

321 Baltimore Blvd
P.O. Box 296
Sea Girt, NJ 08750



Sea Girt
New Jersey
WHERE THE CEDARS MEET THE SEA

October 15, 2024

Hon. Donald E. Fetzer, Mayor
Borough of Sea Girt
321 Baltimore Blvd.
Sea Girt, New Jersey 08750
dfetzer@seagirtboro.com

Hon. Sherri L. Golden, Secretary
New Jersey Board of Public Utilities
44 South Clinton Avenue, 9th Floor
PO Box # 350
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0350

Subject: Comments on the Solicitation for Transmission Infrastructure Project Supporting New Jersey's Offshore Wind Policy

Docket # QO23100719

Dear Madam Secretary,

On behalf of the Borough of Sea Girt, I would like to formally reiterate our strong objection to the awarding of this project at the current time. While we appreciate the ongoing discussions between the Board and our community since May 2024, we still harbor significant concerns regarding the implications of proceeding with this project.

Our reservations stem from several critical factors:

- 1. Exclusion from Decision-Making:** The Borough of Sea Girt was not included in the discussions surrounding the cable landing point on our coastline. First and foremost, we continue to prioritize concerns regarding the health implications of running the cables so close to residences, and possibly the school. Any health analysis should be an "apples to apples" comparison. Moreover, we are deeply concerned that our infrastructure—and the access to it—could be severely disrupted, leading to substantial inconveniences for both our citizens, visitors and your awarded contractors and system operators.
- 2. Inadequate Comparisons:** The comparative transmission infrastructure projects provided by the Board do not adequately reflect the scale of power nor the proximity to residential areas. This raises questions about the appropriateness of the proposed project in our community, most importantly from a health standpoint.
- 3. Impact on Ratepayers:** As outlined in our letter to the Board of Public Utilities dated August 16, 2024 (attached), we are alarmed by the anticipated increase in electricity rates that will not only burden our residents but will also affect ratepayers across New Jersey. Such financial implications warrant a thorough re-examination before moving forward.

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4. **Borough Council Resolution:** In June 2024, the Borough Council adopted Resolution No. 126-2024, which opposes the proposed placement of wind turbine clusters off our coast, the installation of transmission cables through critical fish habitats, and the construction of cable banks within our Borough (attached). Two key aspects of this resolution include:
 - The governing body's strong opposition to constructing offshore wind turbine clusters and laying extensive transmission lines through vital marine ecosystems, as well as their proximity to existing Borough infrastructure.
 - A call for state and federal authorities to engage in open, transparent discussions with our community prior to any final decisions or bid awards. We urge that these discussions also allow adequate time for comprehensive studies to assess both potential and actual adverse impacts of these projects.
5. **Concerns Regarding Superfund Sites:** The proposed infrastructure project is likely to intersect with the White Swan Laundry & Cleaner Superfund Site. In a letter addressed to Commissioner La Tourette of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection dated September 23, 2024 (attached), I highlighted several key concerns:
 - **Risk of Trenching:** The underground installation of high-voltage cables is projected to traverse two Superfund sites, including areas currently undergoing active remediation (see attached map). The risks associated with trenching in these areas, particularly the potential for exposure to hazardous materials, were not sufficiently addressed in prior discussions.
 - **Threat to Borough Infrastructure and Groundwater:** There is a substantial risk of damaging our underground infrastructure and exacerbating groundwater contamination. When this issue was raised with EPA representatives, their response indicated a troubling lack of coordination: "That's their problem since their work will follow ours." This dismissive attitude is concerning, especially given the potential long-term environmental and public health ramifications.
 - **Interagency Coordination Issues:** There appears to be a significant lack of communication between agencies, as EPA representatives seemed unaware of the infrastructure project set to follow their cleanup efforts, despite acknowledging that these projects are likely to intersect.
 - **Long-Term Cable Integrity:** We have serious questions regarding the long-term effects of the high-water table on the integrity of the cables and their coatings. We seek information on any existing studies or data from the DEP regarding wire durability and the potential contamination risks under these conditions.

Lastly, we believe that the public comment period for this docket has been insufficiently brief. While we appreciate the public hearing held on October 1, 2024, at the IBEW Union Hall, many residents have informed me that they did not have the opportunity to provide their comments online. We strongly advocate for additional informational sessions to be conducted, ensuring they are widely advertised, so that our community has fair and ample opportunity to voice their concerns. This would also enable the BPU to continue its outreach efforts effectively.

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Thank you for considering our community's perspectives on this important matter. We look forward to your response and hope for a collaborative approach moving forward.

Sincerely,

Donald E. Fetzer

Donald E. Fetzer
Mayor
Borough of Sea Girt