

**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 generation facility off Route 100 in Lowell, Vermont to be known as the “Northland Solar Project”	Case No. 25-2346
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**PREFILED TESTIMONY OF GERRY NICK
On behalf of the Town of Lowell**

March 13, 2026

Exhibits:

TL-GN-1 Trip Wileman Report

Summary of Testimony:

Lowell Fire Chief Gerry Nick presents testimony about Public Health and Safety [30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5)], Municipal Services [10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(7)] and Development Affecting Public Investments [10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(9)(K)]

PREFILED TESTIMONY OF GERRY NICK

1 Q.1. Please state your name, address, and occupation.

2 A.1. Gerry Nick, Lowell Volunteer Fire Department, P.O. Box 239, 2534 Route 100, Lowell, VT
3 05847. Lowell Fire Chief.

4

5 Q.2. Have you testified before the Public Utility Commission?

6 A.2. No.

7

8 Q.3. What is the purpose of your testimony?

9 A.3. My testimony addresses the public health and safety, municipal services and public
10 investments as they are affected by the proposed solar project.

11

12 Q.4. What concerns do you have about the proposed solar project?

13 A.4. We are aware of the industrial solar project seeking a permit in the town of Lowell. We as
14 the Lowell Fire Department expect a risk assessment plan which includes a map of the solar
15 development with details for shut offs, a key for access, access points for large apparatus such as
16 our fire trucks to maneuver around the solar panels and even reach the back side if necessary. As
17 the fire department strongly believes that emergencies happen when you least expect them. We
18 prefer to be prepared for all and any potential crisis. All of the commercial properties in town
19 require a once a year walk around for the risk assessment and to allow for familiarity for new
20 members and as a refresher for members. The expectation would be that the fire department
21 would be provided the risk assessment as previously stated.

1 Q.5. What questions do you have about the proposed solar project?

2 A.5. We have many questions that need to be answered. First, who do we contact if there is an
3 emergency? Second, in the winter how will we access the solar?
4

5 Q.6. Is the fire department's response to a solar project similar to a response to a substation?

6 A.6. Mr. Hand said in his discovery responses that our fire department must have training
7 already because we have substations present in Lowell. However, the Fire Department has been
8 told to call Vermont Electric Co-op (VEC) and have power shut off and not suppress the fire. An
9 industrial solar project is a very different hazard than has existed in our town before. Substations
10 have VEC to shut town power off. The solar panels continue creating power even when power is
11 off. There is also potential for a grass fire caused by solar panels or during construction, and in
12 general the state of Vermont grasslands have fire potential and these solar panels add to that risk
13 – as well as complicate efforts to extinguish any fire.
14

15 Q.7. What concerns other than fire do you have about the proposed solar project?

16 A.7. It has come to our attention that large solar arrays such as the Northland Solar project can
17 interfere with VHF frequency within a 500 yard radius. We have been informed that the inverters
18 and optimizers, if not properly shielded, can cause RF interference that reduces the station's
19 ability to communicate with our first responders significantly. I have tasked one of our members,
20 Trip Wileman, to investigate this potential and his report – including supporting documentation -
21 is attached to this letter. *Exhibit TL-GN-1*.

1 Q.8. What do you recommend to address the fire department's concerns?

2 A.8. From a public safety perspective we would ask you to ask that the PUC either: 1) require
3 that Northland Solar conduct a pre-construction and post-construction survey in order to detect
4 and address any interference with the departments radio communications, or at the very least, 2)
5 require that Northland Solar, at its sole expense, correct any interference that is determined
6 caused by their equipment.

7


8 Q.9. Does that conclude your testimony?

9 A.9. Yes.

Affidavit of Gerry Nick

1. I have provided pre-filed testimony and exhibits in the above-captioned matter.
2. I have personal knowledge of the information provided in my pre-filed testimony.
3. I am able to testify as to the validity of the information contained in my pre-filed testimony and exhibits.
4. I declare that the foregoing statements are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that if the above statement is false, I may be subject to sanctions by the Commission pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 30.

Dated at Howell VT. Vermont this 10 day of MARCH 2026.


Name