BCRC Regional Energy Committee

**MINUTES**

Thursday - April 27, 2017

4:30 PM

BCRC Offices \* South Street, Bennington, VT

Present: Bhima Nitta, Rob Costantino, Bill Christian, Karen Lee, Wayn Goodman (Chair),

Jeannie Jenkins (recused herself from any discussion of the ECOS Energy Projects),

Jim Sullivan (staff), Catherine Bryars (staff)

Brad Wilson (ECOS Energy)

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. ECOS Energy (aka Allco Renewable Energy) Projects

Brad Wilson provided an overview an update on three projects ECOS is working to develop in Bennington.

* “Battle Creek 1” – located behind the Home Depot plaza in an industrial zone. 2.2 MW rated capacity. Standard offer project. Discussion covered access from Rice Lane and truck traffic, especially during construction. Committee noted it would have been nice to have seen integrated solar projects on the Home Depot and Carbone Auto rooftops. Reviewed potential impacts to viewsheds and neighboring properties – minimal to no impact for the current project, including view from the Publyk House Restaurant, and any concerns over opening up the site to views with future projects will have to be addressed at the time of any future project application. Additional concern raised regarding timing of clearing – ideally during the winter so as to minimize impacts on wildlife/birds, especially those nesting in the vegetation adjacent to the wetland. Will be filing Section 248 petition soon and have applied for GMP interconnect agreement.
* Chelsea-Apple Hill projects – revised site plan significantly reduces the amount of clearing from the original proposal (that was denied by the Public Service Board) and adds more screening. Noted that the solar panel tilt angles were lowered to 15 degrees to allow the units to be located closer together, will result in maximizing production in the summer and significantly reduced production during the winter. ECOS does plan to go ahead with the projects, likely appealing Chelsea ruling in court. Wilson noted it would be helpful to have any public input at local public meetings, particularly from individuals recognizing the value of renewable energy.

III. BCRC Regional Plan/Regional Energy Plan and Act 174 Review

Jim Sullivan noted that the energy plan had been adopted (as an amendment to the Bennington County Regional Plan) in March by the BCRC. The plan(s) now have been submitted to the Public Service Department for a determination of compliance under Act 174. A public hearing is required and will be organized and held by the PSD. Sullivan noted that it is possible that people and groups who have been skeptical about Act 174 and RPC planning work may get organized and come to the meeting, even though, at this point, the hearing should really just focus on conformance of the plan with the energy planning standards, which we are confident that the plan meets. The committee suggested it still would be a good idea to get supporters of the regional plan and BCRC to the meeting, especially town planners and people from statewide organizations who have been involved in the energy planning process with BCRC. Details will be sent to the committee when the PSD sets a hearing date/location.

IV. Municipal Energy Plan Reviews

If the BCRC plan is approved by the PSD under Act 174, a process for reviewing municipal energy plans will need to be in place. The committee agreed to go over the plans and staff reports, and make recommendations to the full Commission.

V. Other Business

Noted upcoming public meeting in Bennington (this coming Monday) about wind energy facility noise standards. Bill Christian provided some additional information and said there is a pre-meeting at 6:00 with RE advocates.

Meeting adjourned at 6:15 PM