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Navigating Massachusetts' energy project siting and permitting reforms - by Seth Lattrell

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Seth Lattrell

The siting and permitting reforms coming in 2026 will have major implications for how clean energy infrastructure is developed. While many questions remain about what the regulations will look like, a few things are clear:

- For large projects, all municipal, regional, and state siting and permitting – including wetlands, waterways, rare species, local bylaws, and even the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) – will be streamlined into a single consolidated process handled by the Energy Facilities Siting Board (EFSB). New requirements will include cumulative impact analyses, and constructive approvals will be mandatory if the board does not make a decision within the allotted time.
- For smaller projects, local reviews will be consolidated into a single permit issued by the local government – again, with a statutory timeframe for issuance after which constructive approvals will be mandatory.

Functionally, what does this mean for getting your project done?

- For large projects, instead of incrementally advancing your design as you work through EFSB and MEPA approvals and then the more detailed wetlands, rare species, and local permits, you will need sufficient design to conduct the cumulative impact analysis and quantify impacts to resource areas before filing with EFSB. Most of your agency consultation will likely occur prior to filing with EFSB.
- For smaller projects, supporting analyses for any local reviews – wetlands, site plans, stormwater design, etc. – will all need to be completed together for the consolidated permit.

VHB understands the complexities of siting and permitting and how these processes can delay projects. We have integrated teams of scientists, planners, and engineers who can help you with most of the work necessary to apply for these consolidated permits. Our capabilities span natural sciences, water resources, cultural resources, air quality and noise, sustainability and resiliency, and civil, structural, electrical, transportation, and environmental engineering, among many other services.

Our goal is to make your permitting process as seamless and stress-free as possible, saving you time and money in the long run. Our extensive experience in the energy industry, including offshore wind markets, solar, and battery energy storage systems (BESS) helps us focus on solutions that get projects moving forward.

Reach out to VHB's regional energy market lead, Seth Lattrell, anytime via LinkedIn or email and see how VHB is supporting New England's energy evolution. Let's work together to pave the way for a sustainable energy future.

Seth Lattrell is the New England regional energy market lead at VHB, Watertown, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540