

Minutes:

Stowe Electric Commissioners' Special Meeting
June 25, 2019 at 12:30 p.m. at Town of Stowe Electric Conference Room

Present:

BOARD MEMBERS: Richard ("Dick") Marron (via telephone), Chairman; Larry Lackey, Vice-Chairman; Heidi Scheuermann, Commissioner

STAFF: Ellen Burt, General Manager; David Kresock, Director of Operations; Lily Burgess, Clerk of the Board

Dick called the meeting to order at 12:36 a.m.

Approval of Acquisition of Property on Cady Hill

About 2 years ago, a developer took an option on a Cady Hill property with the intent of developing a solar project. Stowe Electric has an interest in the property on Cady Hill because of its underground distribution lines (also called getaway conductors) from the Wilkins Substation that are running through the middle of the property within a 30-foot right-of-way. An additional concern is that the Wilkins Substation needs to be upgraded for various reasons. Options for moving SED's distribution/getaways conductors and the associated costs were discussed with the solar developer at one time.

Neighbors around the property became very concerned about the proposed solar project and they contacted Pall Spera, Heidi Scheuermann, Jim Porter from the Public Service Department (PSD) and Stowe Electric. Some of the many concerns of the neighbors are aesthetics and the proximity to abutting properties. Over the past two years all parties concerned have attended many meetings regarding the proposed solar project.

The developer filed with the Vermont Public Utility Commission (PUC) for a CPG in December 2016 to construct the project, however, the developer's option for the Cady Hill property lapsed in December 2018. When Ellen noticed that the owner of the property was getting the land ready to list for sale, she approached Chris Strong. It would be more fiscally responsible for SED to purchase the property with the remaining funds from the Highgate Asset sale in order to ensure that the utility be able to upgrade the underground distribution lines feeding from the Wilkins Substation. The owner of the property was grateful that SED was not planning on developing the property.

As discussed in November during the annual budget approval process, SED needed to hire a consulting engineer to conduct a system study in Spring of 2019. SED is anticipating that the Wilkins Substation will have to be rebuilt in the very near future, particularly since the two circuits that feed the Substation are well loaded during peak times. With the current setup, it is very difficult to move load around in an emergency situation. This need for a third circuit was already identified 15 years ago, and would also help with feeding the Mountain should SED lose the transmission line.

David elaborated on the need for a planned outage scheduled for July 9th to terminate the new transmission conductors. Due to the current setup, this requires the transmission line to be out of service for almost 12 hours while the necessary repairs and upgrades are undertaken.

Larry and David reviewed the maps and aerial photos and discussed getaway conductors, and options to add the necessary underground cables feeding from the Wilkins Substation to add new circuits. Aerial options were discussed as well.

Heidi Scheuermann joined the meeting at 12:50 p.m.

Previous discussions and negotiations with the solar developer regarding outstanding invoices were debated in detail. A meeting at the PUC to discuss this matter is scheduled for next Friday.

Even though the purchase of the Cady Hill property will be paid out of the remaining balance of the restricted building fund from the Highgate Asset sale, Heidi asked how a \$0.01/kWh rate increase would impact SED's revenues. Or in reverse, how spending \$100,000 would affect customers' electric rates.

Heidi raised the Cady Hill neighbors' concerns, and whether SED is planning to build structures, a substation, or a solar project on the property. Dick explained that while that is not the intent of this Board, future Commissions should not be restricted on how they could use the property. Dick reiterated that SED goes before the Development Review Board like everyone else. Ellen stated that SED works hard to find mutually beneficial solutions for SED and the affected neighbors.

Legal Matter (Executive Session)

The Board moved to go into Executive Session at 1:20 p.m. to discuss a legal matter and invited Ellen Burt and David Kresock to stay. The Board made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 1:30 p.m. and the motion carried.

Larry Lackey made a motion that the Commission authorize the General Manager of Stowe Electric to purchase the property at Cady Hill for a price not to exceed \$97,500, Dick Marron seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lily Burgess
Clerk of the Board