

**STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Case No. _____

Petition of Vermont Transco LLC, and Vermont Electric Power Company, Inc. (collectively, “VELCO”), for a Certificate of Public Good pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 248 authorizing upgrades to VELCO’s existing St. Johnsbury Substation, located in St. Johnsbury, Vermont

**PREFILED TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL BUSCHER
ON BEHALF OF VERMONT ELECTRIC POWER COMPANY, INC.**
This document and associated exhibits have been filed ePUC

October 30, 2023

Michael Buscher’s testimony provides an assessment of the Project’s potential impacts on aesthetics (30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5); 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(8)) and addresses compliance with Public Utility Commission Rule 5.800.

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EXHIBITS

Exhibit Petitioner MJB-1 Résumé of Michael Buscher

Exhibit Petitioner MJB-2 St. Johnsbury Aesthetic Report

PREFILED TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL BUSCHER
ON BEHALF OF VERMONT ELECTRIC POWER COMPANY, INC.

1 **1. Introduction**

2

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

4 A1. My name is Michael J. Buscher. I am a Vermont licensed landscape architect and owner
5 of T.J. Boyle Associates, LLC, Landscape Architecture and Planning, 301 College Street,
6 Burlington, Vermont 05401.

7

8 Q2. Please describe your educational background and work experience.

9 A2. I am a Vermont licensed Landscape Architect. A copy of my resume is attached as
10 Exhibit Petitioner MJB-1.

11

12 Q3. Have you previously testified before the Public Utilities Commission or in other judicial
13 or administrative proceedings?

14 A3. Yes. Within Vermont, I have testified before local development review boards and
15 planning commissions, Act 250 district environmental commissions, the Vermont
16 Environmental Court, and the Public Utility Commission. I have also provided testimony
17 before the New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee, and the New York State
18 Department of Public Service and the Department of Environmental Conservation.

19

20 **2. Testimony Overview**

21 Q4. What is the purpose of your testimony?

1 A4. My testimony supports the Petition by VELCO for a Certificate of Public Good (CPG)
2 pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 248 with respect to upgrading VELCO's existing substation
3 located at 397 Higgins Hill Road, St. Johnsbury, Vermont (Project). Specifically, my
4 testimony addresses aesthetics (30 V.S.A § 248(b)(5); 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(8)) and
5 addresses compliance with Public Utility Commission Rule 5.800.

6

7 **3. Aesthetics (30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5), 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(8))**

8 Q5. Please describe the work you have performed with respect to the Project.

9 A5. I performed a visual analysis to evaluate potential aesthetic impacts due to the proposed
10 Project. The work is described in the Aesthetics Analysis Report that my firm prepared,
11 which is attached here as Exhibit Petitioner MJB-2.

12

13 Q6. Will this Project have an undue adverse effect on aesthetics or the scenic or natural beauty?

14 A6. No. Although it was determined that the Project would result in minor adverse impacts
15 mostly due to increased visibility along Higgins Hill Road directly adjacent to the
16 substation, the Project was not found to result in an undue adverse impact under the second
17 part of the Quechee Test.

18

19 Based on a review of the Regional Plan for the Northeast Kingdom 2015-2023 and the
20 2017 St. Johnsbury Town Municipal Plan, the Project does not violate a clear written
21 community standard. VELCO has also incorporated reasonable mitigation, including
22 proposed planting as a mitigation measure (Exhibit Petitioner MJB-2, Appendix C). For
23 similar reasons why the adverse impact would be minor, the Project would not be shocking

1 or offensive to the average person. Most importantly, Project upgrades consist of limited
2 changes to an existing electrical transmission substation, which is an established
3 component of the visual landscape within the surrounding area.

4

5 A review of the Project under the second part of the Quechee Test did not find the Project
6 to violate any of the three factors to be considered undue.

7

8 **4. Conclusion**

9 Q7. Does this conclude your testimony?

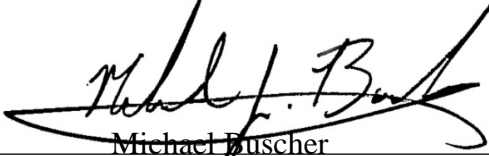
10 A7. Yes.

11

DECLARATION OF MICHAEL BUSCHER

I, Michael Buscher, over 18 years of age, and competent to testify on these matters, declare that on behalf of Vermont Electric Power Company, Inc., I prepared my direct prefiled testimony and exhibits in the above captioned matter and I have the necessary expertise to testify to the same information. I declare that my testimony and exhibits are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that if such information is false, I may be subject to sanctions by the Commission pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 30.

Dated at Burlington, Vermont, this 25 day of October, 2023



Michael Buscher
Affiant