Petition No. 1428
Eversource – Telecommunications Facility
272 East Main Street, Branford

Draft Staff Report
October 16, 2020

On August 21, 2020, the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) received a petition (Petition) from The Connecticut Light and Power Company d/b/a Eversource Energy (Eversource) for a declaratory ruling pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §4-176 and §16-50k, for the proposed installation of an omni-directional antenna on an existing wood pole located at its Branford 11J Substation property at 272 East Main Street in Branford, Connecticut.

On August 20, 2020, Eversource provided notice of the proposed project to the Town of Branford (Town), state and local officials and agencies, and abutting property owners.

On August 24, 2020, the Council sent correspondence to the Town stating that the Council has received the Petition and invited the Town to contact the Council with any questions or comments by September 20, 2020. No comments from the Town were received.

On September 22, 2020, the Council submitted interrogatories to Eversource. On October 7, 2020, the Council granted an extension for Eversource to reply to the Council's interrogatories by October 8, 2020. Eversource provided responses to the Council's interrogatories on October 7, 2020.

Eversource is currently in the process of reconfiguring its communications system throughout the state that will allow an upgrade from the current analog voice radio communications system, which is obsolete, to a digital voice communications system. The new system would allow voice communications under all operating conditions including emergency and storm restoration activities as well as the remote control of distribution safety equipment.

The existing communications facility consists of a 50-foot wood pole within the fenced substation. The facility supports multiple existing omni-directional antennas at various levels and associated equipment within a shelter.

Eversource proposes the installation of a new omni-directional antenna on the existing wood pole. The antenna would be mounted approximately one foot below the top of the pole and extend to a height of approximately 72 feet above ground level (agl). Eversource would extend the southern portion of the existing fenced area by approximately 550 square feet to accommodate the installation of a 1,000 gallon propane tank and a 24 kilowatt emergency backup generator. The proposed fence would match the existing fence – six-foot chain link topped with three strands of barbed wire.

The existing equipment shelter would be connected to the backup generator via an underground trench through the existing substation.

All proposed work would be within existing disturbed areas.

The nearest wetland is located off the northwest corner of the substation fence along the Branford River. The nearest work area would be approximately 78 feet south of the wetland boundary. Erosion and sedimentation controls would be installed in accordance with the *2002 Connecticut Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control* (E&S controls) for the protection of the wetland during construction.

The site is within a designated Coastal Boundary; however, no coastal resources are located within the site. The nearest coastal resources are associated with the Branford River and are located south of the substation.

The facility is located within the Federal Emergency Management Agency-designated 100-year flood zone. The proposed generator would be installed on a concrete pad foundation that is 11 feet above mean sea level (amsl), or 2 feet above the base flood elevation in accordance with local, state and federal floodplain regulations. The existing equipment shelter is installed at 10 feet amsl and is, therefore, currently above the base flood elevation.

The nearest Important Bird Area is at the Quinnipiac River Tidal Marsh in New Haven, which is approximately 5.5 miles to the west of the facility. Additionally, the facility would comply with United States Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines for minimizing potential impacts to bird species. The nearest Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)-designated natural diversity database area is approximately 0.42 miles to the northwest. The northern long-eared bat (NLEB) is a State of Connecticut-listed endangered and federally-listed threatened species. The NLEB‘s range encompasses the entire state. There are no known occupied maternity roost trees within 150 feet of the site and there is no known NLEB hibernaculum within 0.25 mile of the site. Additionally, installation of the proposed facility would not require the removal of any trees. The state-listed endangered and federally-listed threatened roseate tern is a bird species also known to occur in the general vicinity of the site; however, the roseate tern is exclusively marine and nests in various habitats on offshore islands or mainland beaches. The proposed site does not contain appropriate habitat for the roseate tern. Therefore, the proposed facility would have no impact on NLEB, roseate tern or the habitat of either.

The proposed facility is not expected to have a significant visual impact to the surrounding area. The proposed omni-directional antenna would extend 11 feet above the top of the highest existing omni-directional antenna. The existing wood pole is screened from East Main Street by existing vegetation to the east and west and by existing substation equipment to the south. Additionally, there are existing wooden utility poles and existing steel substation equipment surrounding the proposed facility.

There are no nearby state or locally-designated scenic roads or other scenic areas. Branford Supply Pond Park and the Branford Wildlife Management Area are approximately 0.39 mile northwest and 0.12 mile northeast, respectively, of the proposed site. No views of the antenna are expected from either location.

A Professional Engineer duly licensed in the State of Connecticut has certified that the existing structure is structurally adequate to support the proposed loading. The maximum cumulative worst-case power density would be 5.2 percent of the applicable limit.

There are no day care facilities within one mile of the proposed facility. The nearest school is Branford High School, which is approximately 0.43 mile southwest of the site. There are five historic properties located within 0.5 mile of the proposed site. None of the five properties would be impacted by the proposed facility.

The nearest residential building is the Omega Estates Apartments located approximately 145 feet west of the proposed facility.

The proposed structure does not require registration with the Federal Aviation Administration.

The only noise associated with the proposed facility would be from the emergency generator, which would only run during emergency situations. According to Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies §22a-69-1.8, noise created as a result of, or relating to, an emergency, such as an emergency backup generator, is exempt from the State Noise Control Regulations. Testing of the proposed generator would be scheduled to occur for a 30-minute period, once per week, during daytime hours on a weekday.

If approved, construction would begin as soon as possible and take approximately six weeks. Construction is expected to be completed in 2020.

If approved, staff recommends the following condition:

1. Approval of any project changes be delegated to Council staff.

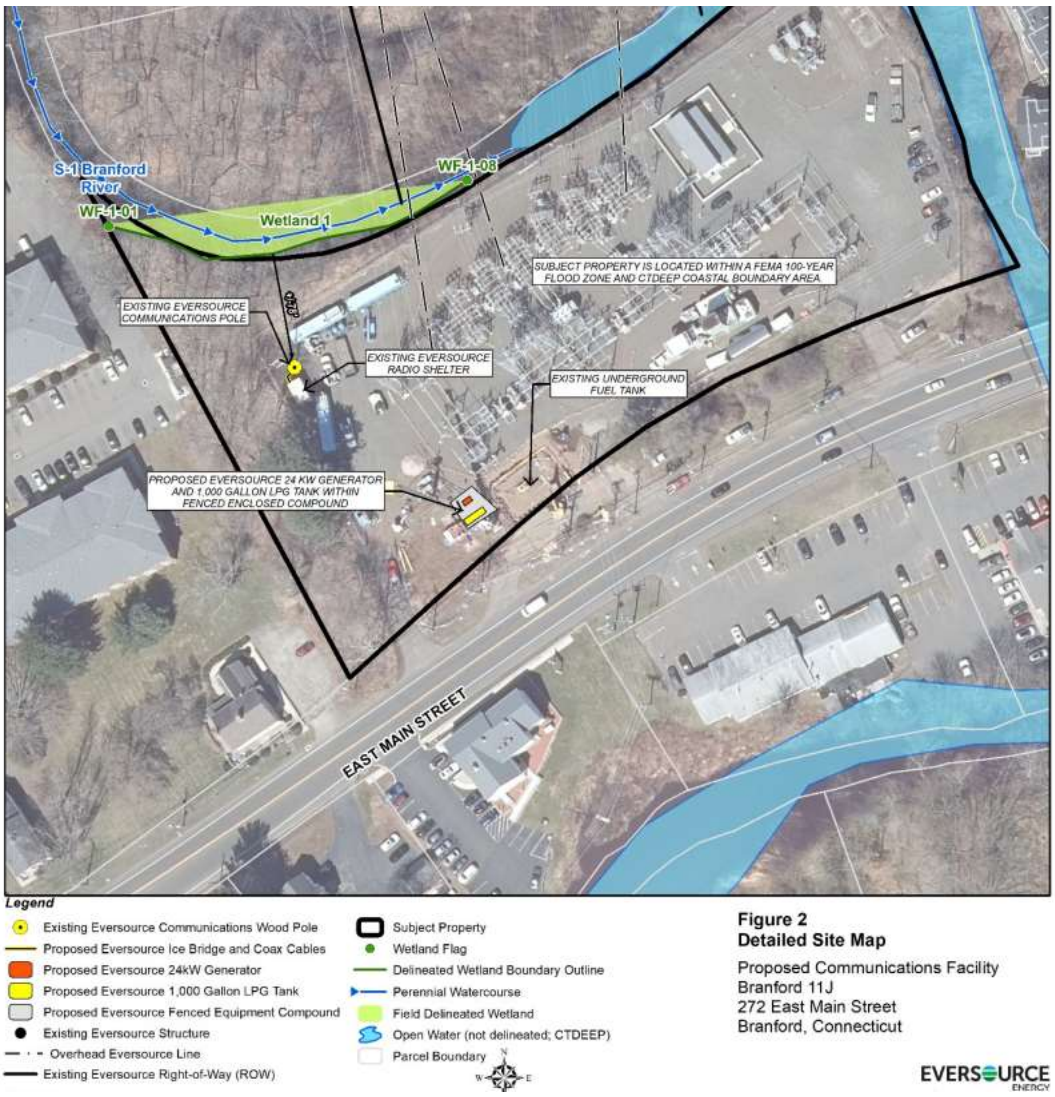

Figure 1. Site location.

Figure 2. Existing facility

Figure 3. Proposed facility