

Good afternoon, members of the committee, madam chair.  
It's good to see you all on this rainy afternoon.

As you may recall, my name is Barbara Burnett.  
I live at 191 Barre St. Apt. 106 in Montpelier.

I was the person who first alerted the local community in the spring of 2014 about the RR's plan to spray toxic herbicides along its right of way (leased from the State of Vermont) through the town of Montpelier. As you well know, the tracks cut through the city limits. They enter just west of the roundabout east of town, then cross the river to the south, where they run through an industrial area near the river,

Then they cross Granite street, heading west and run alongside the walking/biking path, then next to the back yards of homes (some with young children, apartment buildings (one of which houses low income, elderly and disabled persons), small businesses (including Liberty chocolates which produces certified organic products), the Hunger Mountain Co-op, the city's Rec Center, a daycare center, Another Way (a local social services agency with organic veggie gardens right along the tracks), the Italian restaurant and Sarguchi's restaurants and Shaw's grocery. Then the tracks pass directly behind the location of the summer Farmer's Market which hosts numerous organic sellers and food services before they re-cross the river and run parallel to the highway past the VSECU and up to \_\_\_\_, the turn-off for the Dept. of Labor building where they then jog NW, past the Peace Park and head west under the I-89 overpasses where the Amtrak station is located.

After considering the public's request (based on scientifically-based evidence of health concerns) that the VPAC require the RR to use alternative methods of weed control on entirety of the short section of its right-of-way that runs through the city limits--and also based on the VPAC's charter to promote alternatives to herbicides-- VPAC ordered the RR to actively work in good faith with John Snell, whom they designated as the public's representative, to consider and choose alternatives to herbicides to be used on that stretch of track. Also, the Committee ordered that the section of track in dispute remain unsprayed until after these discussions were concluded and the results presented to the Committee at the hearing in 2015.

Unfortunately, as it turned out, the RR refused any meetings with Mr. Snell, so there were no findings to present to the Committee at the April, 2015 meeting. Mr. Snell was so disgusted with the lack of cooperation on the part of the RR that he did not attend the hearing. Unfortunately I was also unable to participate since I had had quickly scheduled major surgery on April 30. It wasn't until June that I found out that the Committee had allowed the RR to spray the entire section of track despite it's unwillingness to meet with John to actually work on finding alternatives to glyphosate.

After I raised the alarm a second time, the public voiced its concerns not only to this Committee but to the Mayor and the City Council members as well as the Secretary of Agriculture, State legislators and the Governor. This public pushback resulted (at the

RR's insistence) in the City footing an outrageous bill for weed-whacking a less-than one mile stretch of track from Granite Street on the East to Main St.on the West. The RR was allowed to spray glyphosate on the rest of its right of way within the city limits.

Now we come to today. Another spring; another hearing.

What if anything, have we learned since last summer? Well, I think we've learned a great deal, but the main thing I would like to present to the Committee today is physical evidence that what turned out to be a test of the efficacy of spraying vs. weed whacking presented in the 2 sections of track was a complete and total success.

While I am admittedly not a professional photographer , nor do I have a professional camera, I decided to document the difference, if any, in the condition of the two sections of track. Based on the photos I took late yesterday afternoon I am very pleased to report that, while both sections appear to be weed-free for the most part, the weed-whacked section actually appears to be even more weed-free than the sprayed sections.

I am passing around a set of photos (I printed out 13 out of about 30) that I took from East of Granite Street to just west of Granite Street (sprayed), then from Granite Street west to Main Street (weed-whacked), then from just East of the VSECU to just West of Bailey Ave (sprayed) and then looking west (and east) \_\_\_\_\_ from the turnoff to the Labor Department building (sprayed).

As you can see from these snapshots, there were places along the sprayed section that have some weeds in the track bed itself as well as alongside the rails. That is not the case in the weed-whacked section. The Committee should also note the general condition of the tracks and the rail beds themselves. I also brought the camera today which contains all of the pictures that I took. If anyone has the appropriate cable, or the right slot to plug the camera's chip into a computer here, then you can copy them all and freely explore (zoom in, etc.) on any that you wish. (All I would ask is that you don't download any of my housemate's photos...)

Based on this evidence, I believe that it is clearly evident to any reasonable person that weed whacking not only met the test of removing the weeds from the railbed but appears to have done so even better than using glyphosate in some places.

I would encourage each member of this committee to go out and inspect and compare the two differently treated sections of right of way for yourself. And I would also encourage you to document what you see.

I sincerely hope that the Committee makes its decision in light of the evidence I have presented here. In conclusion, I strongly urge the committee to order the RR to employ weed whacking--as it is the now proven alternative method of weed control which does not require using herbicides--along the entire stretch of its right of way within the city limits of Montpelier.