

Erin Oikowsk:  
Harrisville, RI

Thank you to the Board for coming to our town and hearing our concerns. If we had more time, I would love to show you around town and explore some of our attractions with you. I would tell you the story of Burrillville and how we began: from the American Indian Inhabitants of this land, to early European settlers, to playing an essential part in the Industrial Revolution. We are one of several towns in Rhode Island which help make up the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Park.

The industrial revolution was not the last chapter in the story of Burrillville. We have transitioned in the time since then into a thriving, residential town. We value our families, friends and our sense of place and strong identity as descendants from immigrants to this great nation.

My own family has roots in this town dating back to 1860 arriving from Ireland. That makes me, according to my father, a <sup>5</sup>~~6~~<sup>th</sup> generation Burrillvillian. I have my own fond memories of Ice Fishing on Spring Lake in the winter with my Grandfather, Father and brothers. I also cherish memories of swimming in the magnificent, pristine, Wallum Lake – a drinking supply lake which is the source for Zambarano Hospital and uncomfortably close to the proposed power plant site.

But tonight, I am speaking to you as not only a resident of Burrillville, but as a resident of Rhode Island. I want to emphasize that this is not simply a “Not in My Backyard” issue. I would respectfully submit to the board that Pollution, Carbon Emissions & aquifer depletion ~~do~~ <sup>does</sup> not respect town or state boundaries.

And in a state only 48 miles long, it is ALL our backyard.

As the Energy Siting board, we know you are tasked with examining several major areas of impact:

### 1) The Need for an Energy Facility

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration we have the LOWEST consumption PER CAPITA in the entire United States. Per capita! Rhode Island is Rhode Island is extremely efficient with our energy consumption

So I ask you, since Rhode Island is doing such a fantastic job in managing our own energy consumption per each person living in our state, **why** are we being asked to essentially take a massive environmental “hit” for the region by siting the largest power plant of its kind in New England in our tiny state and placing a tremendous drain on our natural ~~and municipal~~ resources in this manner?

We are also in the lowest quartile of US States as far as energy cost per capita as well. So the argument about dependable and affordable energy, upon close examination, is a weak argument.

We have heard from the Energy Company that they did not bid the entire capacity of the plant at the energy auction. However, the entire project will need to be permitted and the **impact to the environment and the biodiversity** of that area will be ~~the same~~ <sup>as significant</sup> as if the entire plant was operational from the beginning. Once we sacrifice ~~those~~ <sup>these</sup> habitats on the altar of commerce, we can never regain them.

According to their own admission, this site will be decommissioned and becoming a brownfield site within a max of 40 years.

All these things point to the fact that the proposed plant is not needed.

As the siting board, you are also tasked with examining:

**2) The cost of the energy facility and cost to eventual consumer**

In my past experience working in construction I have seen the vast majority of projects go over cost and over budget. By their own admittance, this particular corporate entity has never built a plant of this size. **So I ask you, how are we sure they are properly estimating the cost to build the plant along with the eventual cost of the energy which will be passed on to the consumer?** I feel compelled to point out, this is the same company which could not get a correct meeting notice printed in our local paper in spite of the fact that the same meeting had been *properly* noticed on the Siting Board website for WEEKS prior. If this is an indication of their future attention to detail and conscientiousness, the residents of Rhode Island are not assured.

Another area you examine is:

**3) The impact on the Environment and financial impact**

We have heard from Rick Enser, the noted environmentalist, regarding the significance of this Watershed area.

As previously noted by other speakers, the Black Throated Blue Warbler is established on the land proposed as the site for the plant. This bird relies on large tracts of unbroken forest on which to live. Additionally the Federally Threatened Northern Long Eared Bat has been observed there along with the threatened species, the wood turtle. Wood Turtles are becoming increasingly rare in New England due to their "Complex Habitational Needs" and because habitat loss and urbanization are negatively impacting their ability to survive according to the Center for Biological Diversity.

Further information regarding this area of forest can be found in the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission "**Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment**" from 1998. In the interest of time, I'll read excerpts:

*3. Intact Western Forests (60) Description*

*The forests of Douglas, MA, western Burrillville and Glocester, RI are extensive 2nd and 3rd growth stands. The Rhode Island portion is **the largest contiguous forest in the state.** ... Encroaching development in the Rhode Island forests poses another serious threat.*

*Recommendations:*

- **Support continued land protection of the forests and adjacent properties by the Towns, conservation organizations, and State DEMs.**

*This is the wrong location for the plants*  
In Summary, our hope is that when all the hearings have ended, when all the advisory opinions are submitted and the three of you are making this momentous decision, that you will act as you always have acted throughout your respective careers, with the best interest of the people in mind.

We are depending upon you. Please do not let this be another chapter in our story. Please follow the example of innovators and free thinkers which people the history of Rhode Island and the great leaders who have protected and fought for the rights of the people such as the religious dissident, Roger Williams, and Revolutionary war hero General Nathaniel Greene. This is our history and our heritage. We ask you to protect it.

**When the time comes, we ask you to just say no to this stunningly misguided proposition.**