

July 9, 2009 **DRAFT MINUTES**  
VSPC Public Participation Subcommittee Meeting

The Public Participation Subcommittee met at 8:30 a.m. at Green Mountain Power and by phone.

Attendees

In person: Jenny Cole, Jack Collins, Deena Frankel, Molly Hooker Hatfield, Kim Pritchard, Dotty Schnure

By phone: Steve Costello, Hans Mertens, James Moore, Hantz Pr sum , Heidi Klein (Snelling Center)

AGENDA

- Overview of the VELCO long-range plan public outreach
- How to improve public participation in outreach efforts
  - Regional Planning participation and information to communities
  - Panel discussion format
  - Use of deliberative polling
- How to increase public awareness and involvement in the VSPC
  - Filling VSPC public member sector vacancies, contacts with business community (Chamber of Commerce, etc.)
  - Changing public membership through amendment to 7081 MOU
  - Sending meeting invitations to e-mail list
  - Press release or newsletter
  - Improvements to web site
- Public awareness of economic transmission
- Critical Energy Infrastructure Information and public involvement
- Docket 7081 evaluation

Overview of the VELCO long-range plan public outreach

Heidi and Deena provided an overview of the VELCO long-range plan public outreach and the internal evaluation by VELCO of the outreach efforts. 6 public meetings were held. Participants seemed generally pleased with the meetings, but felt they came not knowing enough to share comments. In response to this comment, VELCO modified the meeting presentation to include an explanation of what sort of information was being sought from the public, such as plans and activities in communities that would be useful in the planning process. Other lessons learned were:

- The public was informed of the opportunity to view the draft plan. Many had not read it prior to the meetings. It was felt that the plan was too long and that key stakeholders should be provided with “homework” to prepare for meeting discussions.
- It should be made clear how different types of information will be used.
- It may be beneficial to have phased public outreach where community groups would be involved before the first draft is created. This would help with the

development of an agenda for outreach meetings.

Outreach participants included regional planners, town planners, energy committee members, legislators and other citizens. Attendance varied—the Montpelier meeting had 20 participants. The long-range plan outreach web site had 1500 hits. Heidi explained that the Plan and meetings were advertised and that individuals were contacted by e-mail direct mail, and through personal calls by Heidi to a significant number of key stakeholders.

Committee members discussed other options to improve public participation. Hans Mertens suggested the use of Webex teleconference.

It was noted that relevance was important— transmission issues may not have relevance to the general public until something visible is happening. A proactive approach where there is an effort to reach out to communities on what interests them was suggested. What may be of interest to the public may be beyond the scope of VELCO planning and VSPC consideration.

There was further discussion about whether the long-range plan is really a *plan*, or whether it should act as a tool to get to a plan. The Plan was in response to statute and Docket 7081 and deals with reliability deficiencies, and a change in approach may require a change in the Docket 7081 MOU.

It was suggested that public participants be informed about how their input was valuable, and that there needs to be an effort to “get out of the box” and reach out to communities.

There was further discussion about what the plan is supposed to be, what interests the public, public expectation and boundaries of transmission planning through the VSPC, how the VELCO plan fits with the State energy plan, required evaluation of Docket 7081 and review of process by policy makers if a change in statute is required.

Deena thanked those involved with planning and implementing the public outreach.

#### How to increase public awareness and involvement in the VSPC

VSPC meetings are long and the discussions technical. It was felt that contact with targeted groups that are already involved with energy and community planning issues would be most likely to result in public participation.

There was discussion of energy-related topics of importance to the public (such as “smart grid” technology) and how VELCO planning dealt with these topics.

Reasons why public participation is important were suggested:

- To obtain input on projects in a specific geographic location
- Because of the experiences of the NRP

- Inform about economic transmission, new technologies such as “smart grid” and CEII

There was further discussion of how to better inform the public by using the mailing list compiled for the VELCO outreach and the VSPC, letter to editors and VSPC newsletter. Contacting the Vermont League of Cities and Towns was suggested. Deena has made a presentation in the past, submitted information for the VLCT newsletter and participated at the VLCT Annual Meeting. It was found that physical presence through a booth at the VLCT annual conference was not very productive. Jenny volunteered to contact Steven Jeffrey at the VLCT.

#### Critical Energy Infrastructure Information and public involvement

ISO released has developed guidelines for Critical Energy Infrastructure Information (CEII) that have not yet been adopted and published. and FERC and NERC just finished an audit of VELCO ~~policy~~. VELCO is looking at what information can be made publicly available and what information requires a non-disclosure agreement. A non-disclosure agreement is being developed and VELCO plans to do educational piece in the future. Guidelines will be made available on the VSPC web site.

James expressed concern about the fine line between what is necessary and what is realistic, and that the rules may kill public participation and result in less useful dialogue. Deena stated that there should be continuing conversation about CEII.

#### Docket 7081 evaluation

VSPC subcommittees and sectors are asked to provide feedback on the VSPC planning structure for the Docket 7081 evaluation. Deena stated that this may be in the form of surveys to identify areas to follow up on or interviews. Dotty suggested the use of SurveyMonkey. Deena will prepare survey questions. The subcommittee should think about whether the subcommittee charter makes sense.

A conference call was scheduled for August 12 at 9:00 a.m. to follow up on subcommittee comments.