

OFFERED BY COUNCILOR LYDIA EDWARDS



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF A NONBINDING PUBLIC ADVISORY OPINION BALLOT MEASURE REGARDING A PROPOSED EVERSOURCE SUBSTATION IN EAST BOSTON

WHEREAS, Eversource Energy is proposing to construct and operate a new transmission substation facility located on the Chelsea Creek waterfront, on East Eagle Street, in East Boston ; *and*

WHEREAS, The Substation has been overwhelmingly opposed by elected officials, residents, and experts as it would result in the concentration of potentially dangerous and unnecessary infrastructure, obstruction of neighborhood access to open space and the waterfront, and an increased risk to neighborhood climate resiliency. The proximity of the proposed substation being 300 feet to residential housing, 60 feet to recreational spaces, and 450 feet to combustible fuel storage tanks, remain a serious concern. ; *and*

WHEREAS, The neighborhood of East Boston is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse communities in Massachusetts. More than 60% of its population are people of color and more than 50% are foreign born. The state has designated nearly every part of East Boston as an Environmental Justice community. ; *and*

WHEREAS, Eversource, on multiple occasions, has failed to provide adequate interpretation services or properly translated documents. The energy siting regulatory process is complex and difficult to understand, containing terms and procedures difficult for native English speakers. By failing to meet the required language access requirements, Eversource has made it nearly impossible for non-English speakers to participate throughout the process. ; *and*

WHEREAS, Currently, two separate legal challenges related to the substation are outstanding under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act regarding a failure of adequate process and notification as to the Spanish-speaking population of East Boston. ; *and*

WHEREAS, The determination of the need for a new distribution facility as necessary has been called into question by multiple experts and authorities, including the Applied Economics Clinic and the Union of Concerned Scientists. Eversource's proprietary data upon which the justification is based, stems from 2014 data, and is outdated and stale. The determination of public need has not been reconsidered as to provide the most up to date and accurate data, and thus erodes trust in our

public utility companies and the ability for municipalities to hold them accountable. ; *and*

WHEREAS, Eversource was required to evaluate site alternatives to the proposed electrical substation, of which the largest single user of electricity from the proposed substation would be Logan Airport. Furthermore, the Suffolk Downs development area, the largest target growth area for increased demand, was not taken into account. Both locations are currently considering electrical infrastructure investments and upgrades. There has been no formal alternative site analysis to collocate electrical distribution upgrades to include a substation at either site. ; *and*

WHEREAS, The East Boston neighborhood already carries a disproportionate environmental, public health and risk burden from the presence of regionally critical infrastructure such as Logan International Airport, the Sumner/Callahan and Ted Williams Tunnels, the Route 1A viaduct, petroleum product storage and shipping, freight forwarding, park and fly parking lots and heavy marine industry. ; *and*

WHEREAS, East Boston is a peninsula neighborhood surrounded by water on three sides and highly susceptible to flooding and climate change. If sea levels rise 21 inches by 2050, a 100-year storm will flood much of Condor Street and the Chelsea Creek shoreline. 36 inches of sea level rise by 2070 could put the site under a foot or more of water. ; *and*

WHEREAS, New flood mapping data from the Boston Water and Sewer Commission shows that the site may be more vulnerable to flooding than previously thought. Current climate modeling does not take into account extreme weather events like hurricanes and storm water floodings. The City of Boston's own climate resilience studies have shown this area is at an increased risk of future flooding. ; *and*

WHEREAS, Eversource failed to hold a public hearing in the East Boston community in the original review process for this project, thereby denying the East Boston community an opportunity to participate in the discussion of the need for this project. ; *and*

WHEREAS, Any new significant energy project requires the full and informed input of the public, especially in an already disproportionately overburdened Environmental Justice community like East Boston. A non-binding advisory opinion ballot measure will ensure participation in a public utility approval process must not be in name only, and that residents of East Boston and the City of Boston as a whole can meaningfully participate. ; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED: That the Boston City Council go on record in support of this nonbinding public advisory opinion ballot measure regarding a proposed eversource substantiation in East Boston to meaningfully include the participation of all residents and ratepayers.

Filed on: February 24, 2021