

Hartford Energy Commission Special Meeting – 5/11/2023

Jesse called the meeting to order at 5:07pm.

Jesse took roll call. HEC members present virtually: Ashton Todd (2023), Molly Dunn (2025), Jesse Pollard (2023), Laura Simon (2026), Lynn Bohi (2024)

Also present virtually: Geoff Martin from Norwich Solar.

Present in person: Eric Francis and Environmental Coordinator Dana Clawson.

Molly added an item to the agenda at the end of the meeting.

Eric Francis indicated he'd want to make a comment about the proposed Norwich Technologies Solar Array.

#### **MERP:**

Dana; no need to make a decision, but wants people to start thinking about what they want to use the funds for. Maybe website updates? Norwich EC is covering a lot of these basics. Dana is going to find out from Harry at TROC what other communities are doing. The amount is \$4,000 in the form of a mini-grant. Dana to confirm whether funds can be used for Window Dressers.

Lynn joined us at 5:12 from Ohio. **We now have quorum.**

Laura joined at 5:13pm.

#### **Norwich Solar Preferred Siting:**

We moved on to discuss the VLGS plan and how it could be applicable to the Norwich Solar Proposal.

Geoff commented that the ANR atlas showed that they do not expect there to be any adverse impacts on regulated criteria. If they're able to move forward in the project, they will do site specific surveys.

Jesse gave an overview of the Norwich Solar proposal that came to us last year and how that one was located in a forest block and this one is not. Jesse proposed that we designate the site as preferred.

Molly asked about #15 on the VLGS sheet; whether the land would be used for agrovoltatics as well. Geoff said it was the first stage in the process and too early to really tell what the PUC would require. Wouldn't want to commit to anything they can't do later on. Geoff commented they've done this in the past and it could be possible moving forward. Molly additionally noted it would be good to get some clarity on the tree density that would constitute the .2 acres. Not necessarily something that can be addressed here.

Geoff agreed the language was vague. Geoff could not remember the TRORC policy in question. More clarity is required.

Lynn said on page 310 of the town plan there is a solar energy potential site map. Wanted to clarify whether the Braley street site was in a good solar energy potential site was. Further discussed was whether the site would be good for biomass production. The map Lynn pointed out also showed biomass production potential.

Laura unwilling to support project until she's seen the site in person.

Eric Francis commented: He doesn't feel strongly about the site. He is familiar with it. Agrees that it's out of sight. Is a bit mystified by the logic of the project as it seems like it's half a megawatt of production within a 41 megawatt dam that's not feeding into a substation. If it was tied to a particular installation or providing daytime power to a large facility it would make more

sense. Wants to know why we're putting solar out into the woods and not really connected to any larger infrastructure.

Geoff responded: the reason for doing any solar project is economic savings and benefits from the arrays, tax revenues etc. But also reducing emissions. This project, as with any new solar project at this point in time is going to offset and reduce the amount of generation that's coming from fossil fuel and natural gas. While on paper our grid in VT is pretty much clean it's because we're purchasing unbundled recs from hydro Quebec. New solar projects like this one help to reduce the amount of natural gas that needs to be burned in southern new England to help power Vermont. It's still tied to the distribution grid even though it's not behind the grid. Jesse responded and voiced support for the project, small though it may be.

Jesse suggested we vote.

Molly put forward a vote.

Lynn seconded it.

Lynn voted yes

Molly voted yes

Laura had dropped off call and did not vote

Esme not present

Ashton voted yes

Jesse voted yes

The motion passed.

Dana meeting with Planning Commission next week to discuss next steps.

### **Climate change, Act 250, and housing**

Molly asked if Jesse, Ashton, Dana would be willing to meet with Dartmouth students. Lori Hirshfield, Matt Osborn and Bruce Riddle on the Planning Commission would have a lot to say. Molly to set up.

Molly motioned to close the meeting at 5:51. Jesse seconded. The meeting closed at that time.