

My name is Claire Stanley. I live in Fair Haven, VT, where I own my home and property. I thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Energy Siting Commission and hope your work will lead to a better understanding of renewable energy production and its siting.

It is my understanding that the purpose of this hearing is to review the permitting process and to determine if people feel they are heard in that process. I am neither an engineer nor attorney. I can only speak as a lay person and tell you how it feels to the average person when faced with the frustrations of the process.

The following is a three-minute overview of my experience.....

Beaverwood Energy is three years, and as many millions of dollars, in the permitting process to build a wood-fired biomass electricity generating plant/wood pellet production operation/and year-round greenhouse operation in Fair Haven.

I am a Selectman in Fair Haven. I feel I represent the Town and surrounding communities where there is extraordinary support for this project. The company organized a busload of community supporters who attended a day at the State House to show support. This is my sixth trip to Montpelier (on my own dime) to attend hearings, meet with legislators and with the Governor. I have attended hearings locally as well. Some on energy production as well as with energy providers.

The frustration is when there is one message at a hearing with a completely different outcome. There are many, but I will cite one example: at one hearing, 33 people spoke...at least 25 of those (I did not count) spoke in opposition to the Lowell wind project. About two weeks later, I read in the paper that that very project was in progress, while the Beaverwood Energy project proposed for Fair Haven enjoys unprecedented support and continues to be stonewalled. By the way, I totally support wind projects.

The Beaverwood Energy project would generate upwards of a thousand jobs during the two-year building process; at least 50 permanent, well-paying jobs, on site, after completion and 150+ ancillary jobs such as wood chipping, trucking, and forestry professionals. The company will not only provide much-needed employment in southwest Vermont but also will be paying millions in local and state taxes. Surely, that is "in the public good."

It appears (feels like) that only the negatives are "heard." At one hearing, several gentleman spoke re: regulations on use of forest products. These forest engineers, loggers, and firewood professionals were in agreement that a biomass project is "the best thing for Vermont forests since sliced bread." Again, "in the public good." However, more attention seems to be paid to those nay-sayers who go on and on about how "they" are scheming to clear-cut, pollute, and/or cause irreparable harm to our state.

To answer your question(s)...yes, I believe the permitting process is way too cumbersome, extremely expensive, and a futile exercise in duplication. (Act 250/Section248). The message heard is that Vermont is ANTI business. Three slate companies gave up the expense and process rather than try to expand their operations in Fair Haven. They simply moved to NY State.

Do I feel I am being heard? Unfortunately, NO!

Claire Stanley,  
Fair Haven, VT