

PETITION NO. 1104 – The United Illuminating Company	}	Connecticut
petition for a declaratory ruling that no Certificate of Environmental	}	Siting
Compatibility and Public Need is required for the proposed	}	Council
construction, maintenance and operation of a 2.2 MW AC solar	}	
photovoltaic facility and a 2.8 MW AC Fuel Cell facility on	}	
approximately 22 acres of the former Seaside Landfill located at 350	}	
Waldemere Avenue, Bridgeport, Connecticut.		November 13, 2014

Opinion, In Part Dissenting

This Petition proposes two separable projects under one application. Each will be discussed in turn.

1. 2.8 MW Fuel Cell A fuel cell is a device which converts hydrogen (from natural gas) into electricity in an electro-chemical reaction. Typically, this process has about a 40% efficiency which can be increased to about 60% if waste heat from the reaction can be utilized. Ideally, then, siting a fuel cell should consider opportunities for optimal use of both electricity **and** waste heat to achieve maximum benefits from this technology. The installation proposed is located a few hundred feet westerly of a medium size industrial facility; but there is no plan to incorporate use of the waste heat from the fuel cell. Given the significant municipal, commercial and industrial facilities in Bridgeport alone, it is very unfortunate that a more thoughtful and beneficial location was not selected where waste heat could be utilized. There is absolutely no compelling technical reason that the fuel cell and the solar installation must be tied together. They can operate quite properly in separate locations if desired. A more advantageous location might also eliminate some of the capital expense for electrical connection to the distribution system.

While the proposed fuel cell is a much less-than-optimal proposal, the question is, does it create a significant adverse environmental effect? The answer to me is clearly “No”. It’s minimally visible, makes negligible noise, is elevated above all conceivable floods, emits no pollution (except carbon dioxide), and is not a material hazard to adjoining properties. Accordingly, I will reluctantly support this part of the petition.

2. 2.2 MW Solar Photovoltaic Facility The applicant further proposes to construct an 11 acre solar facility on 22 acres of the 46 acre former Seaside Landfill owned by the City of Bridgeport. The facility will consist of 8,550 panels converting sun light into electricity, and related electrical equipment all within a fenced area along the upper portion of the filled area. The facility will be connected to the electrical distribution system at the site of the fuel cell. In contrast with the fuel cell which normally will run around the clock, the solar facility will only produce electricity when light hits it, with its output varying according to the angle of the sun. The big issues affecting this proposed facility are visibility, potential harm and adverse effects on the landfill, and conflicts with the long established Seaside Park.

Visibility from inhabited residential areas is limited to the locations across Cedar Creek north and west of the facility (Burr Creek, Captain’s Cove and to the west). It will also be very evident from Seaside Park and Barnum Boulevard, especially below the proposed facility. And, although not emphasized, it will be starkly visible from the adjoining waters of Long Island Sound. Given the public record of the state in protecting and preserving the coastline, it is very surprising that such a proposal is before the Council. In my opinion, this is a giant step backward and directly conflicts with public and private efforts to make the Sound more accessible and to improve coastal appearance. This Council has agonized over numerous facilities that might have small or modest visibility along the coast or from the Sound. They are all negligible compared to this solar proposal.

The likelihood of adverse effects on the landfill have been duly considered and seem to be manageable. Given past use of the land here, it is probable that some settlement of the surface will occur. This has

been acknowledged and correction anticipated. Will any significant problems occur? It seems unlikely.

Seaside Park lies to the east and south of the facility. While the original Olmsted-designed section of the Park may not be significantly impacted, that portion along the shore south of the facility certainly will. As discussed under “visibility”, this seems to run completely against public policy of making the coast more attractive and accessible

As with the fuel cell, better locations for a solar facility are very evident. As an example (and given the strong support by Mayor Finch), a major solar facility might well have been proposed for the roof of City Hall, or as a roof over its parking lot (as done elsewhere in the state). That would be a ringing endorsement of the technology!

Because of the very high visibility of the proposed solar project, and because this portion of the project materially impacts Seaside Park, I deem it to have a very significant adverse environmental effect and will accordingly vote to deny approval of this proposed project.

Philip T. Ashton
Council Member