

**TOWN OF CHARLOTTE
SELECTBOARD MEETINGS
MARCH 21, 2006**

APPROVED

MEMBERS PRESENT: Eleanor Russell, Chairperson; Jenny Cole, Charles Russell, Ed Stone, Frank Thornton.

OTHERS: Annemie Curlin, Robert Chutter, Peter Demick, Scott Baker, Sylvia Knight, Katherine Manchester, Jessie Bradley, Robert Hyams, Linda Hamilton, Larry Hamilton, Karol Joseyln, Colleen Pelkey, Bill Pelkey, David Miskell, Robert Mack Jr, Stephen Magowan, John Hammer, Dorrice Hammer, Chris Ingreham, Charlotte News; Matt Sutkowski, Burlington Free Press; and others.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Russell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. PUBLIC MEETING REGARDING THE DESIGN OF THE PROPOSED VELCO LINE

Jenny Cole, Selectboard representative, reviewed a brief history of the VELCO transmission line upgrade as originally proposed and a new detailed design submitted by VELCO, dated 02/24/2006. The Town has until 03/24/2006 to make comments on the new design. The Ferry Road area and the Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge area designs were still under discussion. The Town is seeking support for continued Town efforts.

A panorama of photographs of the proposed transmission route with an overlay of poles was used to illustrate the new design.

Ms. Cole outlined Town concerns regarding the project that included:

- Health, safety, mitigation of negative impacts, and if the proposed design meets the Town Plan and goals.
- The Town did not appeal the Certificate of Public Good issued by the Public Service Board (PSB). Some of the difficulties were the expense of the long-term process and dealing with miss-leading information..
- Costs associated with undergrounding the line through the Ferry Road area (3,200') were approximately equal to an overhead solution estimated at \$4 million.
- Mitigating the line's impact on the Waldorf School could include moving the school, or rebuilding the school for several million dollars.
- The height of poles ranged from 61' to 88'. Pole height at the park was not determined yet and the impact on the view at the park was a concern. The span between poles was now proposed at 466' on a 100' right-of-way.
- Impacts to the West Village town "entrance" from a proposed substation near the commuter railroad station off Ferry Road heading south were still under review.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Linda Hamilton, resident, thanked the Selectboard for their efforts on behalf of the Town. Charlotte was in a “David and Goliath” situation and we have legitimate concerns. Ms. Hamilton asked the Board to hang tough and to continue working for true negotiations with VELCO.

Robert Hyams, resident, asked if a Certificate of Public Good laid out the VELCO mandate. Mr. Russell replied that the Town has an opportunity to react to the new design before VELCO files the design to the PSB. There are two areas marked for further review – the park and Ferry Road. Clearing would happen in the right-of-way.

There was lengthy discussion regarding pole height (Ms. Cole read a section of the PSB order that addressed some areas specifically that GMP and VELCO must work closely with towns, such as historic and sensitive areas); potential for undergrounding the transmission line in the Ferry Road/West Village/substation/Waldorf School area versus overhead lines; and impacts to the Waldorf School, the West Village entrance area and the conserved land at the Knowles Farm.

Mr. Russell explained that the Certificate of Public Good gave VELCO the opportunity to design an overhead route if it could to preserve scenic areas, or else the line would have to go underground. If it was more costly to do the overhead route, there could be an opportunity to cost share undergrounding the line within the New England area. The West Village area is a key expansion area and includes a commercial/industrial area in the Town.

An audience member expressed concern that poles could be placed in the refuge park, and asked if undergrounding the line was an option, or if poles could be placed on the west side of the road. Ms. Cole explained that visuals were needed in order to “see” what the proposed route would look like in the park area. For example, could shorter poles in the front of the park be an option. The line follows the east side of the railroad tracks then crosses to the other side near the Shelburne town line.

Jessie Bradley, resident, expressed concern regarding environmental impacts related to installing treated wood poles in the wetlands.

Katherine Manchester asked if any of the energy carried by the new line would stay in Vermont. Does the line comply with the Town Plan, asked Ms. Manchester. Ms Cole explained that the Town Plan encouraged undergrounding of power lines and consolidating utilities on the same poles. Mr. Russell pointed out that the language of the Town Plan could have been stronger and isn’t regulatory.

Mr. Hyams said the change in pole height from 50’-60’ to 70’-80’ was a concern. If we use that as a starting point for negotiations would that put us at a disadvantage, asked Mr. Hyams. Ms. Russell said the Selectboard would include the pole design as part of the argument. Mr. Russell clarified that once VELCO files the new plan to the PSB then we can litigate. The PSB hears and approves a Certificate of Public Good, and we can appeal

the decision. Ms. Cole reiterated that now was the time to provide comments before VELCO files the plan to the PSB.

Ms. Manchester pointed out that it is public record that VELCO just had their hand slapped for digging in a sensitive area where they were not supposed to dig. Should we make comments to the PSB versus VELCO, asked Ms. Manchester. Ms. Cole asked that comments be sent to the Selectboard. VELCO has sent letters to property owners on where they could send comments.

Sylvia Knight, resident and Conservation Commission member, said that VELCO has hired a new engineering crew and that could be the reason for the new design. Ms. Knight expressed concern that we were well into the approval process and the design did not match previous discussions with VELCO. Ms. Knight urged the Selectboard to send comments to the PSB and expressed no confidence that comments to VELCO would bear fruit. We were not getting any responsiveness from VELCO to work with the Town. What are the permits that VELCO needs to work in the flood plain, and why didn't VELCO indicate the amount of clearing proposed in the right-of-way. Where was the VELCO representative at this meeting, asked Ms. Knight, and what was the Town willing to accept. Ms. Knight volunteered to work on composing a letter with the Selectboard.

Lorraine Russell, resident, asked if the line along Limerick Acres would go underground. The five poles proposed would impact views and esthetics of the view looking west. Ms. Cole said that north of the substation would be overhead. There is an accumulation of "things" around the substation that included a number of poles and structures.

Larry Hamilton, resident and Charlotte Tree Warden, asked for clarification regarding methods of vegetation control in the right-of-way and if the plan was different from originally proposed. Ms. Cole explained that discussion included landscaping and selective clearing, but details of what would be used was not discussed. Herbicides would be used, but VELCO said not in the wetlands. The VELCO esthetic consultant said that "feathering" of vegetation would mitigate some of the clearing.

Stephen Magowan, Waldorf School Trustees representative, commended Ms. Cole, Mr. Russell, the Town Attorney(s), and the Town Planner for the amount of work they have vested on behalf of the Town. Mr. Magowan stated that the Trustees have been working with VELCO representatives, who have been difficult to deal with. VELCO does not want to underground the line along the west side of the school property. There have been discussions to move the school structure, or to tear it down and rebuild it. Waldorf has conducted some research and undergrounding the line might not mitigate EMF exposure as much as previously thought, or might not add value to the school property. We might not be able to use our land with underground lines. An audience member asked if VELCO would pay compensation for lost land value. Mr. Magowan replied that VELCO says that there is no health risk and we don't agree. EMF issues are greater with undergrounding. There is a concern that VELCO would not shield the line properly. We understand that it is better to have EMF dispersed with overhead lines. The PSB didn't address the issue as strongly as they should have. There should have been more

testimony, said Mr. Magowan. Ms. Cole asked if Mr. Magowan could provide the EMF information related to undergrounding to the Selectboard.

Mr. Demick asked why couldn't we demand that VELCO bury the line. Mr. Thornton replied that the PSB makes that decision. Mr. Russell said that if the property owner didn't sign easement documents, then VELCO would just condemn the land and put in the line.

Katherine Manchester said that a transmission line upgrade in Connecticut set precedence for shared cost in southern New England. We can make the same argument here.

Ms. Russell thanked the assemblage for their input.

3. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Stone, seconded by Mr. Russell, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: 5 ayes; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Kathlyn Furr, Recording Secretary.

These minutes are subject to correction by the Charlotte Selectboard. Changes, if any, will be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting of the Board.