

## **SEC Docket 2015 #06**

### **Joint Application of Northern Pass Transmission, LLC and Public Service Company of New Hampshire d/b/a Eversource Energy for a Certificate of Site and Facility**

#### **Pre-filed Testimony of Elisha Gray, New Hampton, NH, Member Southern (Ashland to Deerfield) Non-abutters Intervenor Group**

My wife and I have owned property in New Hampton since 2001, when we found a farm in a secluded corner of the town bordering the Pemigewasset River overlooking the river valley and Periweg Mountain in the west. Loving this private scenic getaway, we added acreage to the farm over the years.

Upon inspecting the maps for the proposed Northern Pass transmission line, we believe the towers will affect the view from the owned subject property on Blake Hill Road across the valley, as shown in the accompanying map. The right of way for the project is to the northwest, west and southwest of the property. The presence of the towers and lines in our viewscape, will certainly diminish the beauty of the site and could therefore well affect the market value of our property.

Both a real estate sales associate broker familiar with our property, Birgette Wilms, of Farms & Barns, and neighbor Selectman, Neil Irvine, have commented to us that the shadow of Northern Pass adversely affects the value of our property. Ms. Wilms stated that in New Hampton “buyers are certainly taking advantage of [the prospect of Northern Pass]” in negotiating lower purchase prices, and “buyers... are getting cold feet because they found out that the proposed Northern Pass will impact the views from the farm if the Northern Pass happens.” Mr. Irvine stated that our property value specifically was discussed among selectmen as being adversely affected by Northern Pass.

The Applicant claims that the presence of High Voltage Transmission Lines has “a modest or no measureable impact on property values.”<sup>i</sup> However, because analysts paid by interests proposing HVTLs find minimal affect on average, even they admit that “Several of the studies cited *do* find a more significant impact...” (emphasis added). Indeed, the point made by Woloverton and Bottemiller<sup>ii</sup> must be kept in mind as one evaluates the possible consequence of more than 130 miles of towers and lines through New Hampshire’s scenic landscape: “This conclusion [in their study] cannot and should not be generalized outside of the data, however. The caution regarding generalization stems from the data not being representative of other counties and or locations.” In fact I could not locate any study that evaluates the effect of HVTL’s on real estate in a comparable situation, where aesthetics are so valued by property owners.

In the case of Northern Pass, it is clear, by the overwhelming number of people who object to the project that the towers and lines will diminish our enjoyment of New Hampshire’s scenery, regardless of the economic impact on property values. “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”. This proverb is meant to cut both ways – what is beautiful to

one person may not be so to another. However, if Northern Pass is not going to have an adverse affect on New Hampshire's aesthetics, why are there so many beholders who think the towers and lines are ugly? More than twenty towns along the proposed route are even willing to forego increased tax revenues to preserve the scenery where their citizens live. How many residents and visitors in New Hampshire who will see the lines and towers daily tell us that they even find them acceptable?

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<sup>i</sup> “The effect of high voltage transmission lines on real estate values: a review of the appraisal literature.” May 2011 report prepared by Russell Thibeault of Applied Economic Research at the request of Dana Bisbee Esq. of the Devine, Millimet law firm with compensation from Northeast Utilities.

ii Marvin L. Wolverton and Steven C. Bottemiller:  
“Further Analysis of Transmission Line Impact on Residential Property Values”. *The Appraisal Journal*, July 2003.

