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November 2, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Melanie Bachman
Executive Director/Staff Attorney
Connecticut Siting Council
10 Franklin Square
New Britain, CT 06051

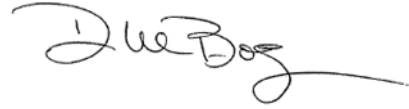
Re: DOCKET NO. 516 – The United Illuminating Company (UI) application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for the Fairfield to Congress Railroad Transmission Line 115-kV Rebuild Project that consists of the relocation and rebuild of its existing 115- kilovolt (kV) electric 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 mile 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.

Dear Ms. Bachman:

Enclosed please find the prefiled testimony of Paul Whitmore on behalf of the Southport Congregational Church in connection with the above-referenced proceeding. An original and fifteen (15) copies of this filing will be delivered to the Council’s office tomorrow.

Please do not hesitate to contact Teresa Chen of this office (860-275-0219) or me should you have any questions regarding this submission.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. W. Bogan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David W. Bogan

Enclosure

Copy to: Service List

CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL

DOCKET NO. 516

APPLICATION OF THE UNITED ILLUMINATING FOR A CERTIFICATE OF
ENVIRONMENTAL COMPATIBILITY AND PUBLIC NEED FOR THE FAIRFIELD TO
CONGRESS RAILROAD TRANSMISSION LINE 115-kV REBUILD PROJECT

TESTIMONY OF
PAUL WHITMORE
ON BEHALF OF
SOUTHPORT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

NOVEMBER 2, 2023

I. INTRODUCTION

Q. Please state your name and professional affiliation.

A. My name is Paul Whitmore. My business address is, 524 Pequot Avenue, P.O. Box 366, Southport, Connecticut 06890. I am the Senior Minister at the Southport Congregational Church (“SCC” or the “Church”), and I live in the Church’s Parsonage located at 612 Pequot Avenue, Southport, Connecticut 06890.

Q. Please describe your educational background.

A. I was awarded a Masters of Divinity degree from Andover Newton Theological School in 1988, and a BS in Marketing from University of South Carolina in 1979.

Q. What is your professional background?

A. I was ordained by the United Church of Christ in 1988, and have served as the Senior Minister of SCC since 1994. I’ve also served the FBI as a Chaplain from 2017 until retiring in 2022.

Q. Have you previously testified before the Connecticut Siting Council or other regulatory agencies?

A. No, this is my first time testifying before the Connecticut Siting Council (the “Council”) or any other regulatory agency.

Q. Can you describe SCC?

A. Yes. SCC has deep roots in the Village of Southport and is recognized by the Library of Congress for its historic significance. It was designed by locally prominent architects, Lambert and Bunnell, and erected in 1874-1875. It currently has 750 active adult members, 180 children, and a weekday preschool with over 100 children. SCC is a warm

and welcoming community of faith, united in ministry and mission for the purpose of enriching life for all.

We understand our purpose through the life of Christ, who set as our highest priority to love: to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. With this spirit of abundant life and joy, we strive to value and serve each person as an individual created in God's image.

Q. What is the purpose of your testimony in this proceeding?

A. I am submitting this testimony to convey the Church's position regarding the United Illuminating Company's ("UI") proposed transmission line, which is the subject of this proceeding.

Q. What is the Church's position on the Application?

A. SCC is opposed to the Application. As currently proposed, the UI transmission line will have serious adverse effects on the Church's operations, aesthetics, finances, ability to attract new members, ability to attract new preschool families, and ability to fulfill our religious mission. As such, we believe the proposed project threatens our future as an ongoing religious institution. Testimony regarding the historic significance of the Church, the potential for placing the lines underground, effect on wetlands, water resiliency, and the accuracy of UI's cost estimates are addressed by others appearing on behalf of the SCC and the Grouped Intervenors.

Q. Can you explain?

A. Yes. It's my understanding that UI is proposing a 35-foot permanent easement across the Church's property at 524 Pequot Avenue, over which the new high voltage electrical cables will be installed, thereby, bringing these cables unreasonably close to the church and all of its facilities. SCC has activities with hundreds of people on a regular basis in several buildings that will be adversely affected by the proposal: 1) the primary Church

Building, including the sanctuary and chapel; 2) the education wing, over which the proposed high voltage electrical lines will loom, in which the church operates a daily weekday preschool; and 3) a separate facilities and events building, situated between the Church and the railroad corridor, which we use to conduct various Church youth group meetings, adult gatherings and missions activities. There will also be a significant detrimental effect on the parking area required to operate the daily preschool and Church operations.

Q. What is your concern regarding the effect that the transmission line will have on the Church Building and appurtenances?

A. As I mentioned, the Church itself is recognized by the Library of Congress. It is also within the area designated as the Southport Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The proposed easement and tower(s) will have an irreparable adverse effect on the historic integrity of the property. A more detailed discussion of the adverse impact is presented in Wes Haynes' testimony.

Perhaps most importantly, the proposed construction will adversely affect the Church's operations. For example, the facilities barn at the rear of the property appears to be very close to the proposed easement boundaries. This building is used for the Church's youth group meetings and various other activities that are central to the Church's religious mission, including community service events, feeding programs, and providing spiritual leadership to youth and adults. The current proposal threatens SCC's ability to continue these ministry activities. Further, UI is proposing to remove and 'clear-cut' a broad swath of large growth trees that provide a visual and acoustic barrier between the railroad corridor and the Church property. In the last several decades alone, SCC has spent literally millions of dollars protecting and upgrading the aesthetic integrity of the Church and its surrounding property. With these visual mitigation barriers removed and the installation of high voltage transmission lines hovering above our property possibly exceeding the height even of our church steeple, our property aesthetic will have an industrial aesthetic. I believe that one of the reasons people come to our church is for the

pastoral sense of serenity, beauty and peace it provides. Clear cut trees exposing a harsh industrial view of new towers with high voltage electrical lines hovering above the church, its parking, its buildings and every person who sees and walks under them - will clearly harm our ability to maintain as well as recruit new members to our church. As a result, this will create a permanent negative economic impact, which, in turn, will also harm our religious and outreach mission. Most notably, it will harm our ability to recruit new 2 to 5 year-old students to our preschool, because their parents will be able to choose other settings that are not dominated by high voltage electrical lines and their corresponding towering monopoles. As such, it will have an immediate and long-term negative impact on our church finances and is a threat to our preschool as an ongoing church concern. More importantly, the broad impact of this project I believe represents an existential threat to the ongoing viability of SCC as a religious institution.

Q. Can you further explain your concern inasmuch as it relates to the preschool?

A. SCC operates a preschool for 100 children between the ages of 2 and 5 in its education wing facility, which faces the railroad corridor. The preschool generates material annual net income accounting for approximately 8% of the church's total annual budget, upon which SCC depends for its annual operating budget. The preschool also furthers the church's mission of promoting faith, compassion, a sense of community for members and non-members, and avenue for spiritual growth through educational leadership and community outreach. Families whose children enroll in the preschool frequently are, or ultimately become, members of the congregation.

It is our understanding that this new transmission corridor will carry high voltage transmission lines that will be positioned within 75' to 100' of our preschool and its playground facilities. Setting aside the scientific debate relating to the health effects of radiation emitted by high voltage transmission line electromagnetic fields, the reality is that the perception of health risks by parents of young children will irreparably harm our future ability to recruit and enroll students at SCC's preschool. The result will be declining enrollment and possibly the closure of this program. This would have a

materially substantially negative, irreparable, and permanent long-term impact on SCC's finances, as well as on the church's ability to fully continue its current mission of outreach and care for those in need, and that of offering religious education, and offering a sense of sanctuary, beauty, peace and community to our greater community. To replace the lost current net earnings of our preschool we believe would require an increased endowment of over \$3 million.

Q. What are your concerns as they relate to the parking area?

A. SCC uses the parking area abutting the railroad corridor to access the church seven days a week in support of a number of efforts critical to the Church's economic, spiritual, and social well-being. Among these are

- The weekday preschool
- Thrift shop activities
- Weekday external community organization meetings
- Extensive weekday member private counseling sessions with clergy
- Weekday youth group meetings
- Member Bible study classes
- Church board and committee meetings
- Weekend religious services, as well as weddings, funerals, and fundraising activities that are held throughout the year randomly throughout the seven-day week.

During Sunday services, holiday services, and special fundraising, funeral, and wedding events, SCC regularly has a severe shortage of parking space available for its members. The permanent loss of parking capacity would restrict our ability to conduct our ongoing religious and ministerial activities and completely hamper our ability to grow our membership, which is integral to our devotional mission.

During the multi-year construction-phase of the project, UI is proposing to construct a 95' fenced construction area which represents the majority of SCC's parking area abutting the railroad corridor which it currently relies on to conduct its various activities. This proposal

would force SCC to curtail most if not all of its activities during construction periods. It would force us to shut down our weekday preschool activity as parents use the parking area for drop off and pick up of their children. Our thrift shop activity would be restricted if not possibly closed. This would pose an unacceptable and possibly existential burden upon the Church and its congregants.

Q. Can you describe the Church's thrift shop?

A. Yes, SCC operates a thrift shop that generates material annual net income equal to that of our preschool, and upon which SCC depends for its annual operating budget. The thrift shop operates out of the rear basement of the main church with its entrance/exit facing the railroad corridor. The parking for patrons of the thrift shop exists in the proposed 35' easement zone proposed by the UI project.

Q. Describe the impact of the proposed project on the thrift shop.

A. The proposed project would negatively affect traffic into and out of the thrift shop, which serves to introduce non-members to SCC's religious programs and which offers another important activity in which members can participate and work together in furtherance of the Church's mission. Reduced traffic into and out of the thrift shop would also negatively impact SCC's revenues and church finances.

Q. Will the proposed project affect other areas of the Church property?

A. Yes. UI has stated in its proposal its intention to clear-cut all mature tree growth along the SCC property boundary abutting the railroad corridor. SCC has invested significant time, material, and financial resources across many decades to mitigate, through landscaping and tree cultivation, the visual and noise pollution effects of the industrial railroad and utilities

transmission line infrastructure development that has occurred within the CT-DOT owned railroad corridor. This decades-old mitigation work has enabled SCC to successfully build and expand its religious mission and church membership, which, in turn has enabled it to invest in and develop its church facilities building infrastructure.

The proposed removal of SCC's landscaping and tree mitigation barriers from our property line, would directly expose SCC's religious facilities to the industrial infrastructure of both the MTA railroad and the UI high voltage transmission line. This would potentially irreparably and permanently harm SCC's ability to continue many of its religious missions and activities, SCC's ability to maintain and grow its church membership, and threaten SCC's future viability as a vibrant, let alone growing, church organization.

Finally, the current proposal will adversely affect SCC's real property value. SCC has invested millions of dollars to improve its building facilities. The addition of project transmission lines and removal of trees and the mitigation barriers will undermine the historic integrity, character and pastoral and welcoming setting that SCC has worked hard to create over its almost 200-year history.

The negative impact on SCC's property value would also extend to the Church's neighboring parsonage property located at 612 Pequot Avenue, Southport, CT, 06890.

UI's offer to install controlled growth, low-height vegetation along SCC's property boundary will not change or improve the devastating impact caused by the removal of SCC's existing mitigation barrier along the railroad corridor.

Q. Does this conclude your testimony?

A. Yes, it does.


Paul Whitmore

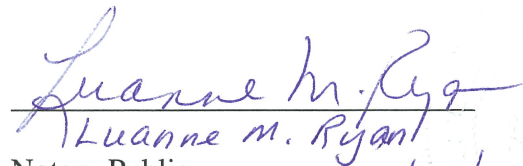
STATE OF CONNECTICUT:

: ss: Fairfield

November 2, 2023

COUNTY OF FAIRFIELD :

Personally appeared before me Paul Whitmore, known to me to be the person described above, who made oath to the truth of the matters contained in the foregoing and acknowledged the same to be his free act and deed, before me.


Luanne M. Ryan

Notary Public

My Commission Expires: 8/31/2027