

January 31, 2017

Judith C. Whitney, Clerk of the Board
Vermont Public Service Board
112 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2701

RE: Docket 8875: Investigation into the possibility of adding an additional seat representing the interests of towns and regional planning organizations to the Vermont System Planning Committee

Dear Ms. Whitney:

On January 9, 2017, I filed a letter on behalf of the Vermont System Planning Committee (VSPC) requesting an extension of the deadline to file initial comments in Docket 8875. The request for extension was made to allow time for the VSPC to discuss the matter at its already scheduled January 25, 2017, meeting, and, if consensus could be reached, to provide collective input of the VSPC to the Public Service Board (PSB or Board). At the January 25 VSPC meeting, the group was able to reach consensus. This letter provides the initial comments of the full VSPC with participants' unanimous consent.

The VSPC members support the creation of a new seat on the VSPC representing the interests of towns and regional planning organizations. With the new regional and local energy planning requirements of last year's Act 174, we recognize the increased role of planning commissions in Vermont grid planning, and the attendant value of having their representative understand and provide input into the VSPC process.

We have several recommendations with regard to implementation of the proposed change:

- The addition of a seat raises the question of how the new position would be incorporated into the existing sector structure. We recommend the new seat be included in the existing Public Members sector. In the event of a vote taken under the provisions of the Docket 7081 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the Public Members sector vote would be determined by the majority vote of four, rather than the current three, members (Residential, Commercial, Environmental and the new Planning representatives).
- We recommend the term of appointment for the newly created seat should be the same five year period as the other Board-appointed seats.

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- We recommend that the Board conduct the same type of broad, open solicitation of candidates it undertakes for the other public seats on the VSPC. The VSPC offers its assistance in publicizing the availability of the new position in the same manner we have done for other vacancies. In particular, we recommend that the Board provide, or permit the VSPC to provide, notice of the vacancy to the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, as well as individual planning commissions. We think it would be especially valuable for both the planning community and the VSPC to have a representative of one of the three regional planning commissions that took part in the recent pilot energy planning studies, and therefore, has already completed its initial round of energy plans. We reiterate that the VSPC offers its assistance in outreach to these groups to solicit interest in the new position.

We support the resolution of this matter in the most efficient manner possible. We suggest that the Board consider the VSPC's and any other interested parties' recommendations, issue a proposed order, and provide a 30-day opportunity for comment before issuing a final order.

Thank you for the Board's consideration of the VSPC's input.

Respectfully submitted,

Deena Frankel
VSPC Secretary

cc. Vermont System Planning Committee