

From: Patrick Bartley [<mailto:pbartley11@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2017 11:26 AM
To: Monroe, Pamela
Subject: written comments - Northern Pass - docket no. 2015-06

Ms. Monroe,

I oppose the Northern Pass, and believe the members of the Site Evaluation Committee should read and consider the two attached articles from the Caledonian Record while making their decision: "Northern Pass Business Directory Stirs Some Controversy", December 16, 2017 and "Bethlehem Planners Approve Site Plan For \$20 Million Hilton Hotel", November 17, 2017, which I include as part of my written comments.

Thank you for your time,

Patrick Miller-Bartley
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Bethlehem Planners Approve Site Plan For \$20 Million Hilton Hotel

But Could Northern Pass Complicate The Project?

- Robert Blechl
- Caledonian Record
- Nov 17, 2017



David Eckman, of Eckman Engineering, presents the site plan for a \$20 million Hilton hotel, on the long-vacant Baker Brook cabins site, that Bethlehem planners approved unanimously on Wednesday. The project is now seeking its state permits. (Photo by Robert Blechl)

BETHLEHEM — The Bethlehem Planning Board on Wednesday approved a \$15 to \$20 million Hilton hotel on the site of the former Baker Brook motel and cabins, though Northern Pass could complicate the project.

Planned is a five-story, 85-room high-end hotel, a Hilton franchise that would be called Homewood Suites by Hilton.

If the required state permits are obtained, the 12-month construction could begin in the spring of 2018 and the hotel could be open for guests in 2019.

“I see this as a very positive thing for our community,” planning board chairman Michael Bruno said before the board unanimously approved the site plan.

The project will need to obtain a N.H. Department of Transportation permit as well as state alteration of terrain and wetlands permits. Permit applications have been submitted and could be approved in the next few months.

The hotel is proposed by Yizchok Rudich, of Brooklyn, N.H., who created Presidential Mountain Resort LLC for the project, which initially began in 2014.

Then, the plan was to rebuild the deteriorating cabins on both sides of Route 302 until a study deemed that wouldn't pay for everything, said Rudich's representative, David Eckman, of Eckman Engineering, of Portsmouth, N.H., who presented the site plan Wednesday.

The hotel is planned on the front part of the total 42-acre parcel, near Route 302. Out back, the high-value wetlands, steep ravine and land that could be used for hiking trails will be left alone, said Eckman.

“We put the development in front, which leaves it untouched in the back,” he said. “It's pretty minimal impact overall.”

The hotel, which will feature a portico vehicles can pass under, will be about 75 feet high and have a footprint of about 19,500 square feet. The project will include six parking areas, porous pavement for water to filter through, and a rain garden for storm water to filter into the ground.

An outdoor area with a patio is planned and abundant landscaping is also part of the package.

“They want it to look beautiful,” said Eckman. “They didn’t spare any expense on the landscaping.”

Wetlands will be protected by a retaining wall that will also enhance safety, he said.

The hotel will have its own on-site septic system and will be on the town water system.

The project also entails renovating the former restaurant building across the road and redoing about a dozen cabins on that side, and also rehabilitating a former trout pond, said Eckman.

Discussions about the speed limit in the hotel area have been discussed, with the suggestion of reducing it from its current 40 mph to 35 mph, he said.

The guests the hotel would attract would be seeking more of an extended stay, he said.

The hotel was presented in a conceptual before Bethlehem zoners in November 2016, but has since been delayed partly because of funding and some back-and-forth between the parties in the planning, said Eckman.

The Matter Of Northern Pass

The back parcel, said Eckman, is owned by Renewable Properties LLC, the property-buying subsidiary of Eversource Energy, which is proposing the controversial Northern Pass Transmission (NPT) line.

The Baker Brook location is where the NPT line would transition from overhead to underground and where a large transition station, about eight stories high with a 10,000-square-foot footprint and two nearby towers, 95 and 105 feet, would have to be built.

Initially, the Eversource plan was to put the station closer to Route 302, and the original intent was for Eversource to get a wetlands permit for that location then amend the application to put the station on the back knoll, said Eckman.

“They said it was mutually beneficial,” he said.

In March, Rudich, who signed a memorandum of understanding and confidentiality agreement with Eversource and who wrote a letter of support for Northern Pass, told The Caledonian-Record a land swap was in progress through which Eversource would put the station behind the hotel and at a lower elevation so it would be less visible.

Now, it looks like Eversource reneged on its plan to put the station on the back parcel, said Eckman.

“He [Rudich] said they might not move it,” said Eckman. “He supported it because they said they’d move it, and now feels a little bit betrayed ... He spent a lot of money with the assumption they were going to move it ... He would not have written the letter if he knew it was going to be near the front of his hotel.”

Eckman called Northern Pass, whose approval is still far from certain, the “wild card” in the project and said Rudich was “shocked” to learn of the change.

Bruno asked if there is the possibility of the hotel project being withdrawn in light of the unknowns in Northern Pass.

Rudich said to move ahead with the permitting, and after buying the land (for \$600,000), is now financially invested, said Eckman.

“I talked to him today,” said Eckman. “Everything’s a go. He’s hopeful everything is fine.”

A meeting on the NPT issue is scheduled for next week, he said.

“We can still build a hotel with a tower there, but it’s not as aesthetically pleasing,” said Eckman.

Resident David Van Houten, who lives near the site, said Eversource came up with a notice of option that carries no protection to the developer and it is par for the course for the company to keep things confidential and from the public.

Van Houten asked that the Northern Pass issue be cleared up because abutters live in the area and the hotel business there would be impacted.

On Thursday, Eversource spokesman Martin Murray did not respond to questions asking if or why the company went back on its plan to put the transition station on the back parcel after Rudich wrote a letter of support for Northern Pass and if Eversource can guarantee that NPT and its transition station and roadway construction will not interfere with the hotel business under RSA 162-H:167, which states projects cannot “unduly interfere with the orderly development of the region.”

Murray said he was occupied with writing a press release on the project’s federal Presidential Permit, which was officially granted Thursday by the U.S. Department of Energy.

Northern Pass Business Directory Stirs Some Controversy

Robert Blechl
Caledonian Record
December 16, 2017

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Cold Mountain Cafe in Bethlehem was one of a group of businesses in the North Country that found itself on a Northern Pass business directory it never signed up for and that now wants its name off. (Photo by Robert Blechl)

Wrong names, closed businesses, and ones who say they never signed up and oppose the project - all can be found on the recently released Northern Pass business directory, which Eversource Energy had wanted to keep confidential at this point.

Of the 208 businesses on it, many did sign up, with some saying they don't necessary support Northern Pass, but if the line is ever approved it would benefit their enterprise and other small, local businesses that would see traffic from work crews building the line.

Others, however, were surprised and perplexed, and some angry, to find themselves on it and are now trying to get off a directory they say they never registered for and that conveys the impression they support the project when they don't.

On Friday, Eversource/Northern Pass spokesman Martin Murray said, "Support of the project was never asked for nor required of any business to be listed, and all the businesses in the directory did previously indicate their respective agreement to be listed."

Some business owners in the North Country said there was no such agreement.

One is Kate Foley, who runs Cold Mountain Cafe in Bethlehem.

"We do not support the Northern Pass and are outraged that we were added to the list," she said in a Dec. 3 letter to Tom Getz, attorney for Eversource Energy, which is proposing the transmission line. "In fact, we are horrified to be connected to this endeavor in any way."

She asked that Cold Mountain Cafe be removed and requested a written apology from Eversource "to show all our customers and people of our community that we are not supporting the Northern Pass."

Getz issued a response letter, saying a "community outreach team member" spoke with a "Kate" in 2015 about participating in the business directory.

Foley, however, said no such contact occurred. Her mother, Coleen Foley, said the same.

In his response, Getz, who said Cold Mountain Cafe will be removed, said the list was created to ensure local businesses would benefit from the project.

For some, though, that doesn't explain how their businesses - more than a half dozen the Caledonian-Record spoke with, from Littleton to Pittsburg - became listed on a directory they never sought to be on.

"We did not give them any kind of permission for that," said Tom Caron, co-owner of Rainbow Grille and Tavern in Pittsburg. "No one stopped by to my knowledge. We came out against Northern Pass, in a letter written under Tall Timber Lodge, so I'm not sure how it came to be."

Another is Le Rendez Vous French Bakery, Colebrook, owned by Verlaine Daeron and Marc Ounis.

“We never signed up, but we have our name on the list,” Daeron said Friday.

They did receive a friendly email from Eversource on Thursday stating their name would be removed, she said.

“We prefer not to be associated with Northern Pass,” said Verlaine. “We are against that.”

In Littleton, there is The French Sisters Bakery.

Owner Patricia Ann Tilton said her husband, Rick, learned of their business’s listing after the N.H. Site Evaluation publicly released the directory on Nov. 20. The implication, she said, was that French Sisters supports the project.

“That’s not the case at all,” said Tilton. “I don’t know how they got our names and how this came about.”

Rodney Stone, who runs Twisted Wrench Auto Repair in Bethlehem, said he also never signed up and it’s a mystery to how he got on there.

On the directory, too, is the Spare Time Pizza Pub, in Colebrook, whose name was changed three years ago to Strike Zone Pizza, and Colebrook House Motel and Restaurant, which closed several years ago.

Another entry is the Dancing Bear Pub in Colebrook, which closed in 2015 and is now the location of Black Bear Tavern.

“Dancing Bear Pub hasn’t existed for 2 1/2 years,” said Black Bear Tavern owner Rick Nadig, who said he is not in favor of the project. “Personally, I don’t care whether I’m in the directory or not. But if you’re going to put out a directory, make sure the information is correct.”

Heidi Milbrand, who runs Pleasant View B&B in Bristol, found out from a Bristol town representative.

“I never signed up for anything,” she said. “I’ve called [Northern Pass] twice and spoken with somebody who assured me my name would be removed, but it hasn’t been removed as of yet.”

Doug Kenney, who runs Crazy Horse Family Campground in Littleton, said the previous campground owner, when a few years ago it was called Crazy Horse Campground, could have had something to do with the inclusion of the latter name.

“We didn’t put our names on it,” said Kenney.

Others, however, did sign up, including the seasonal Barron Brook Inn, in Whitefield.

Owner Beth Cape, a member of Northern Gateway Regional Chamber of Commerce, said the inn could provide lodging to construction workers.

“If you own a business, you can’t discriminate,” she said. “That doesn’t mean we support it, but we are a hospitality business, and if you look up the word hospitality, you

have to open your doors to all ... My job is to help businesses and promote our business. There is some trickle-down effect to local businesses.”

Cape called Northern Pass a “tough situation” and said if the line was going near her property she would not be happy.

Shawn Cote, of LL Cote sports center in Errol, also said he chose to be on the directory.

“Being a businessman, if it’s coming through I’d just as soon be on the good side of things than the bad,” he said. “There will be plenty of people around and we definitely need some business in this area.”

The city of Franklin, which would have a DC-to-AC converter station and is the only municipality out of the 31 communities the line would run through that is on record supporting Northern Pass, has 46, or nearly a quarter, of the 208 directory listings.

Franconia, Sugar Hill, and Plymouth, all hotbeds of opposition, have no listings.

For Cold Mountain Cafe, Coleen Foley said when she asked representatives of Northern Pass how businesses get on the directory, she was told they have to register.

“That is not certainly anything we did,” she said.

Murray declined to recount the process of how businesses were contacted, who from Northern Pass visited area businesses, and what was said to them about the directory.

He also declined to say how many businesses to date have contacted Eversource requesting removal of their names and if the N.H. Site Evaluation Committee was also a target audience for the directory to show business support for the project.

The Northern Pass business directory web page has a prompt for owners of lodging establishments, restaurants, gas stations, convenience and hardware stores and other businesses to actively sign up if they want to be included.

In testimony before the SEC, lead Northern Pass project manager Sam Johnson, when asked about economic impacts, said between 200 and 300 businesses registered with Northern Pass through a jobs hot line.

He said businesses have to register to be on the list and, when notified, are directed to a web site to put their name in.

“That, in effect, is the way we do it,” said Johnson.

It is completely sensible to produce a listing of businesses that are available to provide services for what would be some 2,000 Northern Pass construction workers, said Murray.

Eversource sought confidential treatment of listed businesses because of concern for their privacy, he said.

“We will honor the request of any business who does not wish to be listed on the directory when it is actually published and disseminated at the time construction begins,” said Murray.