

Comments for Joint Legislative Hearing on Energy  
Senate and House Natural Resources and Energy Committees  
February 2, 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments. I wish I could attend in person.

I am writing on behalf of the Norwich Energy Committee, with one observation that arises specifically from our work on a large project that didn't get built and other, more general, comments.

The Norwich Energy Committee worked very hard for about two years on a solar electric project intended to offset electricity usage by town facilities. We were awarded a \$220,000 Clean Energy Development Fund grant and a federal allocation to issue a \$1.3 million Clean Renewable Energy Bond. This took a great deal of effort from our group of volunteers (including private donations totaling \$7000 to cover application costs such as professional engineer's review and a preliminary project design).

In the end, though, the finances didn't work and we had to – very reluctantly – abandon the project. One early blow to the project finances was losing the lottery for the SPEED program. I can say with absolute certainty that, if the Norwich application for SPEED had been approved, our 250-kW municipal solar project would be a reality. The result would be reduced expenses for the town, and an additional revenue stream that would reduce local taxes.

My observation and recommendation is that *SPEED should consider projects developed by public entities on a track separate or different from projects by private, commercial developers.*

Other comments/suggestions:

- Building efficiency measures have a huge potential for cutting both individual costs and societal energy footprints, yet the typical \$500 fee for a home energy audit is a huge barrier to action. (It's even higher for buildings such as libraries.) If you can develop *a mechanism to get that initial fee into the \$100 range for homes and \$500 for non-profits*, it would induce many more homeowners and small institutions to take action.
- Cities such as Chicago have modeled how global warming will affect them and begun planning for these changes (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/23/science/earth/23adaptation.html>) . Many Vermont towns are in the midst of updating their town plans, yet no Vermont town has the resources for any analysis of this crucial factor. This is *a function that the state must take on as a support to town planning.*
- Many towns will be voting on PACE districts this spring, and *support for concrete marketing to explain and promote PACE* is important to its impact.
- *Streamlining the permitting process for small hydro* would help more of these projects come online.

We on the Norwich Energy Committee are very supportive of a mandatory Renewable Portfolio Standard for Vermont.

Submitted by Linda Gray on behalf of the Norwich Energy Committee  
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