

STATE OF VERMONT  
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Docket No. 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	
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Order entered: 1/25/2018

**ORDER RE REQUEST FOR COMMENT ON PROPOSED CHANGES  
TO THE VERMONT SYSTEM PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**I. BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

This case concerns an investigation into the possibility of adding an additional seat to the Vermont System Planning Committee (“VSPC”) for the purpose of representing the interests of towns and regional planning organizations.

The VSPC was established by the Vermont Public Utility Commission (“Commission”)<sup>1</sup> in Docket 7081 to promote public engagement, long-term planning, and effective collaboration in addressing Vermont’s electrical transmission needs. In particular, the VSPC serves to enable the timely identification of future transmission needs and address these needs by utilizing cost-effective non-transmission alternatives such as efficiency and distributed generation. The VSPC structure and purpose are set forth in a Memorandum of Understanding, most recently approved by the Commission in its November 6, 2013, Order in Docket 8073 (“VSPC MOU”).<sup>2</sup>

To help promote public engagement in this process and ensure that the interests of residential, environmental, and commercial/industrial users of electricity are appropriately represented, the VSPC includes three public members representing each of these categories.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to Section 9 of Act 53 of the 2017 legislative session, the Vermont Public Service Board’s name was changed to the Vermont Public Utility Commission, effective July 1, 2017. For clarity, activities of the Vermont Public Service Board that occurred before the name change will be referred to in Commission documents as activities of the Commission unless that would be confusing in the specific context.

<sup>2</sup> The initial Memorandum of Understanding establishing the VSPC was approved by the Commission in its June 20, 2007, Order in Docket 7081. This Memorandum of Understanding has been subsequently amended with the approval of the Commission. The version approved by the Commission in the November 6, 2013, Order in Docket 8073 reflects the cumulative changes approved by the Commission and is what we refer to here as the VSPC MOU.

<sup>3</sup> Although not specifically spelled out in the VSPC MOU, the Commission has also selected three alternate public members to serve in the event that the principal representatives are not available.

In a December 27, 2016, Order, the Commission opened this proceeding to investigate the possibility of amending the VSPC MOU to add an additional seat to represent the interests of towns and regional planning organizations. In the December 27 Order, the Commission observed that the passage of Act 174 of 2016 had significantly increased the role and responsibilities of municipal and regional planning entities in the planning process for the development of Vermont's electricity infrastructure. In light of this expanded role, the Commission requested comment on whether it would be appropriate to add a new public member to the VSPC to ensure that these elements are represented in the VSPC planning process.

On January 17, 2017, the Windham Regional Commission ("WRC") filed comments in response to the December 27 Order. In its comments, WRC expresses support for the addition of a new member. WRC also notes that the task of representing both regional and municipal planning organizations will require a high degree of familiarity with both types of organizations and suggests that efforts to recruit and select a representative to fill this role should take this into account.

On January 31, 2017, the VSPC submitted comments in response to the December 27 Order. In its comments, the VSPC states that at its most recent meeting VSPC participants had an opportunity to discuss the issues raised in the December 27 Order and reached a consensus that including such an additional representative in the VSPC process would be beneficial to all parties. The VSPC notes that such an individual would also be in a position to help local planning organizations understand the VSPC process. The VSPC also recommends that the new member become part of the public sector voting bloc of the VSPC, meaning that in the event of a vote taken under the provisions of the VSPC MOU, the vote of the public sector would be determined by a majority of the four participants. The VSPC also suggests that the new representative should be appointed to a five-year term, consistent with the other public sector members. Finally, the VSPC recommends that the Commission conduct a broad solicitation for appropriate representatives, and suggests several entities that should receive beneficial to provide notice of the new position.

No other comments were received.

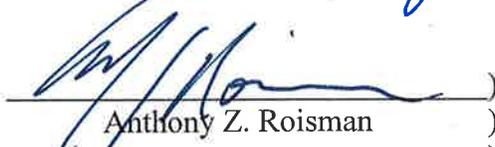
## **II. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The comments filed in response to the December 27 Order all agree that the addition of a new member to represent town and regional planning organizations would provide a benefit to the functioning of the VSPC. Accordingly, we find that the addition of this new member would be beneficial. The VSPC also makes several suggestions as to how this new member could be incorporated into the VSPC's existing charter. These suggestions are reasonable and reflect a consensus of the VSPC participants. We therefore adopt them.

Accordingly, we direct the VSPC to file proposed amendments to the VSPC MOU to effect the proposal outlined in its January 31 comments. The VSPC shall file its proposed amendments no later than Friday, February 9, 2018. Other parties shall have 30 days from the VSPC's filing of proposed amendments to provide any comments on the requested changes.

**SO ORDERED.**

Dated at Montpelier, Vermont this 25<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2018.

 _____)	) PUBLIC UTILITY
Anthony Z. Roisman )	
 _____) )	) COMMISSION
Margaret Cheney )	
 _____) )	) OF VERMONT
Sarah Hofmann )	

OFFICE OF THE CLERK

Filed: January 25, 2018

Attest: Julith C. Whitney  
Clerk of the Commission

*Notice to Readers: This decision is subject to revision of technical errors. Readers are requested to notify the Clerk of the Commission (by e-mail, telephone, or in writing) of any apparent errors, in order that any necessary corrections may be made. (E-mail address: puc.clerk@vermont.gov)*

*Appeal of this decision to the Supreme Court of Vermont must be filed with the Clerk of the Commission within 30 days. Appeal will not stay the effect of this Order, absent further order by this Commission or appropriate action by the Supreme Court of Vermont. Motions for reconsideration or stay, if any, must be filed with the Clerk of the Commission within 28 days of the date of this decision and Order.*