

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
ENERGY FACILITY SITING BOARD**

IN RE: THE NARRAGANSETT ELECTRIC COMPANY :
D/B/A NATIONAL GRID'S NOTICE OF INTENT :
APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL G-185S : **DOCKET NO. SB-2014-1**
115KV TRANSMISSION LINE :
RECONDUCTORING PROJECT :

DECISION AND ORDER

On February 10, 2014, the Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a National Grid (National Grid or Company) filed a Notice of Intent Application with the Energy Facility Siting Board (EFSB or Board) pursuant to Rule 1.6(f) of the Board's Rules of Practice and Procedure (Rules).¹ The application² proposes to reductor³ approximately 5.3 miles of the existing G-185S line located in Warwick, East Greenwich, and North Kingstown. The project includes the replacement of fourteen single-circuit wood structures and five double-circuit steel pole davit arm structures in approximately the same alignment to support the new conductor. As required by the Rules and after public notice published in the local newspaper in each community, the Board held a public hearing in East Greenwich.

¹ Rule 1.6(f) provides for an abbreviated review of an application for the construction of power lines of more than 1,000 feet, but less than 6,000 feet, or the modification or relocation of existing power lines. After the application is filed and a public hearing held in one or more of the cities or towns affected by the project, the Board must make a determination within sixty (60) days of the filing as to whether the project "may result in a significant impact on the environment or the public health, safety and welfare." If the Board finds no significant impact, the project does not constitute a major alteration and the applicant will be licensed to proceed without further review.

² The application provides a detailed description of the work to be performed as well as an extensive analysis of the impacts upon the natural and social environments and electromagnetic field levels. At the public hearing, the application and the various parts of the application at issue here were marked as full exhibits, National Grid Exhibit 1A, 1B and 1C.

³ Reconductoring is the replacement of conductors on an existing transmission line and may involve the replacement or reinforcement of existing towers and/or poles.

At the public hearing, the Company presented two witnesses: Shaun Vacher, National Grid's Project Manager, and Adam Rosenblatt, a project manager and senior environmental scientist with Vanesse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB), to describe the project and its effects, as set forth in the Application and the Environmental Report, and to respond to inquiries by the Board. Mr. Vacher described the need for and the location of the project and explained the construction process and schedule. He identified the G185S line as a 15.5 mile transmission line that extends from the Kent County Substation to the West Kingston Substation. He explained that the 5.3 mile portion of the line being replaced was a section between the Kent County Substation and the Old Baptist Road Tap Point. He also stated that the section being replaced was entirely within an existing 300 foot wide transmission corridor running through the City of Warwick and Towns of East Greenwich and North Kingstown. In addition to upgrading the line with a new conductor capable of carrying more power, Mr. Vacher noted, the Company would replace nineteen of the existing sixty-two structures, only three of which would be more than three feet taller than the structures they were replacing. He described, by community and in detail, each area being affected. He also provided diagrams of the area as well as cross sections of the arrangement of the lines.⁴

The project was necessary, Mr. Vacher explained, to avoid thermal overloads under contingency conditions that could result in outages, to comply with industry standards, and to maintain safe, firm, and reliable electric supply to National Grid's customers. He described the various alternatives considered, which included an underground alternative and a parallel transmission line, and explained why the proposed project was the preferred solution in terms of cost effectiveness, minimization of environmental impacts, reduction in permitting and

⁴ Hr'g Tr. 8-13, February 26, 2014.

implementation schedules, and compliance with ISO-NE standards. Mr. Vacher discussed the project timeline noting that National Grid expected completion of the project by the summer of 2015. Mr. Vacher stated that increases in traffic and noise as a result of the project, if any, were expected to be negligible. Additionally, he noted there would be no visual impact, no adverse impact to social and economic conditions, and no cultural resources that would be disturbed. Lastly, he discussed the Company's community outreach that commenced in January 2014, noting that outreach would continue through the life of the project.⁵

When questioned about the height of the new structures, Mr. Vacher explained that some of the structures being replaced had to be higher than the original structure to satisfy ISO-NE internal standards that establish clearances. He said he had determined there would be no visual impact from the increased height of the towers. The increases are modest overall; the single one that will be much higher will be in a non-residential area. He also stated that there would be no replacement of structures in the area of the Cindy Ann neighborhood. Moreover, prior to any construction in that area, to mitigate any concerns that they might have, National Grid would notify the neighbors. Finally, Mr. Vacher noted that there would be no change in the magnetic and electric fields as a result of the project.⁶

Mr. Rosenblatt described the natural and social environment of the project area, mitigation measures, and anticipated impacts. He noted that in addition to performing wetlands delineation and obtaining a wetlands permit for the project, VHS -as the environmental monitor- would ensure permit and regulatory compliance throughout construction. He described National Grid's two programs used to maintain the right of way, the flora maintenance program, whereby the Company cuts tall shrubs and saplings, mows, and applies herbicides and the sideline

⁵ *Id.* at 13-18.

⁶ *Id.* at 21-24, 36.

program, whereby the Company identifies and removes diseased or leaning trees that have the potential of coming into contact with the lines or towers.⁷

Mr. Rosenblatt provided a detailed explanation of the process for studying the environment and potential impacts of the project. In explaining the mitigation measures, he asserted that since there were no permanent impacts associated with the project, the focus was on short term impacts that would occur during the construction period. He noted that because the project involves an existing transmission facility, having a cleared right of way and existing road network, activity will take place within that area. VHS will implement a soil erosion sediment control plan which will include using swamp mats, straw walls, compost mulch tubes, and straw bales to minimize disturbance to the wetland. VHS also will train National Grid employees as to the specific measures imposed so those employees will be aware of the sensitive areas within the construction zone that need to be protected.⁸

When asked about the impacts on the natural environment, Mr. Rosenblatt reiterated that there would be no permanent impacts from the project and that the temporary impacts would be mitigated through the implementation of the soil erosion sediment control plan and monitoring. He explained that because there are only three structures that are slightly greater than five feet higher than the existing structure, no significant social impact was expected. Finally, he noted, because a survey of the right of way area revealed no historic or cultural resources, there was no cultural impact.⁹

⁷ *Id.* 26-29.

⁸ *Id.* at 29-33.

⁹ *Id.* at 33-37.

After the Company's presentation ended, the Chairperson solicited public comment but none was offered.

Immediately following, Board Member Coit moved that the Board find the project would result in no significant impact to the environment or public health, safety, and welfare and that a license be granted. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously. The Board found that the project is necessary to avoid thermal overloads under contingency conditions that could result in outages, to comply with industry standards and to maintain safe, firm, and reliable electric supply to National Grid's customers. It also found that the project will not result in a significant impact to the environment or public health, safety, and welfare. The social and environmental impacts resulting from the construction will be negligible, and the Board is assured that National Grid will engage in appropriate mitigation measures to minimize any disturbances to vegetation and soil and to the social environment.

ACCORDINGLY, it is:

() ORDERED:

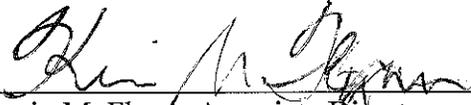
The Energy Facility Siting Board hereby grants to the Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a National Grid a license under R.I. Gen. Laws §42-98-11 to authorize it to reconductor the G185S 115 kV Transmission Line, as previously described, subject to the Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a National Grid's receipt of all other permits required for the Project.

DATED AND EFFECTIVE at East Greenwich, Rhode Island on February 26, 2014 pursuant to an open meeting decision. Written Order issued April 11, 2014.

ENERGY FACILITY SITING BOARD



Margaret E. Curran, Esq., Chairperson
Energy Facility Siting Board



Kevin M. Flynn, Associate Director
Division of Planning



Janet Coit, Director
RI Department of Environmental Management

