

CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL

IN RE:

THE UNITED ILLUMINATING COMPANY (UI)	:	
APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF	:	
ENVIRONMENTAL COMPATIBILITY AND PUBLIC	:	DOCKET NO. 516
NEED FOR THE FAIRFIELD TO CONGRESS	:	
RAILROAD TRANSMISSION LINE 115-KV	:	
REBUILD PROJECT THAT CONSISTS OF THE	:	
RELOCATION AND REBUILD OF ITS EXISTING	:	
115-KILOVOLT (KV) ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION	:	
LINES FROM THE RAILROAD CATENARY	:	
STRUCTURES TO NEW STEEL MONOPOLE	:	
STRUCTURES AND RELATED MODIFICATIONS	:	
ALONG APPROXIMATELY 7.3 MILES OF THE	:	
CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF	:	
TRANSPORTATION'S METRO-NORTH RAILROAD	:	
CORRIDOR BETWEEN STRUCTURE B648S	:	
LOCATED EAST OF SASCO CREEK IN FAIRFIELD	:	
AND UI'S CONGRESS STREET SUBSTATION IN	:	
BRIDGEPORT, AND THE REBUILD OF TWO	:	
EXISTING 115-KV TRANSMISSION LINES ALONG	:	
0.23 MILES OF EXISTING UI RIGHT-OF-WAY TO	:	
FACILITATE INTERCONNECTION OF THE	:	
REBUILT 115-KV ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION	:	
LINES AT UI'S EXISTING ASH CREEK, RESCO,	:	
PEQUONNOCK AND CONGRESS STREET	:	
SUBSTATIONS TRAVERSING THE	:	
MUNICIPALITIES OF BRIDGEPORT AND	:	
FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT	:	NOVEMBER 2, 2023

PRE-FILED TESTIMONY OF BRENDA KUPCHICK

Q. Please state your name, business address and title.

A. Brenda Kupchick, Sullivan Independence Hall, 725 Old Post Road, Fairfield, Connecticut 06824, First Selectwoman for the Town of Fairfield (the "Town").

Q. Are you testifying on behalf of and for the Town in support of its intervention in this proceeding?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you please tell the Siting Council about yourself?

A. Sure. I am a fourth generation Fairfielder. I was elected the Town's First Selectwoman in November 2019. Prior to that, I served as the State Representative of the 132nd District for five terms, representing the people of Fairfield and Southport. My husband and I have owned and operated a small business for over thirty years.

Q. What are your duties and responsibilities as the First Selectwoman?

A. The Office of First Selectwoman is the chief executive officer for the Town. I handle constituent concerns, coordinate interdepartmental activities, provide research services for the development of policies, programs and facilities that enhance the socio-economic viability of Fairfield, provide leadership and administrative guidance to town employees, and to boards, commissions, and committee members, oversee expenditures, research and administer grants, coordinate public activities, and most importantly, provide information to the public. I also am responsible for developing the town budget of over \$350,000,000 and oversee an organization of 500 employees that serve a community of approximately 62,000 residents.

Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?

A. To strongly voice the Town's objection to and concerns about the application filed by United Illuminating Company ("UI") for a certificate of environmental compatibility and public need to rebuild its existing single-circuit 115-kilovolt overhead transmission line.

Q. Are you familiar with the application filed by UI that is the subject of these proceedings?

A. Yes.

Q. How are you familiar with the application?

A. I have reviewed the application and the documents that are publicly available on the Siting Council's website. I have also spoken with several UI representatives about the application.

Q. What is your understanding of the application?

A. I understand, from my review of the application and the public docket for these proceedings, that UI is proposing to rebuild its existing single-circuit 115-kilovolt overhead transmission line that are currently situated on UI-owned infrastructure on top of railroad catenary structures that span the Metro-North Railroad ("MNR") tracks in the Town of Fairfield ("Town") and the City of Bridgeport ("City"), which UI refers to as the Fairfield to Congress Railroad Transmission Line 115-kv Rebuild Project (the "Project"). I further understand that UI proposes to remove the existing infrastructure that are located on Connecticut Department of Transportation ("CTDOT") owned railroad catenary structures and rebuild the transmission line on new double or single circuit self-supporting steel monopoles. I also understand that the Project includes the rebuild of lines along UI's right-of-way that extends from the CTDOT corridor to UI's Ash Creek Substation and will connect the rebuilt lines to UI's Ask Creek, Resco, Pequonnock and Congress Street substations. From my initial meetings with UI representatives, it was represented to me that the Project would take place within the CTDOT right of way. At that time UI shared conceptional plans that showed the rebuilt lines on CTDOT property, which my administration shared with the community. Prior to the filing of the Application, UI never advised me that they could not install and operate the rebuilt line

entirely on CTDOT property and that their plans had changed to placing monopoles on private property.

Q. Could you briefly describe the areas of the Town that are within the project's area?

A. The proposed path of the project corridor generally runs along the CTDOT Metro North Railroad through downtown Fairfield and the historic village of Southport. Downtown Fairfield is home to the Town's commercial base that houses many small businesses, as well as many residential properties. Downtown Fairfield is also the home to the Old Post Road Historic District. This historic district includes the town green and the eighteenth and nineteenth-century buildings that surround it, including the Old Town Hall (original built in about 1794) and the Old Academy (built in 1804). To the east of the green there are four houses that survived the burning of Fairfield by the British in 1779. These homes are not only some of the Town's earliest homes, but are classic examples of the kind and style dwelling that were being built in the 1750-1775 period and are a rare example of eighteenth-century Colonial streetscape. This streetscape is rare nationally and a unique feature to Fairfield.

The path of the project also crosses through the Southport Historic District. This district consists of over 150 buildings and is significant because of its high percentage of landmark quality buildings representing the early, middle and late eighteenth century and major nineteenth century styles. These buildings span many uses including churches, commercial buildings, institutional buildings and residences. The unusually high number of noteworthy buildings reflects Southport's post-Revolutionary and nineteenth century affluence. Included in the Southport Historic District is the Pequot

Library. This landmark building is of the Richardsonian Romanesque style and features an expansive tiled roof, ribbon windows and has an arcaded entry with a multi-gabled parapet.

Q. What concerns does the Town have with respect to the application?

A. Many. The proposed project will have a detrimental impact to abutting and neighboring properties as well as to the Town as a whole.

In the application, UI proposes to rebuild its existing 115-kV line with approximately 103 new double or single circuit self-supporting galvanized steel monopoles placed either within UI's right-of-way on CTDOT property or on private property via the procurement of new permanent easements over 19.25 acres of primarily private-owned land. This taking alone will have a detrimental impact on the use and enjoyment of these properties, as well as their respective market values. These easements may also render some of the properties non-conforming under applicable zoning regulations, which will have a permanent and detrimental impact on future development possibilities.

The project also calls for the placement of new monopoles in or near environmentally sensitive locations, including in or near wetlands or watercourses and near contaminated soils. The Town has unfortunately recently dealt with and experienced the horrors that come with disturbance of contaminated soils with the incident involving the "Julian" Fill Pile, the Exide Property and Penfield Pavilion, and the detrimental impact of unearthing contamination cannot be underestimated.

In addition, the project calls for the removal of 5.5 acres of vegetation which is essential to natural existing habitats and plays an important role in maintain the visual

beauty of our neighbors and provides vital natural sound barriers from noise, such as passing trains. Such destruction is inconsistent with the sustainability efforts that the Town has undertaken over the years. For thirty-five straight years, the Town has been recognized as a Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation. The Town is tied with the City of Stamford for the longest-running active Tree City USA designation in the State of Connecticut.

The project also will have a negative cultural impact on our town and in particular historic Southport Village and downtown Fairfield. The landscape of the Town's historic districts will be permanently altered by the presence of 95-145' monopoles that are incongruous and inconsistent with the surrounding historic architecture and buildings. The negative visual impact cannot be underestimated. The new monopoles will be visible all year around and some will be placed so close to historic sites – such as the historically recognized Pequot Library – that their presence will jeopardize these properties ongoing historic significance.

Q. Has UI reached out to the Town in an effort to address the Town's concerns?

A. My administration met with UI in good faith and at my request they held a recent Town Hall meeting for the public on October 4, 2021. While UI has undertaken these efforts, I and my administration have found UI to be less than forthcoming in the information that they have provided in each meeting and evasive in their answers to legitimate questions and concerns. For example, at the October 4, 2021, public meeting, UI representatives could not answer many of the public's question, including why the project could not be placed entirely within UI's CTDOT right of way, or why it

could not be north of the tracks where monopoles already exist. The lack of preparedness and evasive answers from the UI has caused the Town and its residents to feel that their legitimate concerns have not been heard and properly considered. The preservation of the historic and communal nature of our community is of utmost importance to me, my administration and the public at large and while the alternatives of placing the project underground or rebuilding it in its existing location may cost more (as per UI), the permanent damage to our town under UI's preferred alternative cannot be measured in dollars and cents.

Q. Are there any alternative proposals that the Town prefers?

A. Yes. It is the Town's position that updating the existing lines, moving the lines to the north side of the railroad tracks and/or placing the new lines underground are preferable alternatives because they will result in less ground disturbances, will not involve the taking of private land away from residents and small business and will not visually impair our beautiful town and our historic properties.

Q. Does this conclude your testimony?

A. Yes.