

Selectman's Meeting / Public Hearing
Thursday November 17, 2005
10 am
Town Clerk's Office

Present: Michael Adams, Tina Sedney, Jim Dumont, James Walsh, Frank Delguoice, Jerry Smiley, Alexandra Rome, John Stamatov, Keith Hall, Claire Ayer, Kim Hayden, Scott Mitchell, Sansea Sparling, Suki Fredericks, Jeremy Smiley, Larry Buck, Harvey Smith, Tom Dunn, Harold Giord, Barb Torian.

Army Corp of Engineers, who have jurisdiction over wetlands, came to hear peoples concerns regarding the Northeast Reliability Project. Introductions were made; there were VELCO representatives, citizens, selectboard members and the Corp of Engineers. The purpose of the meeting was to hear peoples concerns.

Mr. Mitchell from Brandon - Has a large piece of property which he is refurbishing and restoring and would like to put on the registry of historic places. There is a 2 mile stretch of the proposed lines that will go through his property. He would like to make sure that all aspects are being looked at. There are other issues besides providing power; there are environmental and aesthetic issues as well. Does not believe that people thought much about what is happening now when they granted easements in the 50's. He will have over a half million dollar investment. The cost to bury the wire as a percentage of the whole project is minimal. 115 line would be preferable. Would like to have them consider burying the line. Property value would be affected by large lines across the property. There are documented health risks. Tourism will be affected. Main issues are economic, health, aesthetic and historical. (VELCO's issue is cost)

Larry Buck – Thanks for coming. Would like to see the reliability issues addressed with a 115 line and smaller more local generation. Mentioned State energy policy. The 345 line creates more issues with an enlarged corridor and the increased substation.

Army Corp has jurisdiction over 2 federal acts. Waterways and wetlands. Clean water act. Regulation of work in bodies of water. Pole placement and aerial over sec 10 water ways.

Sansea Sparling - Concerned about the wetlands impact. Trees will be cut and habitats will be changed. Bare areas are not the same as wooded areas environmentally the reptiles will be affected by the temperature changes in the water. A total of ¼ of an acre will be affected by this project. This will be permanent damage and shrub lands will not grow up to be the same as the wooded lands that will be destroyed. Trading/ creating another area to replace the area destroyed does not cut it, what will you do put up signs telling the animals where to go? Would like to request that they do a thorough study. The State did not do that. Consider the temperature differentials and protect the animals.

Jerry Smiley – Spoke about the move of the substation and making sure that the screening is adequate. There are significant wet areas in the proposed area of the move and he has just recently seen the maps for the compromise position. Not enough information on what VELCO is planning. Would like to make sure that a larger substation would be sited in the best possible way. Does not trust VELCO. Data is pushed in odd ways and tend to be high handed with local people's view. Army Corp has the potential to mitigate the process. Also has been little consideration of the future impact to carry the 345 kV up to Williston. Will be going up North Street on one of the

most pristine areas. Makes one sick to spoil that area. They have not disclosed the plan or its impact.

Suki Fredricks – Oliver Hill Farm 750 acres in Leicester – Spoke of importance of agriculture and the beauty of the area. There are several contiguous organic farms. This is a substantial block of farm land. VELCO has said they won't impact the land and will accommodate requests not to use pesticides, but... with the wider corridor and additional poles; they will need to use more pesticides. What will the effect be on the farm animals? What about stray voltage? The corridor will be a wide swath through the woods and will be seen from far away. No amount of brush will change that. What will the impact on the ecosystem be? VELCO says but there are no guarantees and no accountability. What about the archeological sites along the way? What about alternative sources of power? Should be looking at a broader scale, is this the best way to proceed?

Jim Walsh – They have been having ongoing discussions regarding the line exiting the substation. The land owners along the proposed change would like to have the line remain in the existing corridor. VELCO is willing to leave the line in the existing corridor, but legally the line has to be put in the new area. Jim Walsh stated that there is no benefit to moving the line there is no elevation advantage.

Jim Dumont – CFR section – How far do they look beyond the wetlands? The New Haven River is heavily used. These wetland areas have a large environmental effect. The project would not be able to proceed if the corp. says no to the wetlands. There are 66 different sites to permit. Should be looked at individually. As well as areas in-between. 1% of the total area, but they are scattered so can't look at separately. Need to look at all together. NEPA analysis – least alternative would be the 115 KV line.

Claire Ayer – Senator - The State has fallen down on the job. There is very little information available. We don't know the impact of this project. The Wetland portion of this project is bigger than any other, and it has slipped under the radar somehow. Water quality and control are both issues. We need to think carefully about this project.

Keith Hall – Zoning Administrator – When do they have to ask the town for a permit? It is wrong that there is no local control. The deck is stacked against us as a town.

Harvey Smith - Representative – and a dairy farmer – He has a line traveling through his property. Wondered about the role that the corp. plays in the process. Assume they do their own evaluation. The Corp. responded – The corp. does its own research and evaluation. They do not have the authority to override or tell others what to do. People need a permit from each regulating body and they can't proceed without the proper permits. The clean water act is the domain of the state. (Federal projects would meet those regulations of the State). The Application has been submitted to the corp. Research has been done, no promises have been made and the written record is not closed. VELCO does not have authorization to start until they receive the permits. They are hoping to use the winter for construction.

There is a farm family that has not given an easement. VELCO has filed papers of condemnation.

How will the public know what you're doing?

Sansea Sparling – Will the vegetation cover be frozen and the migration of birds be done prior to touching the wetlands? Corp. – The permit could be issued at any time. There may be conditions in the permit stating what can or can't be done. Fish and wildlife concerns are usually addressed.

Jerry Smiley – Concerned about the site map not being of the correct scale to cover the fill patten of the local stream and the wetland near the junction of 7& 17.

Harold Giard – Senator – Concerned about the effects on land owners along the way.

VELCO – Came to listen – not debate – Believe that the concerns expressed have all been addressed. Spoke of the 115 line not having a lesser effect on the environment.

This is a broader project. They have been through 18 months of hearings with extensive evidence and all areas were addressed, environmental, aesthetic, health and need. The Public Service Board said go ahead.

Thanks for coming

Adjourn 11:45