



For Immediate Release

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DPU Fails to Protect Public Interest and Community Health: Approves MMWEC's request for \$170 mil in Bonds

Despite substantive evidence suggesting that the proposed gas and oil peaker would harm local residents, worsen the climate crisis, and not provide the lowest-cost option, DPU approved MMWEC's request for \$170 million in bonds to fund a brand new dirty facility

Peabody, MA - On Thursday, June 12th - less than a month after MMWEC requested to resume its proceedings - the Department of Public Utilities approved MMWEC's request to issue \$170 million in bonds to finance their proposed 60 MW oil and natural gas peaker power plant. This decision comes despite widespread opposition to the proposed power plant and increased calls from community members, advocates, and municipal officials for further investigation into the impacts of the proposed peaker power plant on health, safety and reliability.

MMWEC's proposed project is located directly within an Environmental Justice Community that is already burdened with considerable pollution coming from two existing peaking power plants and a multitude of other sources. Despite this, MMWEC has not conducted an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or carried out Comprehensive Health Impact Assessment (CHIA) to understand how this project will worsen the climate crisis, reduce local air quality, and harm community health.

"Although 14 MMWEC communities will pay for this plant over 30 years, it is the people closest to the plant in Peabody and Danvers who will pay with higher rates of respiratory illness," said Sudi Smoller of Breathe Clean North Shore, the Peabody resident group opposing the project. "It's time to do all we can to combat climate change. There's no excuse for continuing to burn fossil fuels. We need a utility of the future, not the past."

"We are deeply disappointed by the outcome of this proceeding," said Sarah Dooling, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Climate Action Network. "DPU's approval brings MMWEC one step closer to building a power plant that will contribute to local pollution and harm local community members, while highlighting - yet again - how broken DPU processes are. The DPU is meant to serve the people of the Commonwealth by considering safety, security, reliability of service, affordability, equity, and greenhouse gas emission reductions in their decision making. In approving these bonds without requiring further evaluation of the project, DPU has abandoned their mission to promote equity and emissions reductions. MCAN will continue to push for the Baker Administration to do their job and protect vulnerable communities by

demanding that the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs re-open the MEPA process for this project and require MMWEC to conduct an environmental impact review.”

"The DPU's approval of \$170 million in bonds for this polluting power plant is insulting to Peabody residents who are concerned for their health and our climate," said Mireille Bejjani, Massachusetts Community Organizer with Community Action Works. "Just days after the latest IPCC report showing the devastating impacts of the climate crisis, DPU is choosing to invest millions in fossil fuels over the protests of neighbors who just want to breathe clean air. Something is very wrong here."

Background

The project, known as Project 2015A, proposed by MMWEC, was planned to be built on land owned by the City of Peabody with the intent of providing peak power from natural gas and oil to 12 municipal utilities located throughout the Commonwealth: Peabody, Boylston, Holden, Hull, Mansfield, Marblehead, Shrewsbury, South Hadley, Sterling, Wakefield, West Boylston, and Russell. It is slated to be built in an Environmental Justice Community and less than a mile away from seven other EJ communities located in Peabody, Danvers, and Salem.

Since MMWEC filed its request for financing, Holyoke and Chicopee have submitted requests to withdraw from the project.

According to applications for permits, Special Project 2015A will emit nearly **51,000 tons of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide** into the atmosphere every year—the equivalent of adding 11,000 combustion engine cars to Massachusetts' roads each year. Furthermore, the peaker plant will require **installing a natural gas compressor** to increase natural gas pressure, **a 90-foot smokestack** and a 2,500-7,500 gallon new tank to hold either aqueous urea. This project would have a highly detrimental impact on our environment and climate, and would continue to harm neighboring environmental justice communities with worsening air pollution and continued poor health.

On May 11th, MMWEC announced that their board of directors voted to authorize a pause of MMWEC's plans for the siting of the proposed peaker plant. The board authorized a 30-day minimum pause to address the concerns brought to the MMWEC Board, while also considering available options to fulfill its participants' required capacity obligations under ISO-New England rules. On July 15th, MMWEC concluded their pause and announced that they had done everything they needed to engage stakeholders despite **only holding a single community meeting**.

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