

Agenda Summary
November 25, 2024

Agenda Item A-4

SED Letter of Support for FERC Hydroelectric Licensing Exemption

Summary: Stowe Electric Department seeks a letter of support from the Selectboard regarding their application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for an exemption from licensing for the proposed hydroelectric project at Smith's Falls in Moscow village. Michael Lazorchak, SED Manager of Regulatory Affairs, says the letter of support will "provide evidence to the federal agencies that the project has broad community support. A strong showing of support will likely speed up the approval process and reduce expenses for the utility."

The Energy Committee approved a motion on November 21 to authorize the Energy Committee Chair to sign the letter (draft minutes enclosed).

Financial Impact: N/A

Town Plan Impact: *"Explore possibilities for community-based, renewable energy resources such as wind, solar, anaerobic digesters and small-scale hydroelectric."; "Explore the feasibility of removing the Moscow dam on the Little River to allow the river to return to a more natural state."*

Recommendation: Move to approve the enclosed letter of support for FERC hydroelectric licensing exemption for the Smith's Falls hydroelectric project.

Signatures Required

November 25, 2024

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20426



Re: Project No. 15366-000. Smith's Falls Hydroelectric Project. Town of Stowe Electric Department

Dear Federal Energy Regulatory Commission:

The Town of Stowe is providing this letter in support of Stowe Electric Department's (Department') application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC') for an exemption from licensing for the proposed hydroelectric project in Stowe, Vermont. The Department's project conforms to the Stowe Town Plan's stated goal to preserve the existing historic character of Stowe's village areas and utilize utility-scale locally produced renewable energy.

The Town Plan recognizes that our natural resources, working landscapes, and river ecology are key to our sense of place and prioritizes projects that serve the community. The Town Plan also supports projects that protect and improve Stowe's fisheries, riparian vegetation, and recreational opportunities. This project will help to revitalize the Village of Moscow's economic district. We are encouraged that this Project will repower an existing hydroelectric dam, enhance flood hazard mitigation and climate resiliency, improve the Little River's ecology, and bring additional value to the nearby Moscow Recreation Field that was first conserved in 1996 by providing additional recreational opportunities.

Finally, the Town Plan recognizes that energy affordability is key to economic growth, residential quality of life, and tourism. We support the Department's dedication to bringing least-cost renewable generation supply to the utility's portfolio that will improve regional air quality and help insulate the utility from price volatility in the regional power supply market. We are encouraged that this project will bring attention to the Village of Moscow community, help provide rate relief to income-qualifying customers, and showcase that public power utilities can remain both innovative and responsive to their customers.

FERC's approval of this project supports the Town of Stowe's commitment to sound fiscal management, increased renewable generation, and long-term plans for the Electric Department to revitalize an historic parcel within the Village of Moscow Historic District. This project will create a valuable community asset and spur economic development and make sound use of an underutilized site. We hope this application will get approved timely so the Department can take advantage of favorable federal funding support.

Sincerely,

Jo Sabel Courtney
Selectboard

Billy Adams
Selectboard Chair

Paco Aumand
Selectboard Vice Chair

Nick Donza
Selectboard

Ethan Carlson
Selectboard

Catherine Crawley
Energy Committee Chair

Stowe Energy Committee November 21, 2024



Akeley Memorial Building
67 Main Street
Stowe, VT 05672

Present: Catherine Crawley, Elizabeth Soper, Robi Artman Hodge, Cap Chenoweth, Andrew Rianhard, Marina Meerburg

Absent: Nikolas Graupe, Ellie Feinstein

Attendees: Assistant Town Manager Will Fricke, Michael Lazorchak, SED Regulatory Compliance Manager, Tori Hellwig (LCPC)

Call to Order

Chair Catherine Crawley called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Approve Minutes

Cap Chenoweth requested an amendment to the minutes to clarify the Akeley Memorial Building has mini splits, in the discussion surrounding ground source heat pumps.

Cap Chenoweth moved to approve the October 24 minutes as amended. Marina Meerburg seconded. Motion carried (6-0).

Other Business

Catherine Crawley said they have a request from the Stowe Electric Department to have her sign a letter of support for the SED hydroelectric project. Will Fricke said they are planning to only have the Selectboard sign the letter. Michael Lazorchak said he wants the Energy Committee to sign it as well, but it can be done separately from the Selectboard. Will reiterated that the Energy Committee is an advisory body to the Selectboard; it would not necessarily be appropriate for them to communicate directly with a federal agency. Michael noted that the Energy Committee has signed these letters in the past.

Will Fricke requested clarification regarding reference to the Town Plan. Michael Lazorchak said the language comes from a previous letter of support.

Marina Meerburg moved to authorize Catherine Crawley to sign the letter of support for the SED hydroelectric project FERC permitting waiver. Robi Artman-Hodge seconded. Motion carried (6-0).

Thermal Energy Networks

The Energy Committee discussed coordinating another meeting with Jared Rodriguez of Community Decarbonization Partners.

Review MERP Assessment

Catherine Crawley noted that Hyde Park and Morristown received MERP funding, and Stowe did not. Will Fricke said they submitted an application for funding to capital project to convert the Akeley Memorial Building heating from oil to propane. The Energy Committee discussed eligibility and how to better position the Town for future funding. It was noted that the other projects that were funded in Lamoille County were largely to install heat pumps.

Town Plan Discussion & Energy Priorities

The Energy Committee made edits to the Energy section of the Town Plan with Tori Hellwig of the Lamoille County Planning Commission. The discussion included the addition of language to the Town Plan where “*The Stowe Energy Committee will be advised of potential or planned Municipal new-construction, renovations, retrofits, weatherization and purchases of new equipment, upgraded systems, appliances and vehicles through the entire planning process to allow for comments and recommendation from the Committee.*” Will Fricke said Stowe’s Council-Manager form of government distinguishes between legislative and administrative roles; staff conduct their work under policy set by the Selectboard and the Town Plan. He added that requiring staff to wait for Energy Committee meetings in order to make purchases of equipment would be problematic.

Student Project and Schools Update

Student members were not in attendance. It was suggested that they refocus their project from electrifying school buses to electrifying police vehicles. Catherine Crawley recommended a subcommittee to research electrifying police vehicles.

Adjournment

There being no other business, Chair Catherine Crawley adjourned the meeting at 6:58pm.