

DOCKET NO. 149 - An application of the United Illuminating Company (UI) for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need to erect a new 115,000/13,800 volt substation located at 260 Railroad Avenue, West Haven, Connecticut, and to modify two existing 115,000 volt overhead transmission lines to connect this substation to UI's transmission system.

: Connecticut
: Siting
: Council

August 4, 1992

OPINION

ORIGINAL

On February 10, 1992, the United Illuminating Company (UI) applied to the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for construction, operation, and maintenance of a new 115,000/13,800 volt substation at 260 Railroad Avenue, West Haven, Connecticut, and to modify two existing 115,000 volt overhead transmission lines to connect the proposed substation to the UI transmission system.

In rendering a decision on this application the Council must consider the public need for the facility while balancing any disproportionate effects the facility might have on the environment.

Our record in this proceeding affirms the need for the proposed facility. Nothing UI can do, including reinforcing existing substations and expanding conservation and load management programs in the Allings Crossing Road Area, can delay the need for this facility beyond 1995. In order to ensure system reliability for UI's customers, we recognize the public need for this facility.

The facility site was chosen by UI after consideration of other possible sites. The site is located in an existing industrial area and is bordered to the east and west by existing industrial/manufacturing uses and to the south by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) railroad right-of-way (ROW). The site has the added benefit of having a light industrial/manufacturing zoning designation that allows substations as of right in this zone.

No State or federally listed or proposed to be listed, threatened, endangered, or species of special concern, plant or animal would be affected by construction of the facility. Likewise, no historic, architectural, or archeological resources would be affected by the construction of the facility.

Furthermore, with some refinement, the development at this site would not have any substantial effect on the natural environment of the site, including effects on air, water, and ecological quality.

To properly develop the proposed site for the intended use, we will require UI to develop, as part of the facility's Development and Management (D&M) Plan, a plan to protect the ponded area to the south of the site that provides screening, stormwater detention, and ecological functions. To preserve compatible tree species for their screening abilities, we will require UI to reconsider their plans to remove numerous trees during the construction of the facility by preparing a selective tree cutting plan as part of the D&M Plan. The D&M Plan shall also contain an optional provision for a solid architecturally treated wall to attenuate excessive noise generated by the substation, further screen the substation, and provide an appearance consistent with the existing land uses.

The replacement or removal of the existing billboard on the site is a legal matter between UI, the lease holder for the billboard, and the City of West Haven that should be decided with fair compensation consistent with the regulations of the City of West Haven and the legal rights of the involved parties.

Although the groundwater of the site has been contaminated, hydrologic connections to Phipps Lake emphasizes the importance to protect the quality of this groundwater against further contamination. To do this, we will require UI to employ specific plans for groundwater monitoring and restoration, erosion and sedimentation controls, and cement containment basins for the transformers containing oil as a contingency for a transformer oil spill.

Electric and magnetic fields are a concern to us and citizens living in the vicinity of any transmission line and substation. The record in this proceeding indicates that at the edge of the DOT railroad ROW near the closest residence, the electric fields will not change and magnetic fields will be reduced from existing levels. Although the State of Connecticut has not established standards for exposure to electric and/or magnetic fields, there is no evidence to conclude that the proposed substation and transmission line tie-in would be hazardous to persons or property adjacent to or near the substation. However, in order to limit the maximum level of exposure for future loads, we will establish maximum exposure levels for electric and magnetic fields consistent with the intended operation of this line and with levels previously established by the Council in similar dockets. This shall not be construed to be the establishment of a standard for any other facility existing or proposed. Although the Council has not adopted any standard, we will order that UI will bring this facility into compliance with any State or federal standard, should such a standard be developed.

Based on its record in this proceeding, the Council finds that the effects associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of a substation and transmission line interconnection at the proposed site in the City of West Haven, Connecticut, including effects on the natural environment; ecological integrity and balance; forests and parks; scenic, historic, and recreational values; 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, operation, and maintenance of the proposed UI substation and transmission line interconnection. 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. The D&M Plan shall include detailed plans for placement of all equipment, structures, and buildings within the substation perimeter; groundwater monitoring, restoration, and protection plan; a protection plan for the ponded area; a selective tree cutting plan; and an erosion and sedimentation control plan.

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