

CUP 2011:01

Virginia Electric and Power Company, applicant, for Virginia Electric and Power Company and Heirs of Bessie N. Williams, owners

Application Request: Conditional Use Permit amendment

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION INFORMATION

Comprehensive

Plan designation: Industrial, Courtland Planning Area

Zoning designation: M-2, General Industrial District, with 24 acres currently being designated Conditional M-2, granted in 1989

Acreage: Approximately 91.22 acres

Current Use: Power generating plant and vacant land

Tax Map No.: TP 92-8B and a portion of 92-8

Location: 30134 General Thomas Highway, Franklin, VA

Magisterial District: Franklin

Voting District: Franklin

Adjacent Zoning: North: M-2, General Industrial District
South: M-2
East: A-1, Agricultural
West: M-2

Adjacent Land Use: North: Industrial uses and agriculture
South: Agriculture
East: Agriculture
West: Hercules plant

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Overview

In March 1989, the Board of Supervisors granted a Conditional Use Permit to Ultra Cogen Systems, Inc., to construct and operate a coal fired cogeneration plant which would produce approximately 60 megawatts of electricity and provide steam to Hercules Incorporated. The site was 24.5 acres, and it is adjacent to the Hercules plant on Rte. 671, General Thomas Highway. The site was to contain two boilers and one turbine generator. All of the equipment was to be housed in one large building that would stand

approximately 90' tall. The coal to operate the plant was to be delivered off the CSX or Seaboard Rail Line accessing the property from two rail spurs, per the application.

The current zoning of the property is M-2, General Industrial District. Power-generating plants are permitted with a Conditional Use Permit. The current request is to enlarge the plant and to change the fuel used by the plant from coal to biomass, or wood. The benefits of biomass include:

- Biomass is considered a renewable energy source in Virginia. Virginia requires that utilities achieve specific amounts of their energy from renewable sources and this switch to biomass will help this utility reach the 15% goal by 2025.
- The source of biomass, wood products, is readily available in this area. The closure of IP had a major effect on the wood producers and their suppliers and this switch will help use some of that available product. The regional forestry and trucking employers are expected to reap benefits from the switch from coal to biomass.
- The use of a renewable energy source is expected to reduce the carbon footprint of the utility in the long-run.

The elements of this request include:

- An enlargement of the land area in use under the current Conditional Use Permit from approximately 24 acres to approximately 91 acres.
- An increase in height of the tallest structure from approximately 200' tall, the height of the existing smokestack, to 250' tall.
- A change from the current coal-fired plant to a plant that is planned to be fueled by wood. It should be noted that the current fuel, coal, is delivered to the site by rail. The proposed biomass fuel, wood products, will be delivered by truck.

It is anticipated that the operational date of the renovated plant, if all necessary approvals are gained on the current schedule, will be the second half of 2013.

Community Comments

None received

CONCLUSION

Strengths of application:

- Wood is a renewable energy source. Virginia requires an increasing reliance on renewable energy sources from the utility producers in the Commonwealth, and a biomass-fueled plant will help reach that requirement.
- The use of wood will contribute to the economy in this area that was affected by the closing of the IP plant, specifically the forestry and trucking industries and the industries that provide services to those industries.
- It is anticipated that the existing employees at the plant will remain employed, and construction jobs will be available during the construction of the additions to the facility.
- The increased taxable value of the facility will make positive contribution to the County's tax base.
- The ash produced by the plant will be available for farmers to use for soil amendment.

- Train noise from the delivery of fuel will be eliminated.

Weaknesses of application:

- Additional truck traffic would occur along General Thomas Highway. It is anticipated that the delivery of wood products will entail up to approximately 125 trucks per day traveling to the site.

SUPPORT INFORMATION AND ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Staff Analysis
- 2) Application
- 3) Original Conditional Use Permit approval letter
- 4) Adjacent property owner notification

Sign posted 4/1/2011

Letters mailed 4/4/2011

Ad in Tidewater news 3/30/2011, 4/6/2011