

**STATE OF VERMONT  
PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD**

Petition of Green Mountain Power Corporation )  
For a Certificate of Public Good, pursuant to 30 )  
V.S.A. § 248(j), For authority to build a solar )  
Generation unit at its Berlin #5 Facility in )  
Berlin, Vermont. )

Docket No. \_\_\_\_\_

**PREFILED TESTIMONY OF  
JAMES F. PALMER  
ON BEHALF OF  
PETITIONERS**

January 8, 2010

The purpose of Dr. Palmer's testimony is to present the report entitled "199.9 kW Photovoltaic Solar Project at Green Mountain Power Corporation's Berlin Plant #5," prepared by T.J. Boyle and Associates.

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## EXHIBITS

Exhibit__[JFP-1]	Résumé of James F. Palmer
Exhibit__[JFP -2]	Aesthetics Report: 199.9 kW Photovoltaic Solar Project at Green Mountain Power Corporation's Berlin Plant #5, Berlin, Vermont

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1           **1.     Introduction**

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

3    A1.    My name is James F. Palmer. I am a professional landscape architect at T. J.  
4           Boyle Associates, LLC, Landscape Architects and Planning Consultants, 301  
5           College Street, Burlington, Vermont 05458.

6

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

8    A2.    I earned a Master's in Landscape Architecture in 1975 and a Doctor of  
9           Philosophy in forestry/natural resource planning in 1979 from the University of  
10          Massachusetts, Amherst. From 1980 through 2005, I served on the Faculty of  
11          Landscape Architecture at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and  
12          Forestry in Syracuse, New York, reaching the rank of Professor. During this time  
13          I have published numerous articles, given invited speeches, and received national

1 awards for my work in visual assessment. I now serve as Professor Emeritus at  
2 that institution. In 2005, I moved to Vermont where I continued to work as an  
3 independent consultant. I joined T. J. Boyle Associates, LLC in 2009. A copy of  
4 my résumé is attached as Exhibit\_\_[JFP-1].

5  
6 Q3. What is the purpose of your testimony?

7 A3. My testimony presents the report entitled: “Aesthetics Report: 199.9 kW  
8 Photovoltaic Solar Project at Green Mountain Power Corporation’s Berlin Plant  
9 #5, Berlin, Vermont” (“Report”), which was prepared under my direction. Our  
10 Report describes the visual analysis undertaken by T.J. Boyle Associates, LLC  
11 that assesses visual change due to the planned 199.9 kW Photovoltaic Solar  
12 Project at Green Mountain Power Corporation’s Berlin Plant #5 in Berlin,  
13 Vermont (“Project”), and determines whether these changes create Adverse or  
14 Unduly Adverse impacts to the visual character of the areas and viewsheds in  
15 which they are located. The Project is summarized in the prefiled testimony of  
16 Josh Castonguay. Our Report is included with this filing as Exhibit\_\_[JFP-2].

17

18 **2. Summary of Findings and Conclusions**

19 Q4. Please summarize your findings and conclusions regarding the Project’s potential  
20 impacts upon aesthetics.

21 A4. T. J. Boyle Associates conducted a day-long field investigation, analyzed GIS  
22 data, USGS maps, aerial photography, and detailed design plans using the latest

1 computer technologies to best understand the Project and how it will alter the  
2 visual character of the landscapes for which it is proposed. Through these  
3 investigations it was determined that although the Project is located near a densely  
4 populated area of Vermont and certain portions of the Project have the potential to  
5 be visible, the Project's visual impact will be Not Adverse for two reasons. First  
6 the project is located in close proximity to and visually compatible with  
7 industrial-type facilities, including the Montpelier Water Pollution Control Plant,  
8 the Montpelier Department of Public Works, and Green Mountain Power's Berlin  
9 Plant #5. Second, the field investigation determined that the Project is not visible  
10 from most publicly accessible locations where potential visibility was indicated  
11 by a topographic viewshed analysis. The point of greatest visibility will be to  
12 northbound travelers on Interstate 89, where a view from over a mile distant will  
13 last approximately 10 seconds at the posted speed limit. It is unlikely that the  
14 Project will be distinguishable from other industrial facilities in the view. For  
15 these reasons the impact will be Not Adverse.

16

17 Q5. Was your field investigation during the summer, and if so will the Project's  
18 impact change in the winter?

19 A5. Yes, the field investigation was conducted on August 7, 2009, when the trees have  
20 leaves. The hedgerows and trees surrounding the Project site are mostly  
21 deciduous, but they will provide a branchy screen to filter views of the site in the  
22 winter. From the local roads, if the Project were (partially) visible, then the viewer

1 would also see the Berlin Plant #5 and probably railroad cars. In addition, they  
2 would be traveling by facilities like the Water Pollution Control Plant and  
3 Department of Public Works. In this context a photovoltaic system that is six feet  
4 high and the size of a school parking lot is not sufficiently noticeable to constitute  
5 an adverse impact.

6  
7 Views from I89 are between one-quarter to two miles away. Southbound travelers  
8 would be seeing the backs of the photovoltaic panels, which I understand will be  
9 medium gray and it should be very difficult to distinguish them. Northbound  
10 travelers have a 10 second view looking down on the Project site. Even though  
11 they will see the darker front-side of the photovoltaic panels, it will be in the  
12 context of other industrial facilities scattered along the railroad tracks and local  
13 roads. I do not expect travelers will have time to pick the Project out and  
14 recognize it, so again the visual impact will be Not Adverse.

15

16 **3. Conclusion**

17 Q6. Does this conclude your testimony at this time?

18 A6. Yes, it does.