

Power plant in snag

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As Alliant Energy faces a challenge from Milwaukee-based Wisconsin Electric Power Company over the planned new Riverside Power Plant, representatives from the Town of Beloit are disappointed.

Earlier this month, the state's Public Service Commission of Wisconsin allowed Wisconsin Electric Power Company (WE Energies) to intervene and present an alternative to the \$750 million plant.

"Commissioners agreed that WEPCO met the criteria to intervene and that its participation in WPL's Riverside application would help identify issues and potential concerns in the case, contributing to a more robust record for when commissioners ultimately determine the necessity of the project," said Elise Nelson, communications and legislative director for the Public Service Commission.

The new power plant was announced in December and would be near Alliant's existing location in the Town of Beloit. It would be built on the property the company owns at 1401 W B-R Townline Road.

The existing plant is 675 megawatts in a combined-cycle natural gas-fired generation plant with 25 employees and two gas-fueled and one steam-fueled generating unit. The new plant will bring in 25 new employees and at least 200 construction workers. It will be a 650-megawatt combined cycle plant using steam and natural gas power turbines.

Combined, both Town of Beloit facilities will generate power to produce 1,300 megawatts — roughly enough to power 1 million homes.

In documents submitted to the PSC, WE Energies argues that consumers will likely pay between \$46.5 million for transmission upgrades to complete the new power plant. In addition, WE Energies said it has enough power to keep costs low for consumers and delay a new plant for about nine years.

"We're offering an alternative that could result in tens of millions in savings for Wisconsin Power and Light and WE Energies customers," said Amy Jahns, spokesperson for WE Energies.

“Our primary analysis of combined power supply of WE Energies and Wisconsin Public Services is sufficient to meet and exceed the power need of Wisconsin Power and Light customers,” she added.

Jahns said WE Energies’ plan would hold off the new Riverside Power Plant until 2024 and would eliminate any update costs for customers from the Riverside Project.

In response, Alliant Energy filed documents with PSC stating, “At the end of the term, after WEPCO has enjoyed a few years of predictable prices and its load has had a chance to catch up to its capacity, WPL will still have both short-term and long-term needs, and will be abandoned to the vagaries of the market.”

Potential revenue for the Town of Beloit hangs in the balance of the battle. In a previous interview Town of Beloit Administrator Brian Wilson said the town stands to gain at least \$800,000 in shared revenue from the new plant.

Town Chair Diane Greenlee said she was disappointed in the WE Energies move to delay the plant.

At the Legislative Breakfast on Thursday, State Sen. Janis Ringhand, D-Evansville, spoke in favor of the new power plant, saying it would be beneficial to the area in the long term.

“I’m rooting for Alliant Energy to win their case,” Ringhand said. “I know that the project you’re going to do represents energy efficiency and renewable power.”

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin will hear WE Energies’ proposal on Sept. 10 , followed by a detailed proposal and testimony from Alliant Energy on Sept. 22. Then a final decision is expected in May 2016, which according to Alliant representatives will not delay a summer 2016 construction date.