

DOCKET NO. 143 - An application from the Electric Division of the Wallingford Department of Public Utilities for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for the construction, operation, and maintenance of a 115-kV substation and its connection to an existing transmission line in the Town of Wallingford, Connecticut.

Connecticut
Siting
Council

July 31, 1991

OPINION

The Town of Wallingford, Department of Public Utilities - Electric Division (WED) applied to the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need (Certificate) to construct, operate, and maintain a new 115-kV substation and its connection to an existing Connecticut Light and Power Company (CL&P) 115-kV transmission line in the Town of Wallingford, Connecticut, on February 15, 1991.

In deciding this application, pursuant to Section 16-50p of the Connecticut General Statutes, the Council must consider the need for the facility and the nature of its probable environmental impact. The Findings of Fact which accompany this Opinion contains the Council's findings regarding this facility, its impacts, and its consistency with relevant State policies.

Since 1989, the need for this substation has been identified in the "Wallingford Electric Utility Forecast of Loads and Resources" with the timing of this project dependent upon load growth. This substation would help meet growing load demands and would enhance reliability of the distribution system within WED's service territory. Providing bulk capacity closer to load would shorten feeder lengths and decrease exposure to various causes of feeder failure. Also, shorter feeders with less load would reduce energy losses.

Electric and magnetic fields are a concern to the Council and citizens living in the vicinity of any transmission line and substation facility. In this proceeding, the calculated measurement of electric and magnetic fields around the proposed substation perimeter would be lower than limits set by all states known to have such standards. Although the State of Connecticut has no standards for electric and/or magnetic fields, there is no evidence to conclude that the proposed substation would be hazardous to persons or property adjacent to or near the substation.

There are no known existing populations of Connecticut species of special concern or federal endangered or threatened species occurring at the proposed WED substation site. The construction of the substation would have no effect on the State's historic, architectural, or archaeological resources listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Furthermore, with refinement, the development of this facility adjacent to an existing 115-kV transmission line would not have any substantial effect on the natural environment of the site, including effects on the quality of the air, water, and ecology of the site. The proposed location of the facility proves to be superior to other alternatives explored and rejected by the applicant. This location is a logical choice given the proximity of load from existing substations in Wallingford, good feeder routes, and available property adjacent to an existing transmission line.

However, the site plan is lacking some sensitivity to the existing topography and vegetation. The Council is aware of local setback requirements, CL&P's restrictions within a transmission line right-of-way, and a clearing objective to remove danger trees by the Certificate holder; but we believe that certain site refinements in the affected construction area could lessen environmental impacts. A detailed Development and Management (D&M) Plan with provisions to adjust the location of the facility to minimize the loss of the vegetative buffer north of the site, develop a visual screen through landscaping and specialized plantings, and a possible relocation of the access road to avoid significant cutting and grading would mitigate these impacts associated with the development of this facility. In addition, all spill containment areas should be verified to provide full protection of the underlying aquifer.

Based on its record in this proceeding, the Council finds that the effects associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of a substation at the proposed site in the Town of Wallingford, including effects on the natural environment; ecological integrity and balance; public health and safety; scenic, historic, and recreational values; forests and parks; air and water purity; and fish and wildlife are not disproportionate either alone or cumulatively with other effects when compared to need, are not in conflict with the policies of the State concerning such effects, and are not sufficient reason to deny the application. Therefore, the Council will issue a Certificate for the construction of the proposed WED substation. The Council will require the

Certificate holder to submit a D&M Plan for approval by the Council prior to commencement of any construction or clearing at the facility site. This D&M Plan shall include detailed plans for placement of all equipment, structures, and buildings within the substation perimeter; verification of the spill containment capacity of the impounding basin structures surrounding the transformers; detailed plans outlining clearing of vegetation north of the site; a site plan reorienting the access road to minimize grading; a site plan showing the location and type of plantings to screen the facility; and erosion and sedimentation control plans.

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