

PETER SHUMLIN
Governor



State of Vermont
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

October 14, 2015

Town of Swanton
Office of the Selectboard
PO Box 711
1 Academy St
Swanton, VT 05488

Dear Swanton Selectboard,

Thank you for your letter of August 4, 2015 expressing concern about the existing process for review and permitting of renewable energy projects such as wind turbines and solar projects. I appreciate hearing from you.

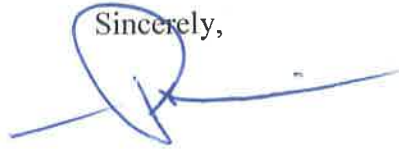
I believe there is no greater challenge and opportunity to Vermont and our world than the challenge of changing the way we use and produce energy. Any form of power generation will have some environmental impacts. That is why I continue to be a strong supporter of energy efficiency, and why I am proud that through investments over the last 15 years we have reduced Vermont's projected electricity needs by more than 13 percent. Where we do need energy generation, we have a responsibility to look at local, clean, low-emission, renewable energy to reduce our carbon footprint and spur the local economy. Wind and solar power are both ways to accomplish that here in Vermont along with hydropower and biomass energy.

You are correct that by law the Public Service Board has jurisdiction to grant or deny a permit to energy projects such as the Swanton Wind project or solar installations. This is commonly referred to as the Section 248 process. In response to concerns such as yours, in the last legislative session my administration supported amendments to § 248 that would increase the ability of municipalities to participate and be heard in the process. Act 56 provides for automatic party status in the Public Service Board process for municipal legislative bodies and planning commissions. It also sets minimum setback requirements for solar projects and, relevant to your concern, allows towns to enact additional screening requirements applicable to most solar projects. The law goes on to require that upon recommendation of a municipality the local screening requirements will be incorporated into a facility's permit if one is issued.

Act 56 also created a Solar Siting Task Force, which includes a representative of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to ensure that the concerns of local communities are heard. The conversation about appropriate siting and mitigation is continuing in the Task Force. I encourage you to contact the VLCT representative on the Solar Siting Task Force as well as your local legislators to be sure they are aware of your concerns.

Again, thank you for your correspondence and for your ongoing service to the community of Swanton. Please don't hesitate to reach out if I can be of assistance in the future.

Sincerely,



Peter Shumlin
Governor