

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Case No. 26-____-PET

Petition of Airport RD1 VT Solar, LLC, pursuant to 30)
V.S.A. § 248, requesting a certificate of public good)
for a 4.975 MW (AC) electric generation facility in)
Fair Haven, Vermont)

PREFILED TESTIMONY AND EXHIBITS OF MICHAEL WILLARD

Summary of testimony: Mr. Willard's testimony addresses the orderly development of the region and aesthetics criteria under 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(1) and (5) for Airport RD1 VT Solar Project and concludes that the Project will not unduly interfere with the orderly development of the region or have an undue adverse impact on the aesthetics or scenic beauty of the surrounding area.

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Exhibit Pet-MW-1

Michael Willard Resume

Exhibit Pet-MW-2

Aesthetics and Orderly Development Report

Introduction and Qualifications

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

A1. My name is Michael Willard. I am a licensed Landscape Architect with the State of Vermont and the Director of Landscape Architecture for VHB's Vermont's office. My business address is 20 Winooski Falls Way, Suite 400B, Winooski, Vermont.

Q2. Please describe your educational background and professional experience.

A2. I received my degree in Architecture from Vermont Technical College in 1992. I have more than 30 years of professional experience in landscape architecture working on a wide range of projects, including commercial development, multifamily housing, private residences, government facilities, and energy generation and electric transmission. Further details about my professional experience are provided in my resume offered with my testimony as Exhibit Pet-MW-1.

Purpose of Testimony

Q3. What is the purpose of your testimony?

A3. My testimony presents the Aesthetic Assessment and Orderly Development Review Report that I prepared for the Airport RD1 VT Solar Project. I address how the Project will not unduly interfere with the orderly development of the region under 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(1) and will not have an undue adverse impact on the aesthetics or scenic beauty of the surrounding area under 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5) applying the *Quechee Analysis*.

1 Q4. Please identify Exhibit Pet-MW-2 and summarize its contents.

2 A4. Exhibit Pet-MW-2 is the Aesthetic Assessment and Orderly Development Review

3 Report that I prepared for the Airport RD1 VT Solar Project. The Report consists of:

- 4 • Assessment of the Project's potential impacts with respect to visual
- 5 aesthetics under the so-called Quechee Analysis;
- 6 • Assessment of the town and regional plans as they pertain to orderly
- 7 development of the region;
- 8 • Maps that identify the potential viewshed of the Project from the surrounding
- 9 area;
- 10 • Photographic inventory of views from the field investigation of potential
- 11 visibility;
- 12 • A landscape mitigation plan; and
- 13 • Excerpts of town and regional plans.

14 **Section 248(b)(1): Orderly Development of the Region**

15 Q5. Please summarize the approach you took to evaluate how the Project is consistent
16 with the orderly development of the region, including in your answer whether and
17 how you applied the "due consideration" and "substantial deference" standards in
18 30 V.S.A § 248(b)(1).

19 A5. Our approach to evaluating the Project's consistency with the orderly development
20 of the region was to review the Rutland Regional Plan, and the Fair Haven Town

1 Plans. In this review, we assessed the Project against several identified community
2 standards, including conservation measures for future land use; recreation;
3 agriculture and forestry; wildlife and natural habitats; electricity and electrical
4 generation goals; energy facility siting and development standards; and natural,
5 scenic, cultural, and historic resources. Through this process, we determined the
6 Rutland Regional Plan contains an Energy Plan that has received an affirmative
7 determination of energy compliance under 24 V.S.A § 4352, while the Town of Fair
8 Haven has not yet developed an enhanced energy plan or received an affirmative
9 determination of energy compliance under 24 V.S.A. § 4352, 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(1).
10 As a result, due consideration was given to the land conservation measures
11 contained in the Rutland Regional Plan. Although the town plan has not received
12 substantial deference, the Project nonetheless complies with related provisions of
13 the Fair Haven Town Plan.

14 Q6. Please briefly summarize your conclusions with respect to the Project's
15 consistency with the orderly development of the region.

16 A6. In conclusion, the Project will not unduly interfere with orderly development of the
17 region, after consideration of any specific provisions of the town and regional plans
18 that would apply to a section 248 renewable energy solar project. There are no
19 specific local or regional land conservation measures that would apply to the
20 Project, and the Project will not interfere with any specific local or regional

1 recommendations regarding the proposed land use for this site. The plans also
2 include statements supporting the use of renewable energy.

3 **Section 248(b)(5): Aesthetics**

4 Q7. Please summarize the approach you took to evaluate how the Project is expected to
5 impact the aesthetics and scenic beauty of the area surrounding the Project.

6 A7. To evaluate potential impacts to aesthetics and scenic beauty of the area
7 surrounding the Project, other VHB staff and I performed visual and viewshed
8 analyses, conducted a field study, undertook document research and review, and
9 reviewed the town and regional plans. This work is described in more detail in the
10 aesthetics assessment and orderly development report. See Exhibit PET-MW-2

11 Q8. What conclusions did you reach with respect to the Project's expected aesthetic
12 impacts?

13 A8. The conclusions reached with respect to the Project's expected aesthetic impacts
14 are, the Project would not be considered shocking or offensive to the average
15 person, the Project does not violate any clearly written community standard
16 intended to preserve the aesthetics of scenic beauty of the specific area around the
17 Project site, and the Applicant has taken reasonable steps to mitigate potential
18 offsite visual impacts through the development of landscape mitigation plans.

Conclusion and Declaration

Q9. Does this conclude your testimony?

A9. Yes.

DECLARATION OF MICHAEL WILLARD

I declare that the testimony and exhibits that I have sponsored are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and were prepared by me or under my direct supervision. 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.

/s/Michael Willard

Michael Willard