

**Members of the VSPC Public Participation Subcommittee met by phone on June 6, 2012, to discuss the questions to subcommittees from the ad hoc process improvement group. Below is a summary of thoughts from the June 6 discussion.**

The Public Participation Subcommittee acknowledges the importance of public awareness of transmission planning, and public engagement early in planning processes. Subcommittee members also recognize how challenging it is to get people interested in public outreach efforts. The increased number of town energy committees in Vermont has provided a conduit for information to the most engaged audience. Communication with regional planning groups has increased, to a certain extent, the participation of these groups in public outreach events.

The Public Participation Subcommittee plays an important role in assuring compliance with the principles of public involvement in transmission planning stated in the Docket 7081 MOU. Committee members have a wide range of expertise and experience, and have much to offer when it comes to reviewing and evaluating public outreach efforts.

While the subcommittee has been assigned the two distinct roles of consulting with utilities in the planning of public involvement during detailed analysis and solution selection of non-transmission alternatives, and consulting with VELCO in the planning of public outreach in development of the Long-range Transmission Plan, the subcommittee has not been consistently called upon to provide input. More consistent involvement of the Public Participation Subcommittee may require nothing more than an expectation that the responsible committee or utility will communicate with the subcommittee when approaching Step 8 of the Docket 7081 MOU.

Meeting by phone is an option to allow the subcommittee to be more nimble in responding to requests of utilities and the VSPC.

The Public Participation Subcommittee has recognized a need for online information regarding transmission planning and energy related issues in general. In an ideal world, the Vt. Department of Public Service in its role as ratepayer advocate would make comprehensive information available to the public through an informative and up-to-date web site. The Department does not have the resources to do this.

While the existing VSPC web site is adequate for internal communication of VSPC participants, and provides the general public with some information about VSPC activities and the electric system in Vermont, the site has not reached its potential (and what has been envisioned by the Public Participation Subcommittee) as a public-friendly place to go for information. This is again a resource problem-- not enough staff time available for this type of meaningful engagement. A reasonable approach may be for the subcommittee to come up with a statement of scope for better communication with the public through improved web site and other means (op-ed articles, media).

Recognizing the importance of filling the public member slots on the VSPC, the Public Participation Subcommittee has assisted with public member recruitment. Slow gains are being made with the appointment of new members and alternatives. The Commercial and Industrial interest remains under-represented.

Summary of recommended actions from the group:

- Clearly state expectations to other VSPC committees on how the Public Participation Subcommittee should be consulted in development of the Long-Range Plan and project-specific public outreach. Offer assistance in the role of advising to strengthen public outreach plans.
- Schedule future subcommittee meeting(s) to develop a description of a scope for VSPC public outreach and an identification of resources that would be needed to accomplish the scope.
- Revise the subcommittee charter to incorporate the role of assisting with public member recruitment, development and retention.

6/11/12