

**TOWN OF NEW HAMPTON  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES**  
**New Hampton School Academic Research Center Meeting Room  
88 Main Street, New Hampton, NH**

March 23, 2011

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Selectmen Paul Tierney, Kenneth Mertz and Nathaniel Sawyer were present.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Town Administrator Barbara Lucas, State Senator Jeanie Forrester and Shaun Thomas, from Congressman Frank Guinta's office

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Paul Tierney called the meeting of the Board to order at 6:00 p.m.

**WORK SESSION:** Mr. Tierney explained that the purpose of this meeting was to allow residents in town to express their views about the Northern Pass Project. He advised that there are 2 speakers that have requested to speak. He introduced 2 guests, State Senator Jeanie Forrester and Shaun Thomas, from Congressman Frank Guinta's office. Other representatives were invited to attend or send a representative and who may be on their way.

Mr. Tierney advised that there was a Department of Energy (DOE) Scoping meeting held in Plymouth last week and that written comments/input to DOE, relative to this project will be accepted until April 12, 2011.

Mr. Tierney called on Neil Irvine to speak.

Mr. Irvine pointed out that the Northern Pass Project affects all of NH, not just the residents who live up north. The main issue up north is the eminent domain, where no right of way exists for 46 miles. In New Hampton the project would come through existing right of ways and would be between 85 - 135 foot towers. This would impact the quality of life, our economy, our property values and our landscape. If we allow this corridor to be built, how long will it be before the Northern Pass comes back to take more land? We have heard about the permitting process and the environmental and economic studies that will be conducted and the opportunities for the public to be heard. Two weeks ago, during hearings at the State Capitol the representative from PSNH couldn't be bothered with what the public had to say and left the hall for 3 ½ hours. The project is projected to take 3-5 years; 5 years of the stalled real estate market, 5 years of the local economy under duress. This is the time to express opposition on the project. At the public hearings in Concord a high school senior from Colebrook asked what things would be like in his town if the project comes through and affects the local tourist industry. Another student in Colebrook asked how their family's land could be taken by eminent domain for benefit of a for profit company. A significant portion of New Hampshire's economy comes from tourism dollars and that those dollars and associated jobs, will disappear, when visitors are greeted by towers instead of trees. The property taxes will also

disappear as property values plummet, and not just properties affected by the right of way. The revenue benefit from the constructed towers could go away. In Maine operators of a natural gas pipeline are seeking an abatement to reduce the property assessment of 13 million to 8 million. Will the Northern Pass do the same? Relative to jobs created – the construction must be done by bonded contractors and the local businesses are not in a position to carry the bond amounts required. Likely the work will be done by contractors from outside of the state. Local restaurants and banks may profit when the workers come through, but once they leave, a scar will be left behind. The stated objective for the transmission line is to create a power corridor and gain access to Massachusetts and New York energy markets. There will be no direct energy benefit to NH. The pressure on the energy markets from this electricity would serve to drive local energy producers out of business and with the competition out of business, a return to normal market pricing will follow, adding to unemployment. I ask the Board of Selectmen to get in front of this issue and draft a resolution in opposition to the Northern Pass Project and to work on a warrant article for the residents of New Hampton that will protect property rights, quality of life and stop the negative impact of the project on the town and the state.

Mr. Tierney called on Garth Woolsey to speak at the meeting. Mr. Woolsey was not present.

Mr. Tierney thanked the New Hampton School for allowing the meeting to be held there. He introduced the other Selectmen, Ken Mertz and Nathaniel Sawyer, Jr. and Barbara Lucas, Town Administrator.

Mr. Tierney asked for comments/questions from the audience. Mr. Tierney advised that a meeting followed at 7:00 PM for NH DOT to discuss changes to the Park & Ride off of Route 104 near exit 23 and the widening of road in the area of the Route 104 Diner.

Bob Martin (Old Bristol Rd) – is there any benefit for New Hampton or NH to having this power line and if not, why would the Selectmen support it? Mr. Tierney advised that the Town and the Selectmen have not taken a stance on whether this project has support or not; the Selectmen are gathering information from the citizens relative to how they feel about it. Relative to why it's proposed to go through NH, Mr. Tierney advises, is a question for the representatives from the Northern Pass Project. He advised there will be future meetings with them and citizens can ask them that question.

Gretchen Draper (Blake Hill Rd) – She stated that she and her husband are very much opposed to the project for environmental, health, construction, and political reasons. In 2008, NStar and Northeast Utilities and Hydro-Quebec signed to put these transmission lines in NH. We are just beginning to find out about this project and people who oppose this project need to show multi-national corporations coming through NH that we do not need this power, nor are we going to get any of this power, in fact we ship power out of NH. Relative to construction, she expressed concern with drilling and

blasting, the impact on her well, and land around her. Relative to the environment the transmission would cut a corridor between Hersey mountain behind them and the river. She expressed concern with the health effects of the DC lines, ie. Electromagnetism and air pollution. She advised that if this more localized and on a smaller scale it would be different. Why is New Hampton not standing up to this as there are 23 towns along the corridor that have voted to oppose the project?

Jessica Morgan (Cross Rd) – she stated her property abuts the right of way. She advised that when the right of way is cut it will damage producing maple trees which will affect them economically. She stated that her mother is susceptible to EMF radiation which affects her health. She said that NH will not get any of the electricity and feels PSNH may raise rates to help pay for the project.

John Conkling (Blake Hill Rd) – He stated his agreement with Mr. Irvine that this project will not benefit NH. He advised that as a real estate appraiser, property values around the project will drop. He said in 1991 he and others were canoeing in Labrador some distance from some falls and found a large power line going over the river. Going under the power line they found their hands vibrating, which he has never forgotten. These lines run through his property and the property of his sons.

Robert Conkling (Blake Hill Rd) – He doesn't see how it suits NH at all and as a landowner this would destroy his beautiful property that he has been constructing a new home on. His view of Cardigan Mountain, which currently has a small power pole, barely visible, will now have a pole of unknown height and is disturbed by the reason for it.

Donald McCormack (Old Bristol Rd) – He said he recently received something in the mail which showed the projected route of the project and wondered why they don't use the other existing route coming from VT. He said after listening to what's being said no one in NH is benefiting from the electricity and shouldn't have the right to place it on their property.

Mr. Tierney advised that the route through New Hampton uses existing right of ways and there are 4 lots in town that Northern Pass wants to expand the ROWs on. Relative to the other existing route, Mr. Tierney advised he can't answer why the Northern Pass is not going onto that route.

Fred Smith, Jr. (Shingle Camp Hill Rd) – Relative to the permitting process, there is a Presidential Permit required for the international connection and he wanted to know if any state or legislative action is required. Mr. Tierney advised that he does not believe there is but that the next level after DOE's scoping process is the site evaluation, which is a NH responsibility. This will be the time for the town's comment. Mr. Smith asked if this is a State agency and Mr. Tierney asked Senator Forrester to address this question. Senator Forrester advised there are several state agencies, such as Environmental Services, Fish & Game, Parks & Recreation, Forest and Lands, Air Resources, NH Office of Energy & Planning, DOT, Health &

Human Services, Dept. of Resource & Economic Development, and Division of Water, and this is the time to speak out against the project.

Neil Irvine (Blake Hill Rd) – He asked Senator Forrester if there will be specific contact people in each of the agencies mentioned. She advised that she did not know, but would look into it and notify the towns.

Selectmen Mertz advised that at the completion of the 7 scoping meetings, the DOE will begin their review of comments. He advised that he had attended the scoping meeting in Lincoln and spoke with a DOE representative who said that would take them through the summer. Mr. Mertz asked at what point that survey comes out and when will the State start acting. He said he has a personal opinion of the project but as a Selectman he is trying to figure as a town what the town can control.

Ralph Kirshner, Conservation Commission Chair (Straits Rd) – He advised that he is familiar with the process in 1980, when the other route shown (going through Alexandria), was constructed. This included testifying before the Site Evaluation Committee. He explained that the current process is for the DOE to issue the Presidential Permit which is determined by the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the determination of the public interest. This will be what the DOE considers #1 - is in the public interest; #2 – the electric reliability. The EIS has to be completed before the Site Evaluation can begin. That could be a 3 year, or longer, process. This process is further slowed by the fact that Normandeau Associates will no longer be handling the EIS study due to a perceived conflict of interest and a new firm will have to be chosen, most likely from out of the state. The scoping meetings are for the purpose of deciding on the scope of the Environmental Impact Statement. He advised that he attended the scoping meeting in Plymouth and left because the discussion had very little to do with what the scope should be. He said that the DOE can't consider whether someone is for or against the project, as it's not their mandate. He advised people who want to comment to the DOE that they do so based on the scope of the Environmental Impact Statement. Relative to what opponents can do about the project – The Conservation Commission has already taken a stand but is limited in doing so due to State law. Their authority is to protect natural resources of the town. When he attended Plymouth's meeting he advised that the commission voted to oppose the project based on the lack of information on impact to wildlife, vistas, and conservation easements. He told the audience that not only will power travel from Quebec down to New England, but it will travel back north to Quebec to be generated to New England. He advised that this information was found in Northeast utilities 2009 Annual Report. He said this current method of producing power has destroyed a watershed the size of New England, caused river diversions, put mercury into the environment, and other effects that can be researched. He pointed out that New England is frozen a portion of the year and affects to property may not be discovered and mitigated for some time. He said that the power going back up to Quebec will have to be made by methods of fossil fuel or nuclear energy.

Nancy Conkling (Blake Hill Rd) – She said that a man at the Plymouth scoping meeting, who was a seasonal resident and CEO of several large companies and said that the bottom line was money for Hydro-Quebec. She also advised that she just learned PSNH is a Connecticut firm and wishes we could stop it before it gets started.

Eileen Kondrad (Birch Wy.) – She inquired as to the height of the towers and Mr. Tierney advised that it was to be a maximum of 135 feet. Nora Conkling advised that she had heard they could be as high as 185 feet. Mrs. Kondrad asked what the height of the current towers were and Nora Conkling stated that she thought they were about 44 feet and had a visual showing the typical height for trees in our area and a tower of 135 in that environment.

Rebecca Lougee (Shady Ln) – She asked if these power lines were the same as the ones that can be seen in Montreal, Canada. Nora Conkling said that Barry Draper confirmed that they were, unfortunately he was ill this evening and could not make the meeting.

Jessica Morgan pointed out that these types of power lines can be seen along Route 4 as your heading into Lee and they look terrible. Mr. Mertz advised that you could see them closely by traveling Route 104 through Alexandria.

Steve Abdu (Blake Hill Rd) – He reminded the audience that during a bad ice storm those were the lines that came down right away in Montreal.

Pat Schlesinger (Birch Wy) – Mrs. Schlesinger asked if the lines in Alexandria were as tall as the ones being proposed and Mr. Mertz advised that he didn't think they were but had pointed them out because the structure is similar to the proposed lines.

Roni Karnis (Blake Hill Rd) – She said that even though the intent is to use existing ROWs the use will be changed in those ROWs. She advised that even though the ROW is several properties away, she may be able to see it from her house. She said that she's seen some of the properties that have the ROWs on them and the existing poles in those locations are no higher than the tree line, in most cases, below the tree line. Now these new lines will be much higher and have large cement bases and will not only reduce the property values of the properties they sit on, but also those properties that have a view of them. She advised that on Tax Map R1 alone, there are 7 properties in a ½ mile stretch that have this ROW through them and 21 properties that abut this same stretch that will be affected. This doesn't include the areas in town that will have a similar effect in their property values. She felt this is unjust that those properties affected won't even see a reduction in their electrical rates. She said maybe there could be restrictions in zoning ordinances to restrict height.

Nora Conkling (Blake Hill Rd) – She said that as this is a proposal what's to say that if they receive approval for the project they won't decide later that the height needs to be greater.

Andrea Woolsey (Coolidge Woods Rd) – She advised that they own 13+ acres and will have 2 of these towers on their property and one can be viewed from their bedroom window and may be within striking distance of a structure. When they spray the easement area it may affect their well. They lost their home once to a fire and chose to rebuild on this site in New Hampton and now their property will be useless.

Richard Hunewill (Old Bristol Rd) – He asked for a vote from the Selectmen and Mr. Tierney yes, they could. Mr. Hunewill said he didn't think there was a lot of support for this project but feels the Selectmen should take a stand even if it has no effect. Mr. Tierney advised that speaking for himself he is not ready to take a vote yet. He said there are roughly 50 people in this room tonight and there are approximately 2000 people in New Hampton and feels it would be fair for those people to express their opinion on the project. Mr. Hunewill said he wanted to know when the Selectmen would know and Mr. Tierney advised the Selectmen were taking tonight's discussion under advisement and will formulate a plan, which might include more meetings such as this one. From this would come a position from the Board. Mr. Tierney reminded everyone that the Site Selection Committee has to go to the towns that are affected and get input from them. Mr. Tierney asked the other board members if they wished to comment about taking a vote.

Selectman Ken Mertz advised that he understands getting input from other residents is necessary. He said he feels that they will get the same result about the project as tonight. He said many are not impacted by it and will not see the towers but if they've been educated, in the same way that all of those in the room tonight have been, they may likely oppose the project.

Selectman Nathaniel Sawyer advised that he does agree that more input is necessary from the town but feels the majority would oppose the project. He said there are several options for the town to take on this. He advised the audience that the other towns that voted against the project did it as a town wide vote. As he is the newest member to the Board he said he needs to learn more about the project.

Mr. Tierney asked Senator Forrester if there is any further she would like to say.

Senator Jeanie Forrester advised she has attended several meetings on the Northern Pass including scoping meetings and one with the Governor where residents from Colebrook were present, and gave very compelling reasons why this project shouldn't happen. She has not met anyone who supports this project. She advises she represents 31 towns and 19 of those communities will be affected by this. She advises this is a private project for private gain going through NH to reach MA and CT. She stated she supports her constituents and personally doesn't see a benefit to NH. She advised that yesterday in the House, Representative Rappaport submitted legislation which addressed the issue of eminent domain. Northern Pass representatives say they are going to work with the property owners but said they would use

eminent domain as a last resort. She said the legislation was put aside as they said they didn't need to deal with it right now but she advised that property values are being affected right now by this project and people are angry and upset. The legislation was revisited again and it did pass. It now needs to go to the House and Senate. The State has done all it can right now and it's at the Federal level now. She advised people to let their Senators and Representatives know how they feel. She reviewed the legislation (HB 648) which said *whenever it is necessary, in order to meet the reasonable requirements of service to the public, that any public utility should construct a line, branch line, extension, pipeline, conduit, line of poles, towers, or wires across the land of another, or should acquire land, land for an electric substation, or flowage, drainage, or other rights for the necessary construction, extension, or improvement of any water power or other works owned or operated by such public utility, and it cannot agree with the owners of such land or rights as to the necessity or the price to be paid therefore, such public utility may petition the public utilities commission for such rights and easements or for permission to take such lands or rights as may be needed for said purposes. No public utility may petition for permission to take private land or property rights for the construction or operation of an electric generating plant or a private large scale transmission line.* Senator Forrester said she was thankful this meeting was held and that she was invited.

Shaun Thomas, from Congressman Frank Guinta's office, advised that was not authorized to speak on Congressman Guinta's behalf, but asked for a show of hands on the number of people who have contacted Congressman Guinta or their Senators, about this issue. He advised those who have not, to call, write, or email their Congressmen, and US Senators. He supplied contact information for Congressman Guinta's Manchester office: 641-9536 to express your concern; for a more substantive conversation, ask to speak with David Tille, whose email address is: [david.tille@mail.house.gov](mailto:david.tille@mail.house.gov).

Selectman Tierney advised the attendees of the 5 options the town could take on this issue:

1. A citizen's petition drive to obtain their opinion on the project
2. The Board of Selectmen could hold a series of meetings to discuss the project with representatives from the Northern Pass Project.
3. A formal Public Hearing could be held to create a resolution, with the Board issuing a position statement based upon that hearing; that will be non-binding to anyone involved with the project.
4. The citizens could petition for a warrant article at a special town meeting requires 50 or more registered voters and cannot have any monies attached to it; the question must be specified, ie. do you support or do you not. Mr. Tierney advised this would require posting of a warrant, a deliberative session, and a ballot vote, for a cost of over \$3,000.00, and when it is done it is still non-binding.
5. After citizen's position is determined at hearing or special town meeting the Board of Selectmen could (a.) testify before the State Site Evaluation Committee and/or (b.) Contact State officials.

Mr. Tierney advised the attendees to decide on those 5; they will be posted on the website and you can send your selection to the email address listed.

Neil Irvine (Blake Hill Rd) – He expressed his appreciation to the Selectmen for holding this meeting, and State Senator Jeanie Forrester and Shaun Thomas, for attending this meeting. He advised everyone to call their representatives and contact anybody and everybody they know.

**RECESS:**

Mr. Tierney advised that this portion of the Selectmen's meeting was adjourned for a short recess at 7:07 PM to reconvene at 7:15 PM for the portion dedicated to NH DOT projects.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Vose  
Secretary

DRAFT