

Email received 3/25/15 – Comments on Renewable Energy Siting

Dear Katie,

Last night I attended the Public Hearing on Solar Siting at the State House. I appreciate that legislators provided a forum for members of the public to express their opinions. I did not testify last night, so wish to submit my comments in writing. I serve on the boards of both Vermont Interfaith Power and Light and Building a Local Economy (BALE) in South Royalton. I chair the Sharon Vermont Energy Committee. I work for the Two Rivers-Ottawaqueche Regional Commission and will be working on a project to formulate a Regional Energy Plan to help reach the goals of the State's Comprehensive Energy Plan. But for the purpose of these comments, I am wearing none of these hats. I am writing as a concerned citizen and as a mother of two wonderful children. Climate change is an all hands on deck emergency. We need immediate action to mitigate the most devastating affects of global warming. We have a moral responsibility to reduce the use of fossil fuels and protect our environment for future generations and for the myriad of species that have no voice. Locally generated renewable energy is one way to combat climate change. My household has made a concerted effort to avoid the use of fossil fuels. We have had a energy audit and have weatherized our basement. In 2010, thanks to federal and state incentives, we installed a 5kW net metered solar array on our barn. When we built the barn the year before, we purposely sited it facing south with a 45 degree pitched roof in anticipation of solar. We heat our home with wood harvested from our property, we grow most of our own vegetables, storing them for winter use. We raise sheep and chickens for our protein consumption. We recently installed a heat-pump water heater and are now driving an all-electric Nissan Leaf. As much as individuals can do to reduce their carbon footprints, it is not enough. Local, state and federal governments must create incentives to increase energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy. They must regulate and tax fossil fuels and wasteful uses of energy. Please maintain policies that allow small scale solar projects in Vermont to be installed quickly and easily. Vermont residents want to feel empowered to produce their own energy and to contribute to solutions to climate change. But, Vermont residents also want a voice into the siting of larger projects. What I heard last night was support for small solar projects, but objections to large solar projects where local input is not given appreciation. I feel that it is in the best interest of the state to give party status to municipal governments and Regional Planning Commissions regarding solar project siting. Everyone would benefit greatly from an educational campaign to enlighten Vermonters about the Public Service Board process for permitting renewable energy projects and the goals and milestones of the Comprehensive Energy Plan. Vermonters need to understand that to reach our energy goals and to effectively combat climate change, everyone must conserve and sacrifice. Residents, towns and the state must then work together to agree on appropriate sites for renewable energy.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dee Gish
Sharon, Vermont