Regional Energy Committee/Development Review Committee

of the

Bennington County Regional Commission

***Joint committee meeting conducted via Zoom***

**December 10, 2020 - 4:30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: Jeannie Jenkins, Wayn Goodman, Rob Costantino, Charlie Rockwell, Jason Dolmetsch,

Bruce Lierman; Jim Sullivan (BCRC Staff)

Also Present: Chris Williams, Tim Scoggins (Town of Shaftsbury)

Thomas Hand (Interested Resident)

Jake Clark, Caitlyn Hines, Mary Wyand (Encore Renewables)

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Solar Project Overview

Jake Clark provided an overview of a 2.2 MW solar energy generation project proposed for a location on Waite Cemetery Road in Shaftsbury. The project is to include single-axis trackers to maximize generation; while more expensive than fixed arrays, they are considerably more efficient because they track the sun to optimize access to solar radiation.

The location was discussed and Jim Sullivan discussed the site relative to the Regional Energy Plan’s solar resource maps and siting guidelines. The project is located in an area with good access to solar energy; constraints include a stream and buffer area (not impacted by the project) and agricultural soils over part of the project area (not a disqualifying constraint, but something to consider in design and operations). He also noted the potential contribution toward town and regional solar generation targets as outlined in their respective energy plans.

Discussion:

* Decided to go with a tracking system to increase energy yield. The trackers also shed snow, important in our area to achieve consequential generation in the winter.
* 3-phase power is on or near East Road; Encore currently is working with GMP on interconnection. Details will be finalized after GMP provides requirements – to be included in the final application.
* Site plan has been modified from the original to move all panels to the east side of Waite Cemetery Road, largely eliminating views from Route 7. No tree cutting is required for this project.
* Discussed potential glare, especially since the panels will be tracking the sun. Encore will look at this and determine if there are any potential impacts, especially to motorists on Route 7. Noted that the panels all are coated with non-reflective glazing.
* Encore will be planting pollinator-friendly plants throughout the array. Some revenue, via lease agreement, go to the landowners and those funds can support other uses, including agriculture (site has been an operating farm).
* The project is a standard offer, as opposed to a net metered, project, so the “preferred site” designation isn’t as critical to project viability.
* Encore has done several 2.2 MW standard offer projects previously as well as some smaller projects in our region.
* The consensus of committee members present was that the project offers a good approach to siting a relatively large-scale solar generation facility and the single axis trackers are a good idea. Note to be that the environmental analyses are thorough and the glare issue is investigated and it should be a good project.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Sullivan, BCRC