



Environmental Review Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday April 30, 2024 4:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

Committee Members Present: Roger Bolton (Chair), Mark Smith, Edward Holub, Eleanor Tillinghast, Kyle Hanlon, and Malcolm Fick (Ex-officio, non-voting)

Others Present: Melissa Provencher (BRPC) and Tom Matuszko (BRPC)

I. Call to Order & Open Meeting Law Statement

ERC Chairman Bolton called the meeting to order at 4:03pm and read the Open Meeting Law Statement.

II. Roll Call of Environmental Review Committee Members Attending the Meeting

Committee Members Present: Roger Bolton (Chair), Mark Smith, Edward Holub, Eleanor Tillinghast, Kyle Hanlon, and Malcolm Fick

Others Present: Melissa Provencher and Tom Matuszko (BRPC)

III. Vote to Approve Minutes of the Environmental Review Committee Meeting of 12/5/2023

E. Holub made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by E. Tillinghast. M. Smith provided a correction that in the third line down in the first paragraph under III should be “approve” not “approved”.

ERC Chairman Bolton conducted a roll call vote.

R. Bolton: Aye

E. Holub: Aye

E. Tillinghast: Aye

K. Hanlon: Aye

M. Smith: Aye

The motion passed and the minutes were approved as amended.

IV. Discussion of the NSTAR WT-02 Transmission Right-of-Way Reliability Program (TRRP) Project, Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), Hancock, Lanesborough, Cheshire, Dalton, and Hinsdale

M. Provencher explained that this particular review is a little bit more straightforward than most in that the FEIR addressed the comments that BRPC submitted on the Draft EIR adequately. At the time the Committee reviewed the Expanded Environmental Notification Form (EENF) the comments that were submitted supported the proponent’s request for a Single EIR. The FEIR addressed the comments that were previously made, which is reflected in the draft comments on the FEIR.

E. Tillinghast inquired about the 6 additional ROW's that will be part of the Transmission Right-of Way Reliability Project between 2023 and 2027 and another 11 ROW's with a timeline to be determined. M. Provencher agreed that a statement could be added to the MEPA comment letter urging MEPA to request additional information from the proponent as it becomes available in order to understand the potential environmental effects and cumulative impacts of the project.

V. Vote to Submit Comments on the NSTAR WT-02 Transmission Right-of-Way Reliability Program (TRRP) Project, Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), Hancock, Lanesborough, Cheshire, Dalton, and Hinsdale to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office (MEPA)

E. Tillinghast moved to accept the comment letter prepared by staff with amendments as discussed by the Committee. M. Smith seconded the motion. ERC Chairman Bolton conducted a roll call vote.

R. Bolton: Aye
E. Holub: Aye
K. Hanlon: Aye

M. Smith: Aye
E. Tillinghast: Aye

The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Discussion of the New England Power Company E131 Asset Condition Refurbishment Project, Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), Adams, North Adams, Florida, and Monroe

M. Provencher explained that the New England Power Company project is on a similar timeline and the Committee has previously reviewed the EENF and the DEIR. This project includes increasing the height of their structures and replacing wood structures with steel structures. Another issue is that it is not clear how this project addressed capacity for the services that they're providing. Previous comments submitted by BRPC raised concerns about the demands on the grid and with the Commonwealth's goals for electrification. It is not clear whether this project was designed to be able to meet those goals and accept that level of demand that is being expected. The proponent has not answered that question. When that question was posed at the time the EENF was filed, the DEIR simply acknowledged our comment. We stressed the question again in our comments on the DEIR. The response within the FEIR was that it is not within MEPA's jurisdiction and that the project is being designed to address current and anticipated future capacity. The draft comments on the FEIR reiterate once again that it is critical to clarify whether future capacity needs are being met in light of the Commonwealth's electrification goals. In addition, the draft comments dispute whether it is outside of MEPA's jurisdiction as it could potentially be a segmentation issue.

E. Tillinghast inquired about whether this project includes compensation for wetland impacts. M. Provencher explained that within the DEIR the proponent stated that they would work with the MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on compensatory storage or wetland replication. BRPC's previous comments included a request that additional information be provided in the FEIR. The FEIR provides a bit more information. The information is not extensive and it is concerning that the proponent is proposing wetland mitigation in the town of Monroe when the majority of the impacts are in the City of North Adams. The Committee discussed the possibility of the NSTAR project being an example and encouraging the compensation of wetland impacts through permanent protection rather than 1:1 replication. The Committee also discussed including a comment that the explanation of why steel structures have been proposed versus wood structures is not adequate.

VII. Vote to Submit Comments on the New England Power Company E131 Asset Condition Refurbishment Project, Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), Adams, North Adams, Florida, and Monroe to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office (MEPA)

E. Tillinghast moved to accept the comment letter prepared by staff with amendments as discussed by the Committee. E. Holub seconded the motion. ERC Chairman Bolton conducted a roll call vote.

R. Bolton: Aye
E. Holub: Aye
K. Hanlon: Aye

M. Smith: Aye
E. Tillinghast: Aye

The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Discussion of General Environmental Review Committee Practices

M. Provencher provided a revised version of the General Environmental Review Committee Practices based on the discussion of the December 5, 2023 meeting. The Committee agreed that the changes were complete.

VIII. Vote to adopt General Environmental Review Committee Practices

E. Tillinghast moved to adopt the General Environmental Review Committee Practices. E. Holub seconded the motion. ERC Chairman Bolton conducted a roll call vote.

R. Bolton: Aye
E. Holub: Aye
K. Hanlon: Aye

M. Smith: Aye
E. Tillinghast: Aye

The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Adjournment

E. Tillinghast moved to adjourn. E. Holub seconded the motion. ERC Chairman Bolton conducted a roll call vote.

R. Bolton: Aye
E. Holub: Aye
K. Hanlon: Aye

M. Smith: Aye
E. Tillinghast: Aye

Materials distributed electronically:

- ERC Agenda 4/30/24
- ERC Minutes 12/5/23
- NSTAR WT-02 Transmission Right-of-Way Reliability Program (TRRP) Project, (FEIR) draft comment letter
- New England Power Company E131 Asset Condition Refurbishment Project, Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) draft comment letter
- ENF & EIR General Review Procedures