

To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy
Senator Bray, Chair
From: Sharon Murray, AICP, VPA Solar Siting Task Force Member
Date: March 8, 2016
Re: **Requested language for Best Practices Advisory Group**

Dear Committee Members,

Attached for your consideration is requested language for the creation of a “Best Practices” technical advisory or working group—as intended to implement the following Solar Siting Siting Task Force Report recommendation:

4. Develop Solar Siting Best Practices

Best practices for solar facility siting and development, adapted for application within a Vermont context, would provide consistent, needed guidance for use in developing regional and municipal plans, and associated community standards, that are considered in § 248 proceedings, and for developers as they undertake site selection, project design, and impact mitigation.

- **Initiate Solar Siting Best Practices Working Group:** A working group of Vermont stakeholders, including representatives of state, regional, municipal, environmental, and industry interests, should be convened to develop a consensus-based set of guidelines for solar development best practices within a Vermont context.

I’ve submitted the attached language at the request of Senator Bray, during my time testifying before the committee. Please note that, because the task force has not met since issuing our report, *this draft does not represent the work or consensus of the group*. I did meet with DPS staff for their input, given that this effort would require a commitment of department staff time and resources. They understandably had concerns about their ability to effectively manage this initiative in relation to their other work.

As such, the proposed language mirrors that of the language establishing the Solar Siting Siting Task Force, in effect extending its life for another year, as a working, technical advisory group to the Department—and expanding its membership to include the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets—to more specifically recommend guidance, in the form of best practices, for the physical siting and development of renewable energy facilities.

I should also note that, while VPA has advocated for a broader approach—to develop guidance of for all forms of distributed renewable energy facility siting—the Department has made it clear that, in accordance with the task force recommendation, they would like to focus at least initially on best practices for the siting of solar facilities, given the current and anticipated pace of solar development. As such, it may be preferable to specify best practices for solar energy

siting and development in the attached, rather than more generally addressing all forms of renewable energy development.

VPA remains committed to continue participating in this work, as directed by the legislature and department, to include providing recommendations based on best planning practices for the siting of solar and other renewable energy, as defined by our profession—including further research regarding those resources identified on the attached resource list, as submitted earlier (also attached). Much of the guidance available to date has been developed in association with the US Dept. of Energy's SunShot Solar Outreach Partnership—a good place to start.

We very much appreciate the Committee's interest and ongoing work, through S.230, to integrate and strengthen energy and land use planning at all levels, in support of more context-sensitive renewable energy development.

Sincerely,
Sharon Murray, AICP

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