



Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities
Public Hearing Testimony Re: Docket 21-29
Monday, April 26, 2021
10:00 a.m. via Zoom

My name is Sally Kerans and I am the State Representative of the 13th Essex District in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. I wish to register my deep reservations about MMWEC's proposal to construct a gas/oil plant at the Waters (River) substation in Peabody.

This new facility would be constructed on PLMP property located on the Peabody-Danvers border and within *several* residential streets in both communities. It is an area that encompasses Rt. 128, a propane company, the Kinder-Morgan pipeline and other environmental burdens. While we cannot fault PLMP or MMWEC for the history of the area, neither can we pretend that these burdens don't exist, any more than we can ignore the hundreds of houses within half a mile of this plant.

This same area was traumatized by a chemical plant explosion in 2008 that knocked people out of their beds in the middle of the night and was heard and felt several miles in every direction from Salem to North Andover. The blast destroyed several houses and displaced hundreds of people for well over a year and longer, in some cases. Miraculously, no one was killed.

It has not been forgotten.

The MMWEC plan before you is for a gas turbine that can rev up to full capacity in ten minutes; a new 200,000 oil storage tank; a smoke stack; and ammonia storage, among several components. All of these bring to mind legitimate concerns about the impact on our environment and our health.

Yet, in the five-plus years this project has been in the works, has there been little if any opportunity for residents to even hear about this plant, much less ask questions, such as:

Why is this particular plant on this particular site necessary?

Were renewables considered?

Why have certain MMWEC communities who initially invested backed away from the project?

How will rates be impacted for MMWEC communities?

And, will all municipal plant communities, whether MMWEC members or not, be penalized by a muni plant that flouts the new Climate Law?

This project is in direct conflict with several provisions in the recently signed new Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy law. We voted and the governor signed this legislation on March 26 to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. Among the (several) provisions of the law designed to help our state to reach that goal is a requirement that municipal light plants increase their investment in renewables. The proposed Peabody plant has no discernible renewable component.

The new climate law also defines environmental justice communities, and not a minute too soon. How much should one area of any one city or town have to put up with? Highways, power lines above, gas lines

below, chain link fence enclosures with signs that say “DEP File Number xxxx....”, transformers, a propane company, utility truck traffic. And now, a \$170 million gas-oil peak capacity power plant. Just last Thursday, Governor Baker signed “Leading By Example: Decarbonizing and Minimizing Environmental Impacts of State Government,” an executive order that prioritizes the implementation of technologies that use electricity as a source of energy in state institutions over technologies that use fossil fuels.”

That same approach and mindset should guide decisions about meeting energy needs in our communities, as well. Sound environmental and energy policy should be at the core of each proposed project and the DPU should safeguard against plants that are fossil fuel-dependent and located in already-burdened areas, such as the Peabody-Danversport area.

I urge the DPU Commissioners to reject or take no action on this application until these questions are answered. Otherwise, there’s every chance that this plant -- paid for by ratepayers -- will undermine the climate law this administration worked to bring about, make a mockery of environmental justice, end up a stranded asset, and, worse, perhaps, cause harm to people’s health.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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