



Testimony of Barbara Currier Bell, Ph.D.

Member

Connecticut Siting Council

Submitted to the Energy and Technology Committee,

In Reference to

Raised Bill No. 6249

*an Act Establishing a Moratorium on the Siting of Wind Projects until the
Adoption of Regulations*

February 3, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Fonfara, Representative Nardello, ranking and distinguished members of the Energy and Technology Committee. My name is Barbara Currier Bell; I am a member of the Connecticut Siting Council.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide this testimony in connection with Raised Bill No. 6249, An Act Establishing a Moratorium on the Siting of Wind Projects Until the Adoption of Regulations.

Raised Bill No. 6249, An Act Establishing a Moratorium on the Siting of Wind Projects Until the Adoption of Regulations seeks to require the Connecticut Siting Council to adopt regulations for wind turbine projects and put a moratorium on any applications until such regulations are adopted.

Naturally, to impose a moratorium on these facilities or any other matter and for whatever reason is a legislative prerogative. Nevertheless, I would be remiss were I to leave you with the impression that the Council acts without the benefit of regulations. Our regulations are extensive and detailed and may be found at RCSA section 16-50j-1 et seq. Moreover, we are further bound by the requirements of the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act (CGS Section 4-166 et seq.). These acts and regulations govern our every action in every matter that is brought before us. These have allowed the Council to fulfill its mission over the past

(over)

40 years to objectively balance the infrastructure needs of our modern society with the responsibility of protecting our citizens and environment.

The combination of these guidelines, related statutes and required input from other State Agencies has provided the Council with the ability to successfully site an array of large generation and transmission projects. For generation, I'll refer to the ~544 MW gas-fired combined-cycle plant the Council approved in Milford (Milford Power, LLC: Docket 187)—I mention this plant because I live in Milford and I know first-hand about the benefits it brings to the community. For transmission, I'll refer to the most recent large-scale project that came before the Council, one piece of the so-called Northeast East-West Solution (NEEWS: Docket 370), which upgrades transmission resources so the Connecticut grid can operate more reliably within the state and also connect more reliably with our three neighboring states.

The Council's recent choice to hold extended public hearings in each of the communities in which new wind generation is proposed is a clear indication of the seriousness of our members and the flexibility of our current regulations and process.

The Council consists of nine members with diverse backgrounds and varying experience. We come from all parts of the state. Our main concern, as mandated by the legislature upon establishing the Council almost 40 years ago, is to minimize the environmental impacts of proposed projects under our jurisdiction: like all our fellow citizens, we include in that mandate a concern with protecting public health and safety. The Council does not set energy policy, or plan energy facilities in advance. It must deal with projects as they come. Gathering as much information as we can on the details of such projects, aided by a knowledgeable staff, and especially going out to view the subject sites and soliciting input from people in the municipalities where they are proposed, Council members work through each application as comprehensively as we can to come up with good siting decisions that reconcile public benefits with public needs.

In the case of petitions for declaratory ruling regarding renewable generating facilities, the Council has proceeded using the same statutory authority, procedures, and regulations applicable to the above-referenced traditional generation and transmission projects. While not automatically requiring a public hearing for the approval of a petition, the statutes nonetheless give the Council the authority to hold such a hearing upon its own motion: thus, at the request of residents and legislators from two communities where wind energy projects are currently pending, the Council voted to schedule not one but two public hearings in each community, and contested proceedings have been initiated. Also, anticipating a need for specialized background information—information that will become available to all parties through the Council's customary open procedures—the Council hired a consultant to provide independent advice on the technical aspects of the petitions.

As previously demonstrated, the Connecticut Siting Council has both the experience and expertise necessary to process applications and petitions relative to wind renewable

energy. Whatever you decide on this bill, please note that adequate regulations and guidelines are in place and the Council has established a credible record for the successful siting of controversial projects.

I would be pleased to take your questions.