

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	:	NOVEMBER 2, 2023
FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT	:	

PRE-FILED TESTIMONY OF HAROLD V. SCHMITZ, SENIOR WARDEN

Q1. Please state your name, profession and position with your employer.

A1. My name is Harold V. Schmitz. I am the Senior Warden of the Trinity Episcopal Church, located at 651 Pequot Avenue, Southport, Connecticut (“Trinity” or the “Church”). I reside at 20 Elm Drive, Easton, Connecticut 06612.

Q2. Have you ever previously testified before the Connecticut Siting Council (the “CSC”)?

A2. No.

Q3. Why are you testifying before the CSC in this proceeding?

A3. I am providing testimony on behalf of Trinity to address the Church's initial concerns regarding the subject application (the "Application").

Q4. What is your role with Trinity?

A4. I am the Senior Warden of the church's vestry. The vestry is the legal representative of the parish with regard to all matters pertaining to its corporate property.

Q5. Can you please tell me about Trinity?

A5. Trinity is an Episcopal church with a parish of over 650 parishioners. Trinity provides a wide variety of religious, education, counseling, and social services to its parishioners and the community. Trinity offers two weekly services of the Holy Eucharist, monthly youth and family services, twice weekly meditation programs, semi-monthly Trinity Parish Nursery School chapel, even song, holiday and special services throughout the year. We also provide pastoral care and comfort via funeral and celebration of life services, weddings, baptisms, and confirmations.

Our educational programs include adult forums on religious topics, bible study, exploring alternative spirituality and contemplative meditation practices through our Spiritual Center of Southport. We host weekly youth groups, Sunday school, childcare, training for young choristers and cherub choir. Our primary educational endeavor remains our award-winning Trinity Parish Nursery School.

Through our clergy we provide our parishioners and community with counseling, community outreach and in-reach, and referral to local social services when needed. Our outreach committee supports local and national programs via grants and donations to help them achieve their goals. Locally we support St. Lukes pantry, St. John's Family Center, Laundry Love, the Center for Family Justice, Bridgeport Rescue Mission, Adopt a Social worker among others.

Our world-class music program, in addition to providing choir and organ offerings at the weekly services, brings in world class musicians for concerts throughout the year.

Q6. Can you please tell me about the history of Trinity and its church building?

A6. Trinity was founded in 1725 and its first church was built on Mill Plain in Fairfield, CT. During the Revolutionary War, the church was burned during the British raid on Fairfield. A church building was constructed and dedicated in its current location in 1856. That church building was destroyed in 1862 when a tornado caused the steeple to crash down through the church roof. The current Trinity church building was quickly built on the foundation of its predecessor and dedicated on December 11, 1862.

Q7. Can you please tell me about the historic significance of Trinity's church property?

A7. The current church building was initially constructed in 1856 and rebuilt in 1862, and remains today. The adjoining chapel was constructed 1871. The church and chapel remain some of the most significant historic properties in Southport, CT. Both the church building and chapel designated on the National Register of Historic Places with measured drawings filed in the Library of Congress. Both the church and chapel are located within the nationally recognized Southport Historic District.

Q8. Can you please tell me about Trinity's properties?

A8. Trinity's church building and chapel are located at 651 Pequot Avenue in Southport, CT. In addition to providing religious services, the church and chapel are also used for celebrating life's biggest moments such as for baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals. In the chapel (sanctuary) we host community music concerts, private recitals and word-class concerts. Trinity has two other properties. One located at 288 Center Street in Southport which it uses for parking for all church and pre-school related activities. Another property is at 678 Pequot Street in Southport where it operates the church rectory, and also where it has a playground that is used by the pre-school students.

Q9. Is UI proposing to construct poles on or immediately near Trinity's properties?

A9. Unfortunately, yes. First, on Trinity's property at 678 Pequot Avenue, UI proposes to take an easement approximately 25ft in depth along the northern edge of the property and to place a 105ft high pole (P656S) in the northeast corner of the property. Second, on Trinity's property at 288 Center Street, UI proposes to take an easement varying in width from approximately 22ft to about 36 ft in depth along its northern edge and to construct a 105 ft high pole (P657S) about 55 ft from the property's northwest corner.

Q10. What is Trinity's position with regard to UI's Application?

A10. Trinity is adamantly opposed to the Application because UI's project as proposed will adversely affect Trinity's pre-school, properties, programming, and services.

Q11. How will the Application adversely affect Trinity's pre-school?

A11. The poles and transmission lines will be near or directly in the area where the pre-school's activities take place, including on a property where the pre-school's playscape is located. Parents of young children will of course be concerned about the transmission lines being located at or near where the pre-schools activities take place. There is not doubt that the location of the poles and transmission lines will lead to a significant decline in the enrollment of the pre-school. Furthermore, many parents will not send their children to attend the pre-school while UI's construction work is being done. Parents will presumably be concerned about the safety of their children while the construction work is being performed.

It may get to the point where Trinity is even forced to close its preschool. The diminished enrolment, or possible loss, of the pre-school will have a disastrous impact. Trinity would lose significant annual revenue which in part funds Trinity's operations, services and programming. The pre-school also furthers Trinity's overall mission. Families that enroll their children in the pre-school often become part of the parish.

Q12. How will the Application adversely affect Trinity's properties?

A12. The proposed UI work will cause multiple direct impacts. First, UI is taking property via easements.

Second, UI will be clear cutting significant mature landscaped screening from the area bordering the train tracks that currently buffers the parking lot area, rectory building, playscape and surrounding outdoor area that is used regularly by the preschool. The removal of the mature landscape screening will take away the protection from the visual, noise and pollution effects from the nearby railroad corridor.

Third, UI is proposing to construct multiple poles on the Trinity properties so that the poles and transmission lines will loom over and/or around the Trinity properties, including the historically protected property.

Fourth, UI will be effectively taking away approximately two hundred (200) linear feet of parking area for a significant period. We estimate that Trinity will lose use of approximately thirty (30) parking spaces. These parking spaces are necessary for the church's services, programming, pre-school and lease obligations to the Fairfield Parking Authority. Trinity has leased a portion of the parking area to the Fairfield Parking Authority since 1997. The income that Trinity receives from that lease is critical to its financial stability.

Finally, the viewshed from the historic church and chapel will be forever diminished by permanent loss of vegetation/screening and the discordant addition of gargantuan poles and industrial looking transmission lines.

Q13. How will the Application adversely affect Trinity's programming and services?

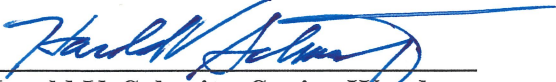
A13. Trinity's Nursery School will either be significantly diminished or forced to close. Church attendance will be drastically reduced as parishioners grow intolerant of parking lot construction and loss of parking spaces. The Application will directly lead to a reduction in religious services at Trinity. Parishioners, as well as others outside of the parish, that would use Trinity for certain religious services such as a wedding, renewal of wedding vows, baptism or funeral will no longer do so because of the terrible aesthetics and potential for negative noise conditions during the service. There is no doubt that most people desiring to schedule these religious services will avoid Trinity. Church income needed to support our programs in the parish and in Bridgeport would suffer as well. Permanent easements will dictate what we as a church will be able to accomplish and not be able to accomplish with our own property. This will also impact our neighbors, Southport Congregational Church and the Pequot Library in serving our neighborhood with local and readily available resources. Their quality of religious life would be drastically curtailed.

The Application will irreparably infringe upon Trinity's right to own, rent and use land for worship and religious exercise. The application will substantially burden the exercise of religion by Trinity.

Q14. Does this conclude your testimony?

Q14. Yes.

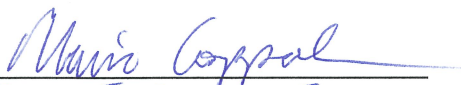
I, Harold V. Schmitz, Senior Warden, duly sworn, hereby verify that this statement was prepared by me or under my direct supervision and is believed to be true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.



Harold V. Schmitz, Senior Warden

November 1, 2023
Date

The above signed, Harold V. Schmitz, personally appeared before me and verified that the above pre-file testimony for the Connecticut Siting Council is true and accurate and that he adopted it by his free act and deed on this 1st day of November, 2023.



Mario F. Coppola, Esq.
Commissioner of Superior Court
Notary Public/
My Commission expires

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:
TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

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