Lyme Energy Committee
Lyme, NH

July 22, 2014

We, the Energy Committee for the Town of Lyme, offer the following comments to the draft New Hampshire State Energy Strategy, dated May 1, 2014.

As a small town, we understand the difficulty of completing a major project with limited resources. Given your time and budget constraints, we commend Navigant for the work done to date on this project. Given that no document is ever perfect, we hope that our suggestions, reflections, and recommendations are received as intended - sharing a goal of making the strongest possible Strategy.

Although a lofty vision for 2025 was laid out, we find the Strategy noticeably lacking in discrete actionable items. We believe New Hampshire is a special, perhaps unique state, in that our towns and villages have a higher degree of coordination and public service than is found in many states. This close-knit setup allows for rapid spreading of ideas and initiatives through word of mouth and local efforts – provided there is leadership and coordination materials available.

As an example, we would like to highlight our town's recent experience with the Solarize program. With limited resources from Vital Communities (such as website assistance and program templates) local influencers were able to facilitate the purchase and installation of nearly 50 photovoltaic systems in 2014, nearly 10% of the total housing stock of the town. These types of programs, relying primarily on passionate locals and word of mouth, represent an amazing opportunity for low cost deployment of economic technologies, whether they be in the areas of efficiency, distributed generation, or fuel switching. Combined with friendly competitions between towns, we believe that our success in the Solarize program could be replicated in other towns and expanded to other technologies. However, for such programs to be successful we need leadership, coordination, and discrete biannual targets and milestones– specifics that were not included in the draft Strategy.

Another missed opportunity for specific actionable plans relates to public infrastructure. Our town's recent experience shows that there is substantial opportunity for cost savings by doing energy efficiency and fuel switching upgrades on public buildings. In order to get voters to approve these upgrades, a substantial amount of education is needed about the economic and environmental benefits about these upgrades. Many walk away from these educational events intrigued by the idea of retaining income and not sending dollars to out of state fuel sources, but are unclear of the next steps, or how to finance their own improvements. By leveraging public building retrofit processes to enable group education and bulk procurement, we see tremendous opportunity to facilitate a town by town approach to meeting the Strategy's goals. Again, we feel that the draft Strategy's lack of goals greatly limits the likelihood of successful adoption. We suggest that the Strategy

suggest a pilot program, perhaps of 5 towns. Based on the experience in those towns, the program would be improved and deployed to more towns the following year. We suggest that the draft Strategy specify the number of locations to be targeted each year, with an end goal of reaching the entire state by 2025. It is only by setting ambitious but achievable targets that we will be able to meet the Strategy's goals.

In general, our Committee is primarily focused on residential and municipal actions, and thus we are broadly supportive of the goals of increased energy efficiency, more distributed generation, and fuel switching to native technologies and fuel sources. Energy efficiency and distributed generation lead directly to a retention of wealth in our towns, and may lead to more local spending and increasing the benefits to our local economy. Our town has seen the positive benefits that local energy sources such as biomass can have, and we believe biomass based energy solutions lead to increased local employment and economic improvement. We believe that these benefits deserve greater highlighting in the final Strategy. We also strongly suggest that specific metrics and targets be set, so that our leaders can confirm that we are on the path to meeting the Strategy's objectives. One such metric could be that by 2025 New Hampshire has reduced spending on non-New Hampshire based fuels by $1 billion annually. This is a specific target, with clear benefits to the state and its residents.

Finally, our experience indicates that the single largest barrier to the deployment of energy efficiency, distributed generation, and fuel switching technologies is financing. If our towns were able to leverage the historically low interest rates that state bonding currently affords, many of our schools could be retrofitted with pellet boilers, better insulation, and solar panels in a manner that annual debt service would be lower than the savings in energy costs.

Financing is perhaps even more important for individuals. We support the idea of a green bank to facilitate financing economic improvements, but find the details in the draft Strategy lacking. We strongly suggest that the final Strategy provide a more specific plan about implementation and deployment of this important tool. Again, we stress that targets and metrics should be specified, so that our leaders can evaluate whether the program is on track to meet our 2025 targets.

We thank you for the diligent efforts you have put into this initiative. We hope that you recognize the strong local resources that town Energy Committees represent, and look forward to a final Strategy that creates a path towards greater economic prosperity, decreased pollution, and greater energy security.