

**STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Petition of Northland Solar LLC for a)
Certificate of Public Good, pursuant to 30)
V.S.A. § 248, authorizing the installation)
and operation of a 4.999 MW solar electric) Case No. 25-____-PET
generation facility off Route 100 in Lowell,)
Vermont to be known as the “Northland)
Solar Project”)

PREFILED DIRECT TESTIMONY OF JEREMY B. OWENS

October 1, 2025

Summary: Mr. Owens’ testimony addresses the proposed Northland Solar Project’s compliance with Section 248 (b)(1) and (b)(5) pertaining to the orderly development of the region and aesthetics.

Exhibits:

- NS-JO-1:** Resume
- NS-JO-2:** Aesthetic Assessment and Orderly Development Report
- NS-JO-2 Appendix A:** Maps
- NS-JO-2 Appendix B:** Photographic Inventory
- NS-JO-2 Appendix C:** Landscape Mitigation Plan
- NS-JO-2 Appendix D:** Regional and Town Plan Excerpts

1 **Q1. Please state your name, occupation, and business address.**

2 A1. My name is Jeremy B. Owens. I am a licensed Senior Landscape Architect with T.J. Boyle
3 Associates Landscape Architecture and Planning located at 301 College Street in Burlington,
4 Vermont.

5

6 **Q2. Please describe your background and qualifications.**

7 A2. I received my bachelor's degree in Landscape Architecture from the University of Georgia
8 College of Environment and Design in 2003. I have experience with a wide variety of landscape
9 planning and design services, including site layout, grading, planting plans, lighting design,
10 residential design, commercial and public sector design, and aesthetic impact analyses. My
11 resume is attached as *Exhibit NS-JO-1*.

12

13 **Q3. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

14 A3. The purpose of my testimony is to describe the work that I have conducted regarding the
15 proposed Northland Solar Project (the "Project"), introduce the Aesthetic Assessment and
16 Orderly Development Report that I prepared regarding the Project (submitted as *Exhibit NS-JO-*
17 *2*), and provide my opinion regarding the Project's compliance with the requirements of Section
18 248 with regard to aesthetics (§ 248(b)(5)) and orderly development of the region (§ 248(b)(1)).

19

20 **Q4. Have you previously testified before the Public Utility Commission?**

21 A4. Yes. I have testified before the Commission on many Projects, including recent cases such as
22 Hunt Road Solar, Case No. 23-2420-PET; Barnet Solar, Case No. 23-3381-PET; Furnace Brook

1 Solar, Case No. 23-4028-PET, Post Road Solar, Case No. 23-4324; Little Brook Solar, Case No.
2 23-4324-PET; and Stone House Solar, Case No. 25-1827-PET.

3
4 **Q5. Please describe the work you have done for this Project.**

5 A5. To evaluate potential aesthetic impacts due to the proposed 4.999 megawatt (MW) solar electric
6 generation project, I performed visual and viewshed analyses, conducted a desktop and field
7 study, and undertook document research and review. This work is described in more detail in the
8 aesthetics assessment and orderly development report. *Exhibit NS-JO-2.*

9
10 **Q6. What other information is in your aesthetics report?**

11 A6. The aesthetics assessment report includes maps that identify the potential viewshed of the Project
12 from the surrounding area, a photographic inventory of views from the field investigation of
13 potential visibility, and an analysis of the Project's potential impacts with respect to aesthetics
14 using the so-called Quechee Analysis. *Exhibit NS-JO-2.*

15
16 **Q7. Please briefly describe the Project site and the surrounding area.**

17 A7. The proposed site for the Northland Solar Project is on a parcel of land located in the town of
18 Lowell, Vermont, most of which is currently a hay field. The Project is located approximately
19 549' east of Vermont Route 100 and approximately 312' north of Vermont Route 58. The
20 Lowell Village and nearby residential uses are located west, southwest and south of the site, and
21 forested areas are located to the east and north. The Project site will be accessed by an existing

1 access drive that leads east from Vermont Route 100, which will be extended east into the site.

2 *See Exh. NS-JO-2 at 1–5; Exh. NS-TH-2 (Site Plan).*

3
4 **SECTION 248 CRITERIA**

5 **Aesthetics (Visual) – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5)**

6 **Q8. Please describe the nature of the Project’s viewshed.**

7 A8. The Project site is in a relatively obscured location that is largely separated from surrounding
8 areas by vegetation and/or landform, and existing mature trees and other vegetation will remain
9 around the field where the array is proposed. Due to the low profile of the Project’s equipment,
10 the Project will generally be screened from surrounding areas by the vegetation that will remain
11 around the array, as well as landform that surrounds most of the Project. Visibility of the Project
12 will be possible for southbound travelers on Route 100 from northwest of the site as well as
13 visitors to the Lowell Graded School and Town Clerk’s office, both of which are located near the
14 Project entrance. Additionally, there will be potential visibility of the proposed array from the
15 closest surrounding residential properties and portions of the Mountain View Cemetery
16 southwest of the site. Where appropriate, landscape mitigation is proposed to help screen the
17 Project from these locations. For further details, see *Exhibit NS-JO-2*.

18
19 **Q9. Will the Project have an “adverse effect” on aesthetics or the scenic or natural beauty of**
20 **the area, under the first prong of the Quechee Test?**

21 A9. Yes. As described in the analysis and conclusion that is included in my report, *Exhibit NS-JO-*
22 *2*, the Project is located in a transition area, with various nearby uses including two electrical

1 substations, a transmission line, multiple distribution lines, low- and medium-density residential
2 properties, and town-owned buildings. The Project would be potentially visible from limited
3 locations in the study area, with minor to no visibility expected from most locations within a 2-
4 mile radius. Visibility to portions of the Project will be possible from the nearest residences,
5 Vermont Route 100, the Lowell Graded School and the Town Clerk's office. The Project's
6 colors and materials are compatible with existing electrical infrastructure at and around the site,
7 particularly the electrical substations and the transmission line that crosses the Project parcel.
8 However, where visible, the Project will be a noticeable change to existing views, including from
9 Route 100, which is a scenic road. For this reason, the Project represents a change to the existing
10 conditions and is considered adverse to the aesthetics and scenic and natural beauty of the area as
11 described under the first part of the *Quechee* test.

12
13 **Q10. Will the Project have an undue adverse effect on aesthetics or the scenic or natural beauty**
14 **of the area under the second prong of the Quechee test?**

15 A10. No. A review of the Project under the second part of the Quechee test found that the Project
16 would not have an undue adverse effect on aesthetics or the scenic or natural beauty of the area.
17 The Project would not violate any clearly written community standard intended to preserve the
18 aesthetics or scenic beauty of the area. The Project incorporates reasonable siting and significant
19 landscape mitigation efforts to reduce potential visibility and harmonize the Project with its
20 surroundings. Portions of the proposed array will be located in remote areas of the Project
21 property and landscaping is proposed to visually buffer the array from Route 100 as well as the
22 Lowell Graded School, the Town Clerk's building, and the nearest residences. Finally, the

1 Project would not offend the sensibilities of the average person, in that it would not be offensive
2 or shocking due to the lack of extensive public views, similarity of the Project materials to
3 nearby electrical infrastructure, limited visibility of the overall Project from the majority of the
4 surrounding area, and incorporation of landscape mitigation measures that prevent the array from
5 appearing significantly out of character with its surroundings or significantly diminish the scenic
6 qualities of the area in which it is proposed. See *Exhibit NS-JO-2*.

7
8 **Orderly Development – 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(1)**

9 **Q11. Will the Project unduly interfere with the orderly development of the region?**

10 A11. No, as further discussed in *Exhibit NS-JO-2*, the Project will not unduly interfere with the
11 orderly development of the region. The Project would not violate any specific land conservation
12 measures contained in the Northeastern Vermont Development Association (“NVDA”) Regional
13 Plan, the Regional Plan’s Energy Chapter, or the Lowell Town Plan. The siting of the Project as
14 proposed does not conflict with the development goals and policies within these Plans, and the
15 Project will help meet energy goals outlined in Vermont’s Comprehensive Energy Plan and
16 subsequently adopted by the NVDA.

17

1 **Q12. Does the Lowell Town Plan contain any land conservation measures or specific policies that**
2 **are specific to the Project site or surrounding area, and if so, does the Project comply with**
3 **such provisions?**

4 A12. No. There are no specific land conservation measures in the Lowell Town Plan that would be
5 affected by the Project, and the Project is not located in protected or otherwise described
6 conservation areas or open space. *See Exhibit NS-JO-2.*

7
8 **Q13. Does the Regional Plan contain land conservation measures or specific policies regarding**
9 **the orderly development of the region that are specific to the Project site or surrounding**
10 **area, and if so, does the Project comply with such provisions?**

11 A13. No, the Regional Plan does not contain any specific land conservation measures or policies that
12 would be negatively affected by the Project. The Project is not located in protected or otherwise
13 described conservation areas or open space, and the Project would avoid undue adverse impacts
14 to significant natural communities and sites. The Project is also located within a “preferred
15 ground-mounted solar energy site” (see Appendix D, NVDA Energy Map Preferred Ground-
16 Mounted Solar Energy Sites). *See Exhibits NS-TH-2; NS-JO-2; NS-MLS-2.*

17
18 **Q14. Has the Town of Lowell adopted a municipal bylaw under 24 V.S.A. § 4414(15) or a**
19 **municipal ordinance under 24 V.S.A. § 2291(28) containing screening requirements that**
20 **apply to a ground-mounted solar electric generation facility?**

21 A14. No, based upon available information we have not found any municipal bylaw or ordinance
22 adopted by the Town that contains solar screening requirements.

1

2 **Q15. Does this conclude your testimony at this time?**

3 A15. Yes, it does.