

**ATTORNEY GENERAL  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

33 CAPITOL STREET  
CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03301-6397

JOHN M. FORMELLA  
ATTORNEY GENERAL



JANE E. YOUNG  
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

May 21, 2021

Chair, Public Utilities Commission  
Dianne Martin, Chairwoman  
New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee  
21 South Fruit Street, Suite 10  
Concord, NH 03301

Mr. Jonathan A. Evans  
Presiding Officer  
New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee  
21 South Fruit Street, Suite 10  
Concord, NH 03301-2429

RE: Counsel for the Public – Comments on Investigation of Complaints Regarding Antrim  
Wind Energy Facility  
(Docket No. 2021-02; Docket No. 2015-02)

Dear Chairwoman Martin and Presiding Office Evans:

On May 21, 2021, a Site Evaluation Subcommittee (“Subcommittee”) charged with investigating alleged complaints of, among other things, project lighting held a public meeting. Previously, the Subcommittee established a deadline of May 18, 2021, for any written submittals and precluded live testimony or comments at the meeting. Antrim Wind Energy, LLC (“Antrim Wind”), submitted comments prior to the deadline as required, specifically at 4:30 p.m. on May 18, 2021. Antrim Wind made an additional submittal on the ongoing sound issue unrelated to the public meeting on May 20, 2021. The Subcommittee reviewed all relevant information and will soon make a recommendation to the full Site Evaluation Committee.

**Turbine Lighting**

Counsel for the Public has no issue with the Subcommittee’s pragmatic approach to the current problem related to the Aircraft Detection Lighting System (“ADLS”). However, having reviewed the submittals of Antrim Wind and listened to the Subcommittee discussion, Counsel for the Public believes that it may be beneficial to the Subcommittee and to the full Site Evaluation Committee to be made aware of its position on certain standards.

In its May 18, 2021 submittal, Antrim Wind states that in order to comply with its Certificate of Site and Facility (“Certificate”), it need only submit approval of the ADLS from

the Federal Aviation Administration (“FAA”) and abide by the FAA’s Determination of No Hazard to Air Navigation. Specifically, Antrim Wind states:

In summary, the Certificate required that Antrim Wind do two things with respect to turbine lighting, which are set forth in full in Section III below. Antrim Wind has complied with both conditions by (1) filing with the Site Evaluation Committee (“SEC”) the Federal Aviation Administration’s (“FAA”) approval of Antrim Wind’s Aircraft Detection Lighting System (“ADLS”) and (2) abiding by the FAA’s Determinations of No Hazard to Air Navigation.

Therefore, Antrim Wind is not in violation of its Certificate.

Antrim Wind submittal, pg. 1. Antrim Wind restates this position later in its letter:

Antrim Wind has fully complied with its Certificate. Antrim Wind was required by the SEC to do two things: (1) comply with the conditions of the FAA Determinations of No Hazard to Air Navigation, which it has, and (2) file with the SEC Administrator, on receipt, the FAA’s approval of the ADLS, which it did.

*Id.* at 6-7. Antrim Wind appears to argue that, although it is working in good faith to ensure a functioning ADLS, these efforts are essentially gratuitous. This position is troubling and may be problematic if future issues with lighting arise. Specifically, if this position is accepted, Antrim Wind is under no obligation to ever properly run the ADLS.

Although it is true that two conditions of the Certificate require the measures described above, the argument that this achieves compliance is contrary to the terms of RSA ch. 162-H, the order granting the Certificate, and the Certificate itself. The proper functioning of the ADLS, and the positive impacts this would have, were material parts of Antrim Wind’s application. This fact was so important to the application process that the applicant, Antrim Wind, and the Site Evaluation Committee relied on it to satisfy, or supersede, N.H. Admin. R. Site 301.05(b)(9). That rule requires:

If the proposed facility is required by Federal Aviation Administration regulations to install aircraft warning lighting or if the proposed facility would include other nighttime lighting, a description and characterization of the potential visual impacts of this lighting, including the number of lights visible and their distance from key observation points....

During testimony, when asked about Site 301.05(b)(9), a witness for the applicant stated:

We did not need to address this issue because the project developers have committed right from the outset to use the radar activated lighting which means that, for the most part, there will be no lighting at night of the facility. So it’s not necessary to evaluate that in depth.

Docket No. 2015-02, Transcript, Day 5, Afternoon at pgs. 57-58.

The Site Evaluation Committee relied on this representation when it issued its Decision and Order Granting Application for Certificate of Site and Facility (“Order”) stating: “*In addition* [to the applications to the FAA], the Applicant agreed to *utilize* a radar activated lighting control system, Aircraft Detection Lighting System, (ADLS), once approved by the FAA.” Order, pg. 154 (emphasis added). The Order also references an agreement with the Appalachian Mountain Club that relates to lighting. That agreement refers to operation of, not just approval for, the ADLS stating that “AWE shall install and *operate* the Radar System,” “AWE shall be required to implement and *operate* the Radar System,” and “AWE will commence with *operation* of the Radar System as soon as commercially reasonable . . .” *Id.*, pg. 154-155 (emphasis added). Finally, the Order states:

The Subcommittee finds that the light associated with operation of the Project will not have an unreasonable adverse effect on health and safety *if* the Project will be equipped with the ADLS. In reaching this conclusion, the Subcommittee considered that the Project’s lights *will be radar operated*, to secure their safe operation, and the Applicant will have to receive prior approval from the FAA for the installation of the ADLS.

*Id.*, pg. 156 (emphasis added).

In addition, the very first condition of the Certificate states: “[I]t is hereby ORDERED that the *Application* of Antrim Wind Energy, LLC, as amended, *is approved* . . .” Certificate, pg. 2 (emphasis added). In other words, the project *as requested* has been approved. Material impacts under the jurisdiction of the Site Evaluation Committee must be addressed in the application and cannot be unilaterally modified thereafter. Specifically, RSA 162-H:7, IX states: “The applicant shall immediately inform the committee of any substantive modification to its application.” Changing the project to no longer include functional ADLS lighting would be just such a change. If Antrim Wind wishes to modify its project, there is a process for doing so; however, construction or operation of a project that is materially different than the project applied for is a violation of the statute, the Order, and the Certificate.

### **Enforcement of the Certificate**

Antrim Wind seems to suggest that complaints from members of the public should not be acted upon if they request an improper procedure or ask for actions outside of the specific relief available at the moment. Members of the public may not precisely understand the procedural constraints in all sections of the statute and rules. This does not render a complaint infirm. The Site Evaluation Committee has the tools necessary to determine an appropriate outcome.

The Site Evaluation Committee should keep in mind that violations of the Certificate need not necessarily result in revocation or suspension. Such action is discretionary. *See* RSA 162-H:12 (stating that the Site Evaluation Committee “may” take action).<sup>1</sup> In addition to

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<sup>1</sup> Counsel for the Public is aware that Site 302.01 includes the mandatory word “shall”; however, to the extent that the rule contradicts the statute, the statute takes precedence. The Site

revocation or suspension, the statute provides for appropriate injunctive relief or penalties. RSA 162-H:19. Finally, not every deviation from the requirements of the Certificate must be considered a violation. The Site Evaluation Committee can determine whether a deviation from the requirements of the Certificate or approved project are reasonably within the scope of what was approved. For instance, if a project with lighting is approved, it is reasonable to believe that a bulb may burn out and be replaced and that such a circumstance is reasonably within the bounds of the permitted activity.

**Issues Related to Sound**

Counsel for the Public may make future comments on issues relating to sound measurement.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

K. Allen Brooks (CMc)

K. Allen Brooks  
Senior Assistant Attorney General  
Chief, Environmental Protection Bureau  
(603) 271-3679  
[allen.brooks@doj.nh.gov](mailto:allen.brooks@doj.nh.gov)

KAB/cmc

cc: Barry Needleman, Esquire/McLane Middleton, P.A. ([barry.needleman@melane.com](mailto:barry.needleman@melane.com))

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Evaluation Committee can also waive this rule if necessary. Taken as a whole, the enforcement mechanisms in RSA ch. 162-H serve as tools to achieve a just result.