



First Selectman Bill Gerber meets with Representative Jim Himes and architect David Parker at the Pequot Library

A Deeper Dive

More Information about Community Issues

Dear Fairfielders,

If we are to have a chance of stopping United Illuminating from installing massive monopoles in the Town's historic, business and residential districts, it is imperative that you, our Fairfield community, are involved in the fight. Following a series of FAQs in this newsletter, you'll be provided with a list of steps that you can take as Fairfield residents.

The Siting Council is considering United Illuminating's request to take 19.25 acres of property rights over seven miles from residents, businesses, organizations, and municipalities in Fairfield and Bridgeport's south end via permanent utility easements, and to install 100 monopoles ranging from 95 to 195 feet in height at a distance up to 40 feet from where the electrical lines currently exist along the train tracks.

The plan will also involve the removal of 6.5 acres of mature trees and vegetation, eliminating the visual and sound barrier between the community and the power and train infrastructure. The Town and several neighborhood and business groups are fighting to eliminate or minimize the taking of the easements, and to pursue the burying of lines as a viable alternative.

On January 11, the Town's lawyers filed their post-hearing submissions to the Siting Council. [The Town's post-hearing brief to the Siting Council is here.](#) My letter registering the Town's objections to the rebuild can be [read here](#). Additional filings and a link to the docket can be [read here](#). The next step in the process is that the Siting Council will issue draft findings of fact on February 1, and is expected to issue its final decision on March 17.

If the Siting Council rules against the Town, the next step is appealing to the Connecticut Superior Court. Public opposition is critical at each step of the process.

Without question, this issue affects the entire Town and our quality of life for years to come. A series of FAQs follows so you can learn more about the impact of this plan, and steps you can take as a Fairfield resident. Scroll down to see the photos included in this newsletter that illustrate the horrendous impact of removing the tree line and siting of towering monopoles.

The nonprofit group Sasco Creek Neighbors Environmental Trust is a tremendous resource for more information and is working with area neighbors and organizations to oppose this developing utility project. [Access Empowering Fairfield here.](#)

Bill Gerber
First Selectman

[Monopoles FAQs](#)

Q: I don't live in any of the areas of Town where the monopoles will be placed. Why is this important to all Town residents?

A: The monopoles, due to their size, will be visible from many areas of Town once they are placed in historic Southport, Grasmere and portions of the Post Road business district. They will be a blight on the landscape, and change the views of Fairfield that we all know and treasure. The permanent utility easements in Fairfield and Southport will transfer property rights from private citizens, businesses, community organizations and the Town to a private, foreign-owned company.

The aesthetics alone have the power to discourage business development and the desire of people to come to Fairfield to shop, to enjoy entertainment and meals, and to live. There is a significant economic impact that will change the face of Fairfield forever.

Q: Is this project necessary?

A: UI claims that this project is needed because the railroad catenary structures on which its transmission lines are attached are in need of repair. However, neither the Connecticut DOT, Metro-North Railroad or any regulatory body has insisted that UI remove the lines. Rather, UI appears to be driven by a profit motive to build taller towers that can transmit far more electricity than is needed now or into the future, for the sole benefit of transmitting the electricity out of state and then reaping a profit. This massive upgrade in transmission capacity provides absolutely no benefit to the Town of Fairfield or the State of Connecticut. UI's profit-oriented motive is especially troubling given that the significant easements, towering monopole heights and detrimental impact on our environmental, historical, and cultural resources are a direct result of this unnecessary capacity increase.

Q: How tall will the monopoles be, in comparison to existing power poles?

A: Within Fairfield and Southport, the new monopoles will range in height from 95 to 145 feet, which is double the height of the existing ones on the north side of the tracks, and more than double the height of the tallest building in downtown Fairfield.

Q: How will the installation of the monopoles change the affected areas of town?

A: United Illuminating intends to clear 6.5 acres of mature trees, fully exposing our community to the train tracks and electricity power infrastructure. The project will adversely impact hundreds of historic sites in its path.

In addition to removing mature trees, home to songbirds and other wildlife, UI will excavate forty feet into the earth to create foundations for the monopoles. The construction process alone will be damaging to many beautiful areas of Town that will be lost to us forever. Their seizure of private property in Southport includes taking land from two churches and the historic Pequot Library.

UI intends to place the poles on private property a full forty feet from where existing poles now stand along the train tracks. Once the poles have been placed on private property as easements, the affected property owners will be expected to pay property taxes on devalued land that they can no longer access or use. This is unconscionable.

Q: Once the monopoles are installed, is that the end of the project?

A: United Illuminating plans to acquire 19.25 acres of permanent easements in Bridgeport and Fairfield that will give UI the right to “at any time and from time to time” construct, excavate and remove any structures in the way of its work. UI reserves the right to...”remove any and all trees and parts of trees...by the use of mechanical means, chemicals or otherwise...and remove all structures including but not limited to, sheds, garages...retaining walls, above or below ground swimming pools, decks ...in each case without payment therefor.”

These permanent easements empower UI to to install even taller poles, service roads, and other developments in the corridor as they see fit without recourse for prevention even after the project concludes. If UI is not able to reach agreements with property owners for the acquisition of the proposed permanent easements, UI will use eminent domain powers to forcibly take private property in our Town.

Q: Did United Illuminating take our Town’s unique historic heritage into account when planning this project?

A: Their report, prepared by Heritage Consultants, had many distortions and omissions. Historical Preservation experts Wes Haynes and David Parker testified that UI failed to consider roughly 90% of Southport’s historic district properties alone.

The UI report was also called into question by the National Trust for Historic Preservation which filed to intervene in the application proceeding. The Trust was so concerned about UI’s plan that it invited Preservation Connecticut to nominate the area for their annual “America’s Most Endangered Historic Places” list.

In a filing submitted to the Siting Council on January 11, the Trust stated the following:

- The proposed transmission line would adversely affect and unreasonably impair an enormous number of historic properties.
- The application fails to comply with the requirements of the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA).
- The Applicant has failed to give adequate consideration to feasible and prudent alternatives that would avoid and minimize harm to historic properties.
- The adverse visual impacts of the project are a direct adverse effect, not an indirect effect.
- The adverse effects to historic properties are exacerbated by the proposal to expand the capacity of the transmission infrastructure, which is unjustified by any need.

Q: Why won’t United Illuminating bury the lines instead of installing huge and unsightly monopoles?

A: UI claims that burying the power lines would be cost prohibitive so they eliminated it as an option. Cost doesn't appear to be driving their decision-making, however, but rather, lack of experience. Accordingly, even though undergrounding 115-kV transmission lines under public roads is common throughout the State, and proven to be reliable, UI inflated the estimated cost of an underground alternative in an effort to dissuade the Siting Council from requiring the lines to be buried.

The UI engineering team that designed and estimated the underground alternative has only *one-half mile* of undergrounding experience. By contrast, our experts have hundreds of miles and decades of experience in undergrounding, and it is their view that the lines can be buried for a fraction of UI's estimate. That, coupled with the significant maintenance cost savings for undergrounding (particularly over its anticipated 40-plus-year lifespan), should make it a far preferable alternative to the permanent destruction that the overhead lines will inflict.

Q: Have our state and regional government leaders taken a stand on the project?

A: UI claims that it "worked closely with federal, state and municipal organizations to identify project proposals that...(minimize) impacts to the community. But its plan has faced a torrent of opposition from government leaders at all levels, including U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, U.S. Rep. Jim Himes, state Sen. Tony Hwang, and state Representatives Jennifer Leeper, Cristin McCarthy Vahey and Sarah Keitt. First Selectman Bill Gerber vehemently opposed UI's plan during his campaign and has made it a top priority of his administration.

Q: I don't want these unsightly monopoles in my Town. What can I do?

A: Your opinion as a Town resident and public citizen counts! Here's how you can join the fight and let the Siting Council and United Illuminating know that you demand that they search for alternatives, including burying the power lines:

- Write to Governor Ned Lamont at Gov.Lamont@ct.gov. Include "Objection to UI Monopoles in Fairfield" in the subject line and include your full name and address. Request the Governor consider the gravity of the situation and use every lever of government to find an alternative solution.
- [Sign the petition](#) that will be presented to the Governor and shared with elected leaders
- Stay informed by joining [Empowering Fairfield](#), and follow the group on [Facebook](#).
- Talk to your neighbors and help spread the word

- Post your opposition on social media platforms and ask your fellow Town residents to share your message
- Attend talks, rallies, walks and other public forums to be scheduled.
- Volunteer your time and skills to help in the fight.

EXHIBIT O



A current view of Pequot Library



A view of Pequot Library as it will appear after monopoles are installed.



An existing Southport property in its current condition



The existing Southport property after the proposed seizure of property



A view of Southport Harbor with the proposed monopoles drawn in red. Imagine the impact of this view once leaves have fallen from the trees.

We're Better Together!

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