

—Slug:.....COMM-0871.vern.VY_nuke_redux
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—Contributor email.....
—For section.....News
—Format.....News - byline and dateline
—Dateline.....Vernon
—Article Number:.....43796



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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1 Vernon, state grapple with potential VY site
2 redevelopment

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3 Ideas for the site of the former nuclear plant include a
4 data center, battery storage, or a small nuclear reactor, but no
5 plan has emerged

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6 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

7 After 40 years in operation, the Vermont Yankee Nuclear
8 Power Station in Vernon shuttered in 2014, leaving over 100,000
9 tons of nuclear waste. More than a decade later, the developer
10 that holds the lease, PowerTransitions, is in the midst of
11 envisioning the site's future.

12 Now, the local community and state are mulling the
13 potential energy, environmental, and economic impacts of the
14 site redevelopment, which could include a data center.

15 After purchasing the 140-acre property, NorthStar, which
16 specializes in facility remediation, is on track to decommission
17 the nuclear site by the end of the year, according to Kerrick
18 Johnson, the Vermont Department of Public Service's
19 commissioner.

20 NorthStar agreed to lease the property to Texas-based
21 company PowerTransitions, which is backed by private equity
22 firm Partners Group. It specializes in converting former industrial
23 areas into energy development sites with a focus on solutions to
24 the growing AI and digital infrastructure demand.

25 It is unclear what PowerTransitions will build.

26 Jim Pinkerton, a Vernon Selectboard member who also
27 chairs the town's planning commission, reported at a June 16
28 Selectboard meeting that plans for battery storage, a small-scale
29 nuclear reactor, and a data center had all been floated by
30 PowerTransitions, but no plan had been finalized.

31 "Any of the projects they're discussing would trigger
32 [Act] 250 instantly," Pinkerton said, referring to Vermont's land-
33 use-review process. The process typically takes many months or
34 years to navigate, Pinkerton said, adding that "there will be two
35 years before they even get a ruling on it."

36 PowerTransitions is in the early stage of developing plans
37 for the site, and the company intends on engaging with the
38 Vernon community and other stakeholders, according to a
39 statement by company spokesperson Carrie Hitt.

40 PowerTransitions currently plans to build a data center in
41 Kansas.

42 Last month, Gov. Phil Scott vetoed a bill that would have
43 placed restrictions on data centers, asserting that the state's
44 existing regulatory frameworks would suffice in limiting any
45 negative impacts. Scott has also long supported the revival of
46 nuclear energy in the state.

47 Data center developments have caused a stir nationally,
48 and Vermont municipalities like South Burlington and Royalton
49 have weighed data center restrictions. Vergennes is contending
50 with current controversy over a proposed battery storage project.

51 Pinkerton said that Vernon’s planning commission sees
52 developing an “environmentally sound” project that generates
53 revenue as a “regional gain.” But he said the town would need to
54 weigh the downsides as well.

55 Pinkerton also expressed personal concern about
56 redeveloping a nuclear site and the potential “serious drain” on
57 local water and power resources of a data center. This concern
58 was echoed by some attendees at the Selectboard meeting.

59 In cleaning up the Vermont Yankee facility, NorthStar
60 shipped low-radiation waste to Texas and contained high-
61 radiation waste in 59 casks on site, Johnson, the public service
62 department commissioner, said in an interview. These will remain
63 under supervision by the Federal Nuclear Regulatory
64 Commission, he said.

65 The department wants the site to generate the greatest
66 value, Johnson said, and different uses of the site “check different
67 boxes.”

68 Battery storage has advantages, said Johnson, but
69 development would be costly and time intensive, while
70 potentially underutilizing the energy transmission capacity of the
71 site.

72 While there is interest in nuclear development, Johnson
73 said, Vermont has significant and unique regulatory requirements
74 for a company seeking to construct a small modular reactor.

75 Any data center development would need to generate its
76 own energy so that it would not tax the power grid, Johnson said,
77 and a disadvantage of a data center plan is that the public
78 perception is “pretty negative.”

79 “We’re looking more for something that puts energy out,
80 not necessarily something that needs more energy,” Johnson said.

81 NorthStar's CEO Scott State said in a statement that his
82 company intended to connect potential developers with the
83 Vernon community and that his company did so with
84 PowerTransitions.

85 Johnson said his department and PowerTransitions are in
86 talks to reach an agreement outlining expectations for community
87 engagement and environmental impacts.

88 The loss of Vermont Yankee has had repercussions on the
89 state's energy capacity, Johnson noted.

90 "Following the exit of that key employer in that region,
91 we have energy affordability needs, we have energy adequacy
92 needs, meaning we need more sources of clean energy," he said.
93 "We're in the process of developing options, and hopefully one
94 of those options will come to fruition that best benefits the
95 community, the state, and the region."

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