

State Representative Rebecca Holcombe has greatly disappointed us both as a Representative and more importantly as a person of integrity. She sent a letter to the State of Vermont Public Utility Commission, ostentatiously on behalf of one of her constituents, but dig deeper and you find a very interesting story.

Some background information:

- Rebecca Holcombe is listed as a founder and a principal of the Greenway Institute, which is a non-profit organization which employs Troy McBride as its Executive Director.
- Troy McBride is the Chief Technology Officer, Treasurer, and a Director of Norwich Solar, Inc., a Delaware for-profit corporation.
- In the Greenway Institute's registration with the Vermont Attorney General's office, the "principal office business address" listed is the same address as Norwich Solar, 15 Railroad Row, White River Junction, VT 0500. In addition, Norwich Solar CEO Jim Merriam registered two for-profit entities with very similar names in July 2023: Greenway Incubator, LLC and Greenway Living, LLC.
- On behalf of Norwich Solar, Inc., Troy McBride initiated a controversial, industrial-sized solar installation to be located on land in the Town of Norwich's Ridgeline Protection Overlay District, which is an area of Town that is protected from energy installations by the Norwich Town Plan. This installation requires the clearcutting of more than eight acres of forested land.
- The industrial solar installation would be located on land currently owned by John Lewis, a landowner who resides full-time in Florida.
- The State of Vermont Public-Utility Commission has been engaged in reviewing the proposal for more than two years.

Representative Holcombe, in her capacity as a member of the Vermont legislative branch of government, sent a formal letter, as an ex parte communication to the Commissioners of the Vermont PUC, an agency of the executive branch of government charged with conducting quasi-judicial proceedings, advocating on behalf of her constituent. In her letter, Holcombe asserts facts and argument in support of the proposed solar installation. She notes her opinion that the delay is unreasonable and asks when her constituent can expect a response.

It is important to note:

1. Representative Holcombe never consulted with her other constituents, the neighbors living in the town of Norwich who oppose this project.
2. Representative Holcombe did not disclose in her letter that her business associate in the Greenway Institute, Troy McBride, has a financial stake in the outcome of the PUC decision.

Representative Holcombe has not taken the time to reach out to her constituents to educate herself on this critical issue. If she did, she might have learned about her constituents whose homes may be devastated by the impact of clearing more than eight acres of forest on a steep slope above their homes. She might have learned about the concerns of these same clear cuts impacting critical habitat and vernal pools. And she may have learned about how the proposed plan does not align with the approved Town Plan. Instead, she chose to elevate the financial concern of one out-of-state constituent and her business partner, over the housing security of Norwich residents.

We expect integrity and honesty from our representatives. We expect our legislators to uphold their oath to the Constitution, not to violate the Separation of Powers doctrine by attempting to improperly influence the Executive Branch by flashing one's Legislative title, to serve the interests of an undisclosed business partner, who has a financial stake in the outcome of the proceeding. Representative Holcombe has misused her position to advocate for her business partner at the expense of her constituents.

Signed,

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