

TOWN OF GROTON
SELECT BOARD MEETING
May 16, 2023

In Attendance: John Rescigno, Tony Albert, Ron Madan and Sara Smith (Administrative Assistant)

Audience Members Present

John called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

MINUTE APPROVAL

**John motioned to approve the Work Session Meeting minutes of May 2, 2023 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.
John motioned to approve the Select Board Meeting minutes of May 2, 2023 as written, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

NEW BUSINESS:

Twin States Clean Energy Link

Sean Downey had called and requested to be added to the agenda so that he and his team could give a presentation on the project called Twin States Clean Energy Link. Sean and Dan were in attendance. They had a presentation and a facts sheet that they handed out. They are here to talk about the project, the potential benefits and any concerns that Groton may have.

Sean mentioned that we may remember that they were here about 6 years ago for a similar project called Granite State Power Link which utilized the existing transmission corridor that runs through Groton. The transmission corridor is three towers across, the two towers on the outside are about 60ft and the one in the middle is 110ft. This is the exact corridor we are talking about today. Twin States is a different plan that utilizes that same corridor to bring in 1200 megawatts of renewable energy. The idea is to bury a line from the Canadian border in Cannon Vermont along Vermont Route 102, travel south to about Lunenburg Vermont where the line will cross below the Connecticut River bed into Dalton New Hampshire buried into Monroe. Then it would be above ground using the existing area through Londonderry New Hampshire.

This is a project was announced May 3rd so they are in the introductory phase and getting out to meet with the towns that the project passes through. They are very grateful to be able to talk to Groton tonight and seek the Towns input while they are working on permitting and going through the federal process.

The goal is to import new Canadian renewables that will help move off of fossil fuel generation in the region. The reason that is important is that everyone knows our energy rates are high right now so this is an existing source of energy that can be brought into the US via a line like this. The greenhouse gas production goals in the region really kind of require the connection of wind, solar and other renewable energy sources on shore and off shore. One of the things this line produces and creates is a scenario in which it creates a balancing power when the wind is not blowing and the sun is not necessarily shining. This can balance the grid. New England is pretty reliant on fossil fuel and natural gas. In order to keep the grid reliable, we need a reliable source of back up energy. This project does this because it is bi-directional. This is not just a one way for Canadian renewables to come in to the US but it allows offshore to export energy into Canada during times of surplus, which in New England is usually in the spring and fall.

In Quebec there is a significant amount of power that is available and ready to be shipped into the US. They are very excited that they found this very low impact way to achieve that.

The reason they were so eager to get on the agenda tonight is because they wanted to start the conversation now with the Town. DOE will select some clean energy to move forward and they are an applicant for that process. On 4/28/23 they were told that they were invited to participate in phase 2 of the Transmission Facilitation Programs RFP process. Twin States Phase 2 RFP response will be submitted on 6/12/23, with DOE deliberations throughout the summer, so they have a lot of work to do in a little time.

John said he is not against green energy. A few years ago, we were energy independent and gas was \$1.99 a gallon. We are no longer energy independent and gas was around \$4.50 a gallon. He asked why would we want to rely on Quebec to supply us with energy. The reason being, let's say they decide to go total green and suddenly all of the energy that they are generating through the hydro plant has to supply Canada. That would leave us in a situation that we transitioned but now we have no power. Dan said that as this process gets moving it ends up being a contract between Quebec and National Grid for delivery of that power, which would be something like a 30-year power purchase agreement that is a binding statutory contract that Quebec has to say they will supply 1200 megawatts to this project, at this rate, for this period of time so those changes wouldn't affect that contract. John said unless our government decides to push us more towards the green and we need more energy and then we fall into the deficit once again. Right now, if we all went and bought electric cars our grid would collapse. Dan agreed and said this is a long technical challenge with predicting energy usage but with this project being 1200 megawatts that is a big enough injection to meet the need. New England's overall load is about 15 gigawatts and we are talking about 1.2 gigawatts so that is a big chunk of energy but it is one of many so it will not be the only supply that everyone in New England will have and need. If he is being honest, he doesn't think everyone will be buying electric cars. From an energy standpoint, as a country we actually are now energy independent again as a country. New England is not so much but the US is one of the top three oil producers in the world, next to Saudi Arabia. John said we are getting fossil fuels from other countries.

Really why they are here the Towns concerns about the project. John said that is one of our concerns. John wanted to confirm that this would be passing through the town on the corridor we currently have. Dan and Sean both confirmed that is correct.

Sean said they are working on completing the second phase and need to make sure they have a strong application. They are fortunate to have Governor Sununu's support and other towns are supporting it. All of this makes for a stronger application. As they complete that threshold on June 12th, DOE will evaluate the applications over the summer and then go into contract negotiations. The bi-directional nature of this line means that the growing off shore energy sector with the wind farms, this gives those developments a place to set power during those times of surplus. It is not always the case that there is a short fall of energy.

John said we are seeing a lot of concern of sonar using mammals in the ocean washing up on shore since these windfarms have been put in. There haven't been studies on how this effects their migratory paths. Dan said there is a lot of news on that and a lot of discussion that can be had on that.

John asked where the line that goes through the Town, where does that end up and where is that electricity actually going. They went over where the line runs, which they had done earlier. It terminates in Londonderry and the reason Londonderry is important is because it is a key energy hub, not just for the state but for the region. It delivers in New Hampshire and that it where it connects to the New England grid so it does supply New Hampshire but also all of New England.

They wanted to talk about the benefits to the host communities and states. Twin States will provide host communities with hundreds of millions in property tax revenue and other benefit packages towards community-identified needs. They would like to talk about how these programs can benefit Groton.

John asked how it will affect the town when they are running the lines through the Town. They said this affects the town because of tower replacements and cable being replaced. There will not be any new right of ways, it will use current one. There will not be new towers and they do not know yet which towers will need to be placed because they are not that far in the process yet. They do know that the tall towers will not change, but the other towers may need to be replaced due to condition. They will try to use what is there or replace with similar to what is there. There is a chance the smaller ones may need to be slightly taller but the 110 ft towers will always be the tallest towers. It will mostly will be old wires being taken off and new ones put on. The small towers will change from 230kv to 345kv. The tallest ones will still be 450kv. When they are done there will be very little to no visible changes, it will mostly be replacing existing cable and towers.

Sean said that they were talking about the community benefits package. This is still early on but they would want to hear from the Town as to how they could benefit from this. They wouldn't want to just give something to the town that they may not use or need. They would want the Town to provide them with any projects or needs that the Town could benefit from. They don't want it to be that the only people that benefit are the ones receiving the power, they want the communities to benefit as well.

John asked if we will benefit more from the gifts that are being received as opposed to the electricity that is given. They said the study is being completed now so he will have a sharper number on this later. They are talking energy saving in the billions of dollars.

John asked if they have to build larger generators there. They said no they are already there and they already have the power. John asked where the surplus is going now. They did not know the answer to that. They know some is designated for a project going to New York and other projects. John asked if they are opening the flood gates so that more water is going through to generate more through the faster spinning turbines. They said they cannot speak for the generators up there but they do not believe there is a plan to create more dams. John said then we would be looking at more wear and tear and more maintenance costs and how this will factor in to the equation.

John said this sounds good and looks good on paper and he is not against green energy but there needs to be the right balance and we need to look at how much damage are we doing to the environment to become green. They said they are not looking for answers right now but they wanted to introduce this to the Town and start the conversation. They are in data collection mode and they want to collect community concerns as well.

Chief Bagan had a security concern with all these new projects and upgrading of substation transmission points. He asked if they are requiring EMP protection. They said that is a really good question. Chief Bagan said that while they are redoing it, why couldn't it be effectively done then for the upgrades. He has concerns about bad actors, hacking and other interruptions, would there be more increases security to protect this. They said that since there will be new equipment that will be to a new standard now for cybersecurity. Chief said it is worth looking into now and if you are retrofitting now would it be worth it to look into protections now since we don't know what will happen in the future and to interrupt the US power grid would be crippling so if we could take steps now to protect against that would be beneficial. They said they will definitely look into that and they wrote it down to follow up on it. They will send a note back.

Slim stated that they mentioned Granite State Power Link and how they were here a few years ago. He said their place was to use the direct line and they wouldn't use the alternating. It sounds like that is not what would happen here. They said it would be alternating. It would be direct until Monroe and then would convert to alternating from there on.

Ron asked if that would do away with the windfarms. They said no it would not be related to that at all.

John wanted to confirm that from what they are seeing right now there wouldn't be much for an impact on the town. They agreed and said that is correct since they would be following same lines. Tony said if we follow the same lines, he doesn't see any push back but if they start to widen the area then there would be. They explained there is no right of way expansion. They did state there would be some tree routine maintenance. John wanted to make sure that they were only cutting and not using herbicides because the Town does not allow that. They confirmed it would be the same practice. John mentioned that some of it is the snowmobile trail. They confirmed it would be maintained the same way it is now and this is why they have these meetings in the towns so they can be made aware of these concerns. When they get into the construction phase, they will reach out to the snowmobile clubs so they can explain their plans and discuss the snowmobile clubs plans as well.

Sara will put the handouts online. Sara has their contact information and their website has contact information as well and ways to contact them. There is also a FAQ on the website as well. The website is www.twinstatescleanenergylink.com.

They thanked the Town for their time and the Select Board thanked them for coming out.

Building Permit- Map 5 Lot 29

The owner submitted a building permit for their property located on Sculptured Rocks Road for a 25x27 car port. **John motioned to sign the building permit for Map 5 Lot 29, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Building Permit- Map 5 Lot 49

The owner submitted a building permit for their property located on Sculptured Rocks Road for a deck over the existing patio in front of the house. **John motioned to sign the building permit for Map 5 Lot 49, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

The owners also inquired on building a garage or having a prefab one delivered. They do not have a lot of room so they were wondering how far off of the road it needs to be. Sara asked what the right of way for this road is so she can let them know. Tony said he is not sure if there is one listed or not. Sara said she looked for it quickly and couldn't find anything but she will look again. Tony said if it doesn't state a specific right of way then it would be prescriptive. He said if it is prescriptive, he can go out with Fred and look at the property to let them know where they could put it.

Conservation Commission Member Request

Sara mentioned that she received an email from Eric Jones, 24 Old Rumney Road, to state his interest in being a member of the Conservation Commission. **John motioned to approve Eric Jones as a member of the Conservation Commission, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Sara will let him know this request was approved and she will give Ruth a copy of the approval for her records.

SELECT BOARD ITEMS:

School Update

John wanted to provide a quick update on the school bill and exiting the school district. He said it is looking good that it is going to be signed into law. Once that happens, they will form an exit committee which will work out logistics of all components such as K-8, which high school the kids could go to, sports, costs, and other pieces. He said more than likely there will be a cost at the beginning to add on two classrooms but then we will have more control over the school budget than we do not. Once they figure all of that out, the towns will vote on it at the 2024 Town Meeting and then in 2025 the new SAU would be formed.

Ann asked about timeline to see if it was changed to one year. Tony said it was amended to two years and the amendment passed.

John said Superintendent resigned but no one knows why. He was really against this bill so maybe the new Superintendent will be more open to working with everyone on this.

Slim said he thought the other towns had to vote to let us out of the school district. John explained that was the old way but this new bill made it so the other towns do not have the vote but the three towns that want to leave would have to have their townspeople voted on whether they want to leave or not.

Chief Bagan asked if the parents and students would be able to choose which Highschool they attend. John said that will be discussed and they are hoping to give each student a certain amount of money that they could put towards a different school. This has only been discussed and hasn't been agreed on yet.

John said that he heard the school board has discussed not opening another school but reconfiguring to a K-8.

Building update

John explained that it is looking like mid-June for when the bidding process will start for the new Town Garage. Tony said that we have to allow 30 days after that for companies to submit bids before we can open them. Then the work will start afterwards.

COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Conservation Commission

Slim shared the fishing derby will be taking place the first Saturday in June. Fred put the signs out. Sara ordered the porta potty and sent Virginia the PDF for the signs. They will have trophies again. Slim said they are going to order new signs. They always get 200 fish every year. He has the permit so he reached out to the state and Hy-On-A-Hill to get the fish. Slim said that there is a big tire on the bridge that needs to be moved. Sara will give Fred a heads up but asked Slim to let Fred know which day they will be coming out so he can move ahead of time.

Memorial Day

Groton Historical Society is doing a Memorial Day event again this year. It will take place on Monday, May 29, 2023. This year there will be a presentation on John Stark which will start at 10:30am. They will raise the flag at noon. A resident supplied a donation for food so they will have food there as well.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

There were no questions or comments from the audience.

Having no other business to conduct, John motioned to adjourn at 7:55pm, Tony 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant