

# Addison County Regional Planning Commission

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## SOLAR SITING COMMITTEE

Suggested list of issues and solutions for discussion

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The process/statute must be amended to recognize a greater voice for municipal/local interests. The process/statute must recognize the impact, especially the cumulative impact, of projects on our rural landscape. Vermont does not allow any other type of commercial development like this. In fact the recent changes to Criteria 9(L) in Act 250 demonstrate a really stark (Some would say hypocritical) contrast to the way the state views and regulates other commercial development. Suggested changes and topics for discussion include:

1. Change the provisions of Act 56 regarding setbacks and screening to provide the municipalities with a greater voice in a manner that is easier to administer.
2. Look at the financial incentives Vermont provides and controls.
  - Rate payers are currently subsidizing the lowest cost development and as an unintended consequence are passing on costs to the rural landscape and rural landowners. This is not good public policy and needs to be discussed and addressed.
  - The market is already creating some really interesting new tools to evaluate and encourage small-scale distributed generation (“Project Sunroof”). Vermont should consider aligning its incentive structure to encourage building diverse sources of small-scale generation that passes more of the incentives to Vermont ratepayers.
  - If Vermont intends to incentivize renewable energy projects, it should evaluate and create a program to incentivize solar systems located in new and existing parking lots. If Vermont considered combining solar incentives with small, green space requirements for stormwater, it might address two significant environmental issues the state faces. Rooftop solar, at least on new buildings, should also be incentivized. DPS already submits comments and conservation requirements in Act 250 applications, with proper incentives; it could also play a role in generation.
3. Ensure that facilities receiving subsidies cannot also require utilities and ratepayers to upgrade public lines serving those facilities (further subsidizing development).
4. REC’s must contribute to the Vermont public good, cumulative impacts are real.
5. Municipal Planning Commissions or Selectboards, depending upon the body the community chooses to represent it, should be found to represent the voice of the “average person” in that municipality.

Addison  
Lincoln  
Salisbury

Bridport  
Middlebury  
Shoreham

Bristol  
Monkton  
Starksboro

Cornwall  
New Haven  
Vergennes

Ferrisburgh  
Orwell  
Waltham

Goshen  
Panton  
Weybridge

Leicester  
Ripton  
Whiting



6. The State should explore “Fair share” standards by municipality, for all municipalities on a statewide basis to ensure that all municipalities contribute to renewable energy’s impact on the State. Local renewable energy should include other generating sources beyond solar, like wind or hydro.
7. Vermont has two substantial renewable energy projects that have or will apply to bring renewable energy, at relatively low cost, from Canada and/or New York into Vermont. While the current market is primarily southern New England, Vermont should consider and discuss what percentage of those projects they could use to satisfy Vermont’s needs for renewable energy and how that percentage may impact Vermont’s rates and the amount of renewable energy Vermont should generate locally.
8. Vermont desires to create a reasonable permitting process to encourage solar development, but in places acceptable to its citizens. It does not want to not enable not in my backyard reactions to every project (“NIMBY”). NIMBY is already too strong in Vermont. The lack of standards for the local review of solar projects has been enabling the voices of NIMBY who believe they should control their neighbors’ property.
9. Impacts to functional significance should control the discussion regarding the use of solar on existing farmland that may once have been wetlands and on the use of solar within significant (Class II) wetlands and associated buffer areas.