

STATE AUDITOR DOUG HOFFER

PRESS RELEASE

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Auditor Commends PSB for Plans to Improve Public Access to Information

MONTPELIER, VT – Vermont State Auditor Doug Hoffer today released the findings of an investigation into the Public Service Board’s (PSB) method of recording its proceedings and making those records available to the public.

At issue is the Board’s long-standing practice of requiring interested parties to buy copies of hearing transcripts from a third-party vendor, which effectively holds the property rights to these public records.¹ While the Board allows members of the public to inspect transcripts on site, this can pose a challenge to Vermonters who live far from Montpelier and who want ongoing access to this information.

The Auditor’s inquiry found that under the current system the PSB has no control over what stakeholders and the public pay for copies of these official government records. The system can pose hurdles to accessing this public information, The Chairman of the PSB acknowledged the problem at the beginning of the Auditor’s inquiry, and he has proposed steps to making these records available to the public free of charge in the spring of 2015.

“PSB cases attract a wide range of parties from a broad spectrum of socioeconomic backgrounds,” Auditor Hoffer said. “The very nature of these cases demands greater accessibility to this public information. I am encouraged that the PSB chair and staff have recognized the problem and are pursuing a solution.”

The PSB is a quasi-judicial body that oversees the financial management and project proposals of public utilities and approves the rates they charge to consumers. PSB proceedings often include an array of stakeholders, such as residential property owners, local businesses, utilities, development firms, and special interest groups.

To read, called “Improving Public Access to Official Records of Proceedings,” [click here.](#)

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¹ Many other documents are available on the Board’s website, such as pre-filed testimony, decisions, etc. It is only transcripts that are handled this way.