

Alliant Energy power plant approved 3-0

By KEVIN MURPHY For the Daily News | Posted: Friday, April 1, 2016 4:00 pm

MADISON — The Public Service Commission has approved Alliant Energy's request to build a 700 megawatt electricity generating plant in the Town of Beloit over the objection of its nearest neighbors.

In a 3-0 vote, the commissioners found the natural-gas fired plant to be in the public's interest and necessary, as Alliant is retiring three coal-fired plants with a combined output of 640 megawatts.

"In five to six years 640 megawatts will be going off line...There will be a need to continue to provide affordable power and this (project) does that in the best possible manner," Commissioner Michael Huebsch said.

The plant also produces power at lower carbon emissions than those it is replacing.

"This continues the trend of improving environmental aspects of energy production without mandates," Commissioner Phil Montgomery said.

Alliant sought PSC approval for the plant in April 2015 as a 650 megawatt plant costing \$750 million, but since then construction bids have lowered the cost and changed specifications have boosted its output.

The new plant will be constructed west of the existing Riverside Energy Center, a 675-megawatt natural-gas fired generation plant, located along Town Line Road that Alliant bought from Calpine Energy in 2013.

Alliant expects to break ground on the new generating plant in September and start construction in the spring of 2017. The new plant is expected to go online in early 2020.

Alliant has touted the plant as one of biggest current construction projects as it will create 1,000 jobs, add 50 permanent positions and produce more than \$250 million in economic benefits.

"This is a major step forward as the Riverside project is a critical part of our mission to provide reliable, cost-effective energy to our customers for many years to come," said Patricia Kampling, Alliant Energy Chairman, President and CEO, in a prepared statement. "This highly efficient generating station will modernize our generating operations and further our transition to cleaner energy sources."

The Town of Beloit passed a resolution in September supporting the project. The town annually receives about \$1.6 million in payments in lieu of taxes for hosting the existing Riverside Energy

Center and should receive \$1.23 million annually for the expansion, Alliant spokesperson Scott Reigstad said.

Residents of Edgewater Estates Subdivision, located across Town Line Road from the proposed energy center, has sparred with Alliant over the noise, fog and ice the power plant generates.

Edgewater Estates Subdivision opposed the expansion, saying the energy it will produce is not immediately needed and is not justified by the impact it will have on their homes.

“The EES will be affected by noise and vapor emissions from the proposed project, and will also be affected by the water well for the proposed project. In our opinion, the EES should not be stripped of its rights to quiet enjoyment of their property without condemnation by due process,” Richard Missimer, an EES resident and attorney wrote the PSC.

The noise levels may cause some homeowners to move and property values to decline, Missimer wrote.

Missimer also asked the PSC to require Alliant to comply with all noise, vibration and vapor emissions regulations even if the Department of Natural Resources or the Environmental Protection Agency determines the plant could operate at lesser standards in rules the agencies may promulgate.

Asked what local controls Alliant will be subject to, PSC Spokesperson Elise Nelson replied by email:

“It is Commission staff’s understanding that (Alliant) included the local noise ordinance in the request for proposals for the project as a performance standard. The final order will include language that (Alliant) will need to obtain all federal, state, and local permits prior to commencement of construction.”

The commissioners found the energy center expansion will not unreasonably interfere with local land use and development plans saying it is zoned for industrial use and cited the existing power plant, a fertilizer plant, an airport and a rail line have “already disturbed,” the area.

RENEW Wisconsin, a renewal energy advocacy organization, opposed the two megawatt solar energy array planned in conjunction with the power plant. RENEW Wisconsin officials say the design flaw is not building the array as a standalone facility directly accessible to the grid. Instead, it will be tied into to the power plant, according to testimony RENEW’s Michael Vickerman filed with the PSC.

Built at an estimated \$9 million, the solar installation is “inexplicably and needlessly expensive,” and will be built too late to qualify for the 30 percent Investment Tax Credit and Alliant will not

be able to pass those savings along to customers. The tax credit will fall to 10 percent when the array is scheduled to go online, Vickerman wrote.