

**STATE OF VERMONT  
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

Petition of Vermont Transco LLC and )  
Vermont Electric Power Company, Inc. )  
(collectively, “VELCO”), for a certificate of ) Case No. 19-\_\_\_\_-PET  
public good, pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 248, )  
authorizing the construction of the New Haven )  
Operations Facility in New Haven, Vermont )

**PREFILED TESTIMONY OF  
MICHAEL J. BUSCHER  
ON BEHALF OF VELCO**

November 15, 2019

Mr. Buscher’s testimony assess the Project’s potential impacts on aesthetics under 30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(5).

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**EXHIBITS**

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Exhibit Petitioner MJB-2	Aesthetic Analysis Report

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1           **1.     Introduction**

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

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

6  
7    Q2.    Please describe your educational background, qualifications and work experience.

8    A2.    I am a Vermont-licensed landscape architect. I received my degree in Landscape  
9           Architecture from Pennsylvania State University in 1998. After graduating I worked as a  
10          landscape architect in the greater Washington D.C. metropolitan area before moving to  
11          Vermont in 2001 when I joined T.J. Boyle Associates. I became the owner of the firm in  
12          2007. Provided as **Exhibit Petitioner MJB-1** is my resume, which sets forth my  
13          educational background and professional experience in more detail.

1 Q3. Have you previously testified before the Public Utility Commission (“PUC”) or in other  
2 judicial or administrative proceedings?

3 A3. Yes. Within Vermont, I have testified before the PUC as well as local development  
4 review boards and planning commissions, Act 250 district environmental commissions,  
5 and the Vermont Environmental Court. I have also provided testimony before the New  
6 Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee, the New York State Department of Public  
7 Service, and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation. I am very  
8 familiar with the PUC’s orders relative to aesthetic standards for various transmission and  
9 generation facilities, as well as jurisprudence under criterion 8 of Act 250, 10 V.S.A.  
10 §6086(a)(8), as incorporated by reference into 30 V.S.A. §248(b)(5).

11

12 Q4. What is the purpose of your testimony?

13 A4. The purpose of my testimony is to summarize the work that I have conducted regarding  
14 VELCO’s proposed New Haven Operations Facility and related distribution upgrades  
15 (the “Project”), introduce an Aesthetic Analysis Report that my firm prepared for the  
16 Project, and explain the findings of that report regarding the Project’s compliance with  
17 aesthetics under Section 248(b)(5).

18

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

20 A5. I performed an analysis to evaluate potential visual impacts due to the proposed Project.  
21 The analysis involved reviewing architectural and civil engineering plans; conducting

1 field visits to document the existing conditions and views toward the Project, as well as  
2 GIS analysis; preparing landscape mitigation plans and photographic simulations; and  
3 reviewing the local town and regional plans for standards that may apply to the aesthetics  
4 of the area. The work is further described in the Aesthetic Analysis Report that my firm  
5 prepared, which is offered as **Exhibit Petitioner MJB-2**. The report analyzes the  
6 potential impacts from the Project under the *Quechee Lakes* test of Act 250 Criterion 8.

7  
8 **2. Summary of Aesthetic Analysis**

9 Q6. Please summarize your findings and conclusions regarding the Project's potential visual  
10 impacts.

11 A6. Under the first part of the *Quechee Lakes* test, I concluded that the Project would result in  
12 adverse impacts to the scenic or natural beauty of the area. The Project will introduce a  
13 new visual element onto a mostly undeveloped site. However, as fully discussed in the  
14 Exhibit Petitioner MJB-2, several measures are incorporated that will allow it to fit within  
15 the area. The Project proposes an 18,000 square foot, two-story building designed to  
16 look like a barn that will blend in with the rural and agricultural character of the  
17 surrounding area. When evaluated under the second part of the *Quechee Lakes* test, I  
18 found that the Project's effects would not be undue, for the following reasons:

- 19 • Based on the review of regional and town plans, the Project would not violate any  
20 clear written community standard intended to preserve the aesthetics or scenic or  
21 natural beauty of the area.

- 1 • The applicants have incorporated generally available mitigating steps. Mitigation  
2 includes the location and siting of the Project, the architectural detailing of the  
3 buildings, retention of existing vegetation, and proposed mitigation planting to further  
4 screen and soften views that would be created.
- 5 • The Project would not offend the sensibilities of the average person. The Project  
6 would have relatively limited visibility, and mitigation measures would allow the  
7 Project to fit into the character of the area. The Project is also located adjacent to  
8 other existing electrical transmission infrastructure.

9

10 A proposed landscaping plan was prepared for two reasons: (1) the Town of New Haven  
11 specifically requested landscape screening during the preliminary stages of the Project,  
12 and (2) additional landscaping around the site is desirable for site security reasons. This  
13 landscaping will be maintained for the life of the Project in compliance with PUC Rule  
14 5.800. In review, the VELCO New Haven Operations Facility will not have an undue  
15 adverse effect on aesthetics or the scenic or natural beauty of the area.

16

17 **3. Conclusion**

18 Q7. Does this conclude your testimony?

19 A7. Yes.

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