



Environmental Review Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 21, 2025 4:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

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

Others Present: Melissa Provencher (BRPC), and Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert (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, Kyle Hanlon, Ed Holub, Eleanor Tillinghast, and Malcolm Fick.

III. Vote to Approve Minutes of the Environmental Review Committee Meeting of June 17, 2024

E. Holub made a motion to approve the minutes of June 17, 2024. The motion was seconded by M. Smith. ERC Chairman Bolton conducted a roll call vote.

R. Bolton: Aye

K. Hanlon: Aye

M. Smith: Aye

E. Holub: Abstain

E. Tillinghast: Abstain

The motion passed and the minutes were approved.

IV. Discussion and Vote to Amend General Environmental Review Committee Practices

Chairman Bolton explained that the ERC procedures include a long-standing provision that the ERC review and comment on all proposals that require an EIR. Therefore, the new MEPA requirements require the ERC to review projects that are not worthy of our time to review and comment. While environmental justice is, and should be, an important part of the environmental review process, there are cases with which the ERC review is not merited. The ERC has limited resources including staff time and citizens' time. Under the MEPA process there is usually a very short window of time to meet the comment deadline, and we often find it difficult to schedule a meeting for that reason.

It is proposed that the ER does not impose upon ourselves an automatic review in certain circumstances.

E. Holub made a motion to amend ERC procedures as proposed. The motion was seconded by E. Tillinghast.

Chairman Bolton explained that the only substantial change is to allow for the discretion of the Chair to make case by case determinations with regard to whether and EIR warrants ERC comments.

Mark Smith: pointed out that under Item 3 the next to last line includes a deletion, which should also delete the word “in”. Chairman Bolton corrected the proposed phrasing from “informal policy” to “formal policy”, as it was recently formalized.

ERC Chairman Bolton conducted a roll call vote.

R. Bolton: Aye

K. Hanlon: Aye

M. Smith: Aye

E. Holub: Aye

E. Tillinghast: Aye

The motion to approve the ERC procedures as proposed, with corrections, passed unanimously.

V. Discussion of the Expanded Environmental Notification Form (EENF) for the Great Barrington Fire District Property Exploration Wells and Vote Regarding Submittal of Comments

Chairman Bolton asked M. Provencher to summarize the project. M. Provencher explained that the proponent filed an Expanded ENF (EENF) along with a proposed EIR. Typically, the proponent will file an EENF with either a Draft or Single EIR to follow at a later date. The project triggers MEPA due to wetland impacts and triggers a mandatory EIR due to the project’s proximity to an Environmental Justice area.

Under the proposed project, the Great Barrington Fire District will explore a new groundwater supply to supplement its sole source. The District does not have a redundant public water supply source and the existing supply system is 89 years old and cannot be taken off-line for rehabilitation necessitating the investigation for a redundant public water supply source. For over two decades, the District has been investigating alternative water backup supply sources to meet the growing demands of the District. For various reasons the numerous proposed backup supply locations have been dropped from further consideration. The Project entails the installation of up to two (2) exploration wells within the Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC) property to gather critical information about groundwater and assess the feasibility of utilizing the Site as a redundant water supply.

The project does not have extensive regional impacts and will be thoroughly regulated by the State and the property owner. The project will be heavily regulated at the state and local level and overseen by both the proponent and the landowner (BNRC). If there were to be substantial changes, there would be another opportunity to provide comments.

K. Hanlon made a motion to submit the EIR Report to MEPA. E. Tillinghast seconded the motion.

ERC Chairman Bolton conducted a roll call vote.

R. Bolton: Aye

K. Hanlon: Aye
M. Smith: Aye
E. Holub: Aye
E. Tillinghast: Aye

The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Adjournment

K. Hanlon moved to adjourn. M. Smith seconded the motion. ERC Chairman Bolton conducted a roll call vote.

R. Bolton: Aye
K. Hanlon: Aye
M. Smith: Aye
E. Holub: Aye
E. Tillinghast: Aye

Materials distributed electronically:

- ERC Agenda 1/21/25
- ERC Minutes 16/17/24
- January 21, 2025 Environmental Review Report for the Great Barrington Fire District Exploration Wells EENF and Proposed EIR