June 16, 2006

Energy Planning Advisory Board

Please find enclosed comments for the Energy Planning Advisory Board's upcoming Stakeholder Forum on June 23, 2006. I will be unable to attend, but will send my co-worker, Kirk Stone, in my place. We do not intend to speak at the Forum. I extend my thanks to the members of the Board for their dedication to this critical issue. As public health professionals working to change the way our built environment is designed and constructed, energy reduction is at the core of The Jordan Institute's mission.

The Jordan Institute provides technical assistance and programs for commercial, residential, and school building owners. Our NH Partnership for High Performance Schools recently won a US Environmental Protection Agency Merit Award after less than eighteen months of program operation. We also have an annual conference for architects, developers, and planners. Finally, we have developed an innovative land use program with NH Audubon called 3iSolutions.

Needed changes to public policies on global issues – such as climate change, the energy supply chain, and air quality – depend upon successful leadership from individual states such as New Hampshire. The recent unveiling of the NH Long Range Transportation Business Plan and the innovative I-93 Community Technical Assistance Program are bringing the issues of land use, transportation, and energy to the forefront of debate. With the rise in energy prices during the past two years, consumer attention has finally been captured.

I believe I am paraphrasing Amory Lovins when I say "the cheapest watt is the one we do not use." It is paramount that the State of New Hampshire work actively to put in place aggressive energy conservation and efficiency measures, as well as encourage and support new, greener supply-side initiatives. It will simply not be enough to add renewables – we must reduce demand through conservation and efficient use of our energy resources.

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, approximately 40% of carbon dioxide emissions in the US are attributable to the energy consumed by our buildings. Carbon dioxide is the most significant green house gas contributing to climate change. Given that climate change is arguably the most pressing issue of our time, along with the need to improve our air quality generally, we need to develop public policy that both regulates where necessary and stimulates market driven solutions where possible, solutions that significantly reduce energy consumption in our buildings. Ways to accomplish this could include:

1. Publicize the sections of RSA 672/674 which encourage passive solar energy collection for buildings, and assure access to all renewable energy sources. Provide a tax credit to either the homeowner or the homebuilder for employing passive solar design strategies.

2. Increase the minimum energy code requirements for commercial and residential buildings:

a. Federal tax credits exist on the commercial side for buildings constructed 25-50% better than code.
b. Residential projects can receive rebates under EnergyStar programs, and homebuilders can receive a $2000 tax credit per home.

3. Design and construct all State buildings to a US Green Building Council *LEED™ Silver* standard AND require that each such building exceed the energy code by 50%.

4. Develop a State incentive program for homeowners who purchase domestic hot water or photovoltaic (PV) solar electric systems.
    a. These would ideally minimally match the new 2006/2007 Federal tax credits of 30% of cost of each system up to $2,000.
    b. The dollars could be made available from the systems benefit charge monies – even if the SBC was doubled, I would suppose that most ratepayers would not notice.

5. Invest in design and construction education through our high school vocation programs and our regional technical colleges.

In addition to buildings, we strongly support efforts to reduce energy demand and increase alternative and cleaner fuel technologies in the transportation sector. We will seek to be involved in the EPAB's transportation stakeholder forum when it is scheduled. In the meantime, examples of efforts we can undertake as a State include:

1. Support rail as a transportation option for the I-93 and Route 3 corridors.

2. Increase the capacity of our bus lines.

3. Provide bike lanes and safer pedestrian access in our communities.

4. Adopt the California vehicle emission standards – all other New England states have done so and many cars sold in NH already comply.

5. Support an enhanced biodiesel fuel distribution network.

6. Market carpooling options to NH's commuters.

Finally, we must act immediately on the issue of climate change. Examples of actions to take include:

1. Governor Lynch should take a leadership role with the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

2. A Climate Action Plan for New Hampshire is essential. There are many models from other U.S. states and the time to act is now.

3. Support the development of wind farms in New Hampshire, an existing energy technology competitive today with conventional electricity generation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions, or need assistance in obtaining resource materials on any of the topics listed here, please do not hesitate to contact me at 603.226.1009.

With best regards,

Patrick

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