

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM



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April 4, 2016

Pamela Monroe, Administrator
Site Evaluation Committee

SEC Docket No.2015-06 Objections
Timetables, Waivers, Confidentiality Request
Due by April 7, 2016

Dear Ms. Monroe:

The Town of Bethlehem's Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, and Conservation Commission have unanimously voted to put in writing our recommendations and objections concerning the following requests from the Applicant.

1) Timetable: We support the timetable put forth by the Society for the Protection of Forests. This schedule would span approximately two years and is necessary due to the unprecedented scope of the proposed project and the number of parties associated with this docket. This would require the SEC to use its authority as outlined in RSA 162-H: 14 to temporarily suspend its timetable for the public interest. The Northern Pass project is so impactful on the State of NH that in the public interest all matters need to be completely evaluated prior to any decision that may affect so many and so much of our environment.

It is not possible for small towns without administrators and towns such as Bethlehem who most likely cannot afford to hire lawyers to work at the pace proposed by the Applicant.

The scheduled proposed by the Applicant would make it highly unlikely that our municipality could present our views on the orderly development of our region under RSA 612-H:16, IV (b). Such a compressed schedule may also make it difficult for the SEC to give due consideration to the views of ALL the municipal governing bodies under the same RSA.

2) Applicant's Request for Partial Waivers under the Newly Adopted SEC Rules: The Applicant has requested several waivers. We oppose the granting of these requests for the reasons below.

- a) The Applicant has requested a waiver on procedural rules for submitting additional information, stating that to comply would be onerous and excessively burdensome. The burden of supplying all required and requested information to enhance the ability of persons involved to make informed decisions lies with the Applicant. All information should be submitted per rules established by the SEC.
- b) The Applicant has also applied for a waiver to remove infrastructure if the lines are decommissioned. Although, not totally clear, this could include the Transition Station

#5, which may contain transformers. They reason that removing the structures will harm or disturb environmentally sensitive areas. However, they disregard this argument when it is related to building the structures. This might indicate that the Applicant sees a limited time for this project to be viable. This in essence will create a tower junk yard for 192 miles in New Hampshire. We require our gravel pits to have reclamation plans so why would we waive that for a large project?

3) Applicant's Unassented-To Motion for Protective Order and Confidential

Treatment: This request has three components: 1) not allowing the public to view any archaeological resources data; 2) not allowing the public information about the status, location, and distribution of native plant, animal species, and natural communities; and 3) lastly, keeping confidential any proprietary and confidential business information relating to the assessment of economic impacts and benefits of the proposed project.

We oppose this Motion. Why would the applicant wish to keep this information from the public unless there are indications of negative impacts to these areas?

First, the eco-system once destroyed will not easily, if at all, return, which in turn will affect the surrounding environment. The Wildlife and Impact Assessment done by Normandeau Associates, Inc. through August 2015 has information that should be evaluated in conjunction with the information that is being suppressed concerning the status on native plants and animal species. The public's right to know should supersede the Applicant's wish for business secrecy. How can an informed decision be made if all the information surrounding the project is withheld?

For these reasons and more, the Boards of Bethlehem strongly object to the request for waivers and the motion to protect so much of the contributing reports to the projects. We strongly support the Society for the Protection of Forest's timetable.

Respectfully submitted,


Board of Selectmen


Planning Board


Conservation Commission