 or something, and they just can't take on any

1 additional debt. I think, for us, that is a major
2 hurdle.

3 If we really want to try to address energy and
4 energy efficiency, we have to be able to deal with our
5 housing issue. We have very few new starts in this
6 region, and I don't know, I don't know what the average
7 age is of a home, but it's old, and they're not
8 particularly efficient.

9 You talked about the pellet stoves and so on, and
10 I, I don't have the, the data, but just talking with
11 Paul Markowitz and others, you see a real increase when
12 there's an incentive program, and a couple years ago
13 they had some great incentives for buying pellet stoves
14 or highly efficient wood stoves and the like, and they
15 made it more doable for, for folks.

16 But and then we've been doing a lot of work in
17 around transit and also when the towns want to, with
18 doing EV, putting in charging stations and the like,
19 especially if we, if, again, there's, there is some
20 grant funding to get it established. Banks are usually
21 pretty good at wanting to participate in those
22 programs. So we did one a number of years ago in
23 Springfield right in the downtown on that.

24 So, um, but we, as far as the facility side of
25 this, I think we've been trying to do as best we can

1 given what we have, but, you know, I, to me, it's the
2 transportation sector, and it's the domestic sector.
3 It's not just building facilities, and I think we
4 really focus on the facility aspect of things and not
5 on the other aspects of it so --

6 MR. ALLEN: Okay. Thanks, Tom.

7 MR. KENNEDY: Yeah.

8 MR. ALLEN: Julia Wright, do you have some
9 comments?

10 MS. WRIGHT: Yeah. I'm the Energy
11 Coordinator for the Town of Weathersfield, and I, and I
12 have been since 2007. So I've been at this quite a
13 while, and I concur with Tom regarding the housing.
14 You know, I've been working on that. First of all, I
15 started out with the town, the town buildings and
16 trying to instill some efficiency there. We did a lot
17 of work, went through a lot of reserve funds because
18 they had never been used. We had a really nice store
19 of money there when I first took over, and that, of
20 course, has dissipated now.

21 However, I've been focusing on homeowners. They
22 really do need help. I can't reiterate that more. And
23 some senior citizens are absolutely unable to take on
24 any debt. They're barely getting by on what they're
25 receiving in the way of any pensions, if they have a

1 pension, or they're living on Social Security, and I
2 have had very little help with communities coming
3 forth, you know, to come in with caulk guns on a
4 Saturday or something and help.

5 I have a flyer -- I'll give you a copy before we
6 go -- that I hand out to everybody, and it's very
7 simple. It's a list of things that can be done with
8 very little money. So that's where I think we should
9 be focusing if we don't want them to waste propane and
10 certainly not the oil. We do have some town funding if
11 -- we don't know how long share heat's going to be
12 available. Maybe next year it will end, and that will
13 really affect people very badly because they do rely on
14 that to fill up their oil tanks if we have a very bad
15 winter. So we have trustees of public funds, and there
16 is a little bit of money there, but it's not going to
17 cover for share heat.

18 And so, anyway, so the housing, I think, is one
19 thing where the heating is concerned, and I'm going to
20 skip around because I have notes that I took.

21 MR. ALLEN: Can I just ask? I mean, the
22 State does have the weatherization assistant program,
23 and I, I don't -- I mean, it sounds like there might be
24 a segment of the population that might qualify for
25 weatherization assistance.

1 MR. KENNEDY: But it's very limited. I mean,
2 in this area it's SEVCA that does it, and they do a
3 fabulous job, but they can only do so much with the
4 funding that, that they have.

5 MR. ALLEN: It's just the constraints on
6 funding?

7 MR. KENNEDY: It's the constraints of the
8 funding. And when was that energy program where we
9 were doing all those municipal buildings?

10 MR. RASMUSSEN: About 2010 we did a bunch of
11 that work.

12 MR. KENNEDY: 2010, there was a state
13 program, and you provided -- that was grant, right,
14 that was grant money?

15 MR. RASMUSSEN: Yeah, stimulus funding.

16 MR. KENNEDY: That was stimulus funding? And
17 all the towns wanted to participate in that. So I
18 think that, again, if there is, there is financial
19 incentive --

20 MS. WRIGHT: We got something. We always get
21 something if there's something available.

22 MR. KENNEDY: There is a number of
23 communities that we had them insulate buildings that
24 had never been insulated before, some of these town
25 halls and the like. It was fabulous.

1 MS. WRIGHT: But the problem is Efficiency
2 Vermont's very good. They'll work with you, and they
3 will help, of course, with the, with the audits, but
4 there, in order to get a rebate, the homeowner needs to
5 sign on to a program and make the expenditure before
6 the rebate comes back, and it's just not practical for
7 people who really cannot afford it, and it's --

8 So I've talked to Green Mountain Power, and I'm
9 now trying to get some help. We're redoing these
10 lights, and they're sending me some more information.
11 I've been pretty lucky with rebates on lighting, too,
12 and so --

13 MR. ALLEN: You said Green Mountain Power or
14 Efficiency Vermont?

15 MS. WRIGHT: Efficiency Vermont, and with
16 Green Mountain Power being helpful with -- they were in
17 the beginning. I don't think the money's sort of
18 really available now.

19 MR. ALLEN: Yeah.

20 MS. WRIGHT: But they are reaping a lot in
21 Weathersfield from people who've gone solar because
22 they, most of the people I know in town who have solar
23 are living quite sustainably, and there's, there is
24 energy in excess that goes to Green Mountain Power. So
25 I feel some of that could maybe come back to the town,

1 but I haven't solicited them on that, but that was one
2 idea, okay? Always having these ideas.

3 My solar is my own. I don't give them anything.
4 It's not even attached. Mine's mine. People could do
5 that, you know, use their very own, and I've had that
6 for 13 years. So, anyway, can I just quickly mention
7 about the building codes?

8 MR. ALLEN: Sure.

9 MS. WRIGHT: When Deborah Markowitz was the
10 Secretary of State, I cornered her one day and asked
11 her if we could initiate some kind of building codes.
12 Because I go round and look and see when there are new
13 houses, and I see how they're going up. They're
14 stick-built, of course, and there's much better
15 cooperation now to build houses with, that are more
16 sustainable than there certainly was in the beginning,
17 but they could do better, and they don't need to be
18 quite as large, and they could be designed with more
19 energy efficiency involved, and I'm not an architect,
20 but I can see that. So I think we could really go
21 after the building codes and make people -- there could
22 be some kind of certification for different styles of
23 houses, maybe, and the usage of the power.

24 MR. ALLEN: Well, there are building codes,
25 but do you mean stretch codes? Do you mean

1 municipalities implementing --

2 MS. WRIGHT: With more energy efficiency in
3 mind, yes. They could be stronger, absolutely. And
4 then you mentioned -- let's go -- I'm jumping around.
5 I'm sorry -- hydro. Now, those hydro plants in
6 Springfield are off-line in June, usually, they're not
7 operating. They go off very early so there's nothing
8 they can do. And I've spoken to the Army Corps of
9 Engineers. They're not about to do anything, even with
10 run-of-river on their, their dams, but, if we didn't
11 have this strict FERC permitting, we could do more
12 run-of-river projects for hydro could definitely be
13 included. Lori Barg used to be the expert in the
14 state. I don't know if you know her.

15 MR. ALLEN: I remember Lori, yeah.

16 MS. WRIGHT: Do you know Lori? And we've
17 talked many times over this to try to get more
18 projects, and I tried to get Peter Welch one day to add
19 onto an Alaskan bill with a little statement that would
20 be add "and Vermont", something that Alaska was
21 proposing to exempt from FERC permitting. Because it's
22 really onerous, and a lot of these springs don't have
23 fish so you wouldn't need the FERC permitting. And
24 there are people round here in Windsor County who have
25 springs and run hydro, and they just sort of thumb

1 their noses at FERC. Don't put that in. So there are
2 -- it does work.

3 And then let's go on to hybrid vehicles. There's
4 no reason now why your second vehicle should not be a
5 hybrid vehicle nowadays, and that would cut down a lot
6 on the emissions, and carpooling is good. I carpooled
7 up to Dartmouth. For five years I only used my car one
8 week of the month for five years, and I took the bus,
9 and it, really, it did very well for me because I could
10 hang on to my car a little longer, and it's easy, you
11 know, if you just think about it.

12 I've been trying to get some chargers here for
13 electric vehicles in town, and, when I applied for a
14 grant, I did not realize the Town had not signed on to
15 the revitalized communities, and we still haven't
16 filled out the forms, and I did go up to the State for
17 two chargers up at the interstate, but they don't have
18 the money, and they're not prepared to put any in
19 Weathersfield because Springfield has them and Hartland
20 has them, and it would mean upgrading the -- they'd
21 need more power. I think, isn't it 120 that they've
22 got here and they need more to put in?

23 And we could put them in beside the fire station.
24 So here we sit with no EV chargers, and a lot of people
25 do come off the interstate to get their gas here coming

1 up and down. I think a couple of chargers somewhere
2 would work.

3 Um, so what else have I got? Oh, I think I should
4 stop there, but I -- so now we're looking for a town
5 array, back to looking at a town array. We've been
6 going on since '07 looking at a town array, and I'd
7 like to step down next year, and I'd like the array
8 before I do not get reappointed. Probably won't
9 reappoint me next year, and but it seems to be in the
10 works.

11 And the same with the schools, you know, they now
12 feel that they're going to purchase some power from one
13 of these large arrays in the Windsor area, and that's
14 one way, before they have the money for, to put up
15 their own array, they could do a power purchasing deal.
16 There are an awful lot of options out there, but you've
17 got to have somebody who's willing to go around and
18 look at the options and see how it affects the towns
19 and someone to juggle.

20 Hartford has just hired an energy coordinator, and
21 Woodstock's had Sally Miller for quite a while, and
22 they're doing great things. So I think, you know, you
23 have to think outside the box in how -- you have to
24 include the town. You can't include people who say,
25 I'm not interested. You have to interest them somehow.

1 MR. ALLEN: Okay, thank you.

2 MS. WRIGHT: Okay. I'm sorry, but you know

3 --

4 MR. ALLEN: Yeah, I think it's great.

5 MS. WRIGHT: I feel very strongly about this.
6 I've put so many years into it.

7 MR. ALLEN: I can appreciate that, yeah.

8 MS. WRIGHT: We could do better.

9 MR. ALLEN: Indeed. I want to give MJ Harris
10 a chance to -- did you want to provide some comments,
11 or are you just observing?

12 MS. HARRIS: That was just Ms. J Harris, but
13 thank you. My email is, is -- my relative in Maryland
14 who was here in early August is very, her visiting
15 relatives in Springfield who are very interested in
16 this, she stopped in the neighborhood and admired the,
17 chatted with a neighbor about the solar paneling right
18 here in this block. Her brother in Springfield is
19 pretty good with, very interested in this. What do you
20 call them? Well, I'm sure there are several people,
21 but I put her email there and didn't put his
22 information. He certainly would be very, want to come
23 and sit in. When is your next meeting?

24 MR. ALLEN: I think this is the public
25 hearing. So I don't --

1 MR. KENNEDY: So we have monthly meetings at
2 the Regional Planning Commission. So we can, if we
3 have your email, we can put you on our list, and you'll
4 see when we're --

5 MS. HARRIS: Again, that's her email.

6 MR. KENNEDY: Yeah, whose ever email.

7 MS. HARRIS: Single mom, she probably won't
8 be calling them, but I should be more clear about what
9 I'm asking which is, Where is this next regional
10 meeting?

11 MR. KENNEDY: So what we're doing here
12 tonight is we're trying to get this regional energy
13 plan adopted.

14 MS. HARRIS: Yes.

15 MR. KENNEDY: And one of the steps in the
16 process is that this group, the Department of Public
17 Service, has a hearing, a public hearing. So this is
18 their -- so they're here tonight to take, to hear an
19 overview of the plan from the regional planning
20 commission and to hear testimony, and then they're
21 going to go back and do their due diligence, but we're
22 coming towards the end of the process. As you saw the
23 timeline earlier, we started this about two -- how long
24 ago?

25 MR. RASMUSSEN: About two years ago.

1 MR. KENNEDY: Roughly about two years ago,
2 and we're looking to get the, to finalize it.

3 MS. HARRIS: Oh.

4 MR. KENNEDY: That doesn't mean we're done
5 doing the planning. It just means the planning part,
6 as far as the development of the plan, that aspect of
7 it hopefully will --

8 MS. HARRIS: There's much publicity in the
9 papers too.

10 MR. KENNEDY: Yes, we've been working hard at
11 that.

12 MS. HARRIS: Thank you kindly for letting me
13 be here.

14 MS. WRIGHT: I would just like to commend the
15 regional planning for this plan, and I think it's a
16 very good plan if it goes through and can be
17 implemented and it gets some publicity and it gets some
18 support. I think they've done a good job, and it lays
19 things out very clearly as to where we're going and how
20 we can get there with a little effort. So I'm really
21 pleased with that.

22 And another thing is that, since I was appointed
23 Energy Coordinator, I have kept the energy figures for
24 the town on a monthly basis. So we have all those
25 years of all the figures for everything that we've

1 spent, all the money and the kilowatts on the energy
2 for the town.

3 MR. ALLEN: Thank you.

4 MS. WRIGHT: I got a grant from EPA to start
5 that too. There used to be grants out there, you know,
6 and, if you were a grant writer. And Jason is
7 available too. Regional planning has been very
8 generous.

9 MR. ALLEN: Okay. Well, if there are no
10 further comments, I'll conclude this hearing. Thank
11 you very much.

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15 (Whereupon at 6:50 p.m. the hearing was adjourned.)

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