



Town of Ashland
New Hampshire 03217

TOWN OFFICE
OFFICE (603) 968-4432
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Re: New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee ("SEC") Docket 2015-06 Northern Pass Petition to Intervene

Dear Ms. Monroe:

We, the members of the Ashland (NH) Select Board, on behalf of our municipal boards and citizens of Ashland, respectfully request to intervene in the SEC's proceedings under Docket No. 2015-06 relating to the proposed Northern Pass Transmission line. Per the SEC's regulations, we are sending this request to you, with copies to the SEC's distribution list for the proceedings as noted below.

Our particular rights, duties, privileges, immunities, or other substantial interests that may be affected by the SEC's Northern Pass proceedings include the following bullet points from input gathered by our Planning Board, Economic Development Committee, Conservation Commission, Water and Sewer Commission, Select Board, and citizens directly affected by this project.

- The major impact this project will have on the community of Ashland in public safety, welfare, development, property values, environment, and water/sewer operation and security, and the state's ability to over-ride local control requires that we play a greater role in the decision-making part of the site review.
- Only 4% of the land in Ashland is zoned as industrial/commercial and only 30% of that is classified as developable for light industrial uses. The allowable uses of this land are already limited by the location of our main aquifer, the wellhead protection zone and the Pemigewasset Overlay District. The location of the towers and any widening of the right-of-way will further restrict our economic development in that area.
- Our water and sewer facilities are a crucial piece of our economic and community development and welfare. The Northern Pass plans severely impact this area through construction and excavation in the wellhead protection area, placement of towers close to the lagoons and over test wells, right-of-way access for construction, lack of room for construction equipment, security concerns, and EMF effects on monitoring and communication equipment.
- Any stated potential property tax coming from Northern Pass will be minimal and more than offset by property devaluations resulting from the above-ground towers. This, combined with taking more land out of play for economic development, will have a very negative impact on the already small tax base of our community.
- Severe wind shear across the already reduced buffer adjacent to US 3 and I-93 will be increased in an area marked by NH DOT for "dangerous crosswinds." This has already been the site of multiple accidents.
- Aggressive vegetation clearing will result in the continued degradation of the vegetation along the Pemigewasset River corridor and will promote the spread of invasive species like knotweed.
- There will be a direct impact on wildlife cover and habitat in an area designated as a "highest ranked habitat in NH" by NH Fish and Wildlife Action Plan.

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Town of Ashland Planning Board

As stated in the Ashland Master Plan *Community Vision*, a primary goal for the future of Ashland is to foster low-impact business opportunities to improve economic well-being. "Future growth and development should be regulated by town policies and ordinances in compliance with the Master Plan. These policies and ordinances must protect our natural resources, community values, and preserve the essential rural character of the town. This Vision guided the development of the recommendations found in each chapter of this Master Plan". The chapters provide detailed ideas for balanced growth and development and information about Ashland's community character and the attributes associated with a high quality of life. In *Chapter 1 Land Use*, the purpose of the Industrial-Commercial (IC) is to encourage the establishment of industrial and commercial uses that are not detrimental to the community or environment. The Industrial-Commercial Zone is comprised of 279.2 acres or approximately 4 percent of the total land area in Ashland. In the evaluation done on the Town's land development capacity, of the 11.2 square miles, only 30.2% was classified as developable; the other 69.8% had constraints with 48.9% having slopes of 15-25% grade, 12.8% with slopes of 25+% grade, 1.9% wetlands, 3.8% floodplains, and 2.4% prime agricultural soils (and 256 acres of surface water). The Town has two overlay districts designed to protect environmentally sensitive water resources which includes the Pemigewasset River corridor. The overlay districts provide additional development constraints designed to protect water quality. The Pemigewasset River overlay includes land within 500 feet of the river, with a 50-foot setback specified as an available option for light impact commercial or industrial development. The Industrial Zone that runs from the Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) to the Pemigewasset River is referred to in the Master Plan and by the Lakes Region Planning Commission as an "industrial park" with the potential for light impact development. It lies on top of an aquifer on which the Town wellhead is sited. Although challenging for development, it is the one area with the potential to expand the Town's industrial base. The Planning Board is reliant upon the Conservation Commission for its expertise on the natural resources of the area, and more details are itemized in its report.

It is stated in the Normandeau Associates report (p. 82) that, "Wells and other water supplies will be avoided on a case-by-case basis throughout implementation". The proposed Project has a direct impact on the Town of Ashland wellhead, the aquifer, and the WWTP and a planned septage receiving station. The economic development of this town is dependent upon its municipal water and sewer capacities, and the best use of the land still open for light industrial or commercial development. The Ashland Water and Sewer Department has submitted a detailed report with its request for intervenor status. The Project plans still tend to be vague on the details of how much land around the ROW will be impacted to the extent of decreasing any growth opportunities in the target area. All current parcels will be affected; it is yet to be determined how much impact the groundwork, tree removal and physical presence of the towers would have on the future value and use of the land.

As stated in the *Town of Ashland Site Plan Review Regulations*, "The purpose of Site Plan Review is to provide a thorough public review and analysis of certain development projects in order to protect the public health, safety, and welfare; to avoid development which results in adverse impacts on the environment, nearby properties, and the community; and to provide for the safe, attractive, and harmonious development of the site and the community." The fact that the scope of this project brings a State-level override of local control to bear, it is the position of the Ashland Planning Board that the Town has a right, and an obligation to its residents, to participate in the decision-making process in order to protect the best interests of our community.

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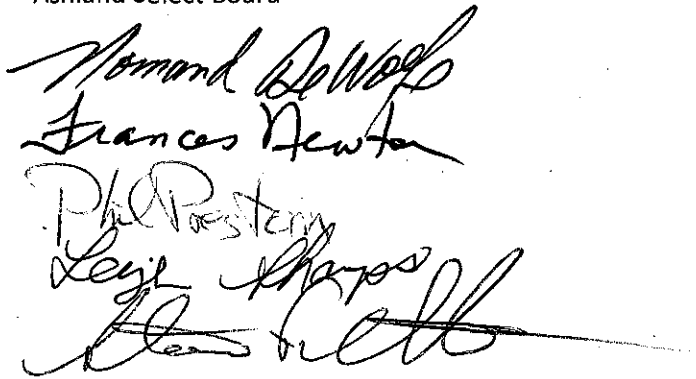
- The sight of the 75-100 foot towers will be a distraction for visitors to the recently established 400+ acre Whitten Woods, purchased by the New England Forestry Foundation. The area will be developed and managed by Squam Lakes Association for multiple recreational uses and will foster community and economic development.
- The towers will have a negative impact on views from several key areas to include Route 3, Route 25, Interstate 93, and areas all along downtown Ashland.
- One private land owner (who allows a right-of-way to the wellfield) will be additionally impacted by the increased traffic to the tower construction sites.

Please also see more detail of the concerns by the Ashland Planning Board and the Ashland Economic Development Committee attached.

Based on the detailed work and concerns done by the Ashland Conservation Commission as well as the Ashland Water and Sewer Dept. they will be submitting their own Intervenor requests as well.

Thank you for your consideration of this petition to intervene:

Sincerely
Ashland Select Board



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Town of Ashland Economic Development Committee

In the Ashland Master Plan, the chapters provide detailed ideas for balanced growth and development and information about Ashland's community character and the attributes associated with a high quality of life. In *Chapter 8, Economic Development*, the growth of the Town's economic base is dependent upon the establishment of industrial and commercial uses that are not detrimental to the community or environment. In the evaluation done on the Town's land development capacity, of the 11.2 square miles, only 30.2% was classified as developable, so well-planned best use is crucial. The Pemigewasset River overlay is in the Industrial Zone and governs development of land within 500 feet of the river, with a 50-foot setback specified as an option for light industrial or commercial use. Although challenging for development, it is the one area with the potential to expand the Town's industrial base. The Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) and Town wellhead are located in this zone. The proposed Project has a direct impact on the wellhead, and the WWTP and its planned septage receiving station. The economic growth of this town is dependent upon its municipal water and sewer capacities, and the best use of the land still open for light industrial or commercial development. The Project plans remains vague on the details of how the land around the ROW will be impacted to the extent of decreasing any growth opportunities in the target area.

It is yet to be determined what impact the physical presence of the towers will have on the future value and use of the land. Although the tourism report had surveys suggesting tourist concern over the visibility of towers and other such structures is low, averages and generalizations do not address the individual sites. Recently a 400+ acre parcel of land, now known as "Whitten Woods" was purchased (partially funded with an LCHIP grant) by New England Forestry Foundation to actively manage for forestry, with an easement for recreational use held by Squam Lakes Conservation Society. The Squam Lakes Association will be establishing and maintaining an all-access trail system, facilitating access for people of all abilities to experience the woodlands, nature and the unique stunning views of both the Squam waters and the Pemigewasset River. The Economic Development Committee recognizes that it offers a great opportunity for the community to enjoy as well as becoming a recreation destination that can contribute to the economic growth of Ashland. The sight of 75-100 foot towers will significantly change the experience of the view looking towards the Pemigewasset.

An asset to the Town of Ashland is its municipal electric department, which supplies power at one of the lowest rates in the State. Ashland will not necessarily realize any benefits from these new lines from Canada in the foreseeable future. We acknowledge the reality that cleaner, reliable sources of electrical power must be developed and the means of transmission will directly impact many smaller communities to benefit the entire region. It must also be acknowledged that those communities have the right to participate in the decisions that directly impact their lands and quality of life.

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