

January 27, 2016

Dear Senator Bray; Chair Natural Resources & Energy and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing town officials from around the State to give testimony in your committee on January 20, 2016. Listening to the testimony it was easy to hear the frustrations these towns are feeling in the area of renewable projects. I would like make note of a few of the recurring themes from the day.

The Public Service Board process is not a process that includes any democracy for the towns. Many towns in Vermont have very dedicated volunteers that work many hours simply to make their towns a good place to live. When the PSB process comes into play, it is entirely a lawyer's game and all the hard work the select boards and planning commissions have done over the years is simply ignored. So, those select board members and planning commission members are suddenly thrown into a courtroom atmosphere. In order for a town to participate, they have to hire a lawyer (and lawyers familiar with the PSB process are not easy to find and they are expensive). Suddenly, town dollars are being used and the costs add up quickly. The developer is spending up to one million dollars to permit their project. There is no way that any town in Vermont can come up with that kind of money. That makes the playing field very one-sided to the developer.

The history of participation in the Public Service Board process in Vermont for large renewable energy projects has left every participant except the developers feeling like they weren't even there. Every expert and all facts brought to the table by the towns and/or neighbors are tossed aside by the PSB in favor of whatever the developers say. Lawyers do not want to take on cases because they don't want to waste their client's money since the PSB isn't listening to them.

In addition, the towns have spent a lot of time and money to create town plans that tried to look into the future of how their town would grow. Now, along comes Section 248 and all of the work done by the town is just thrown away. In my town of Swanton, the Planning Commission wants to put something into their town plan regarding Industrial Wind Turbines, but they are concerned about being sued if they put something in wrong. They are also concerned that if they put too much into their plan regarding Industrial Wind it will be considered wrong and all their work will be thrown out and ignored. And then, there is the fact that the PSB doesn't have to defer to their plan anyway so what does it even matter.

It has been said that if the towns have a say in the placement of renewable energy projects then none will be built. That is not a true statement and really puts down a lot of hardworking town board members. The towns that I have spoken with are all very willing to look into proper placement of renewable energy projects. The members of the town boards know their towns well and they will know where good options might be. As a state, we can work together and we

can do renewable energy the right way. That is not happening now and it is leaving a sour taste towards renewable energy in the mouth of many towns.

I would like to see us move forward in a positive manner to create renewable energy for the State of Vermont that we can look back on years from now and be proud of. The current process is not anything to be proud of.

Feel free to contact me at (802) 528-5242 or [cmlangvt@gmail.com](mailto:cmlangvt@gmail.com) if you have any further questions or comments for me.

Respectfully,

Christine Lang  
Swanton, Vt

CC: Senator Diane Snelling  
Senator Mark A. MacDonald  
Senator John Rodgers  
Senator Brian Campion