



Sub. H.B. 133*

125th General Assembly
(As Reported by H. Public Utilities)

Rep. Olman

BILL SUMMARY

- Eliminates the requirement of a determination of the need for a major electric generating facility by the Power Siting Board prior to authorizing the facility.
- Extends to such a facility a standard currently applicable to electric transmission lines: that the facility be consistent with regional electric power grid plans and serve system economy and reliability in order to be authorized by the Board.
- Authorizes the Board to conduct a complaint hearing if it finds reasonable grounds to believe that a violation of power siting law has occurred.
- Authorizes the Board by order or its chairperson, by written notice and after an opportunity to respond, to require that any activity that is the subject of a complaint be suspended for the duration of the Board's consideration of the complaint, and requires the chairperson to terminate any such suspension if the complaint has been satisfactorily addressed.
- Adds to the two continuing prohibitions under power siting law--not obtaining a certificate and not complying with a certificate--a third prohibition against failing to comply with an order or suspension issued under that law.

* *This analysis was prepared before the report of the House Public Utilities Committee appeared in the Senate Journal. Note that the list of co-sponsors and the legislative history may be incomplete.*

- Upon a finding in a complaint hearing that a violation has occurred, authorizes the Board to assess a forfeiture of not more than \$5,000 for each day of the violation, with the actual amount determined after considering specified factors.
- Caps at \$1 million the total amount of forfeitures that may be imposed for a related series of violations under power siting law, with collected forfeitures deposited to the credit of the state General Revenue Fund.
- Authorizes, instead of requires, the criminal penalty of continuing power siting law to be imposed if violations are proven in a criminal proceeding.
- Advances from two years, to one year, before the planned construction date the latest date to file an application for a certificate for a major electric generating facility.
- Removes Board authority to waive for "unforeseen emergencies" the filing period for an application for a certificate, and replaces it with authority to waive the filing period for "good cause shown."
- Extends from 7 to 15 days the period within which newspaper notice must be given after the filing of an application.
- Modifies punctuation to clarify the requirement that, generally, persons that wish to intervene in a siting proceeding must petition the Board for authority to do so.

CONTENT AND OPERATION

Overview

Generally, under the power siting law of R.C. Chapter 4906., the Power Siting Board (PSB) issues certificates of environmental compatibility and public need for the following "major utility facilities" proposed to be constructed in Ohio: (1) electric generating facilities with a capacity of 50 megawatts or more, (2) electric transmission lines with a design capacity of 125 kilovolts or more, and (3) gas and natural gas transmission lines capable of carrying pressures greater than 125 pounds per square inch. The PSB also issues construction certificates for major utility facilities related to Ohio coal development. The PSB is composed of the Chairperson of the Public Utilities Commission (PUCO); the Directors of Environmental Protection, Health, Development, Natural Resources, and

Agriculture; a public member appointed by the Governor; and, as nonvoting members, two state representatives and two senators. The bill changes the PSB's authority in two general areas: (1) the certificating process and (2) enforcement.

Certificating process

Siting standards for generating facilities

(R.C. 4906.10(A)(1) and (4))

The bill changes the standards applicable to PSB approval of a certificate for a major electric generating facility. Currently, the PSB is prohibited from granting a certificate to any major utility facility, including a generating facility, unless it determines the need for the facility. Based on a provision added by the electric restructuring law of the 123rd General Assembly (Am. Sub. S.B. 3), a generating facility is presumed to be needed.

The bill eliminates the requirement of a needs determination for a major electric generating facility. It also extends to such a facility a standard applicable to major electric transmission lines: that the facility be consistent with regional electric power grid plans and serve system economy and reliability.

Time of filing

(R.C. 4906.06(A))

Current law provides that an application for a certificate of environmental compatibility and public need from the PSB must be filed not less than two years (or one year, in the case of transmission lines) nor more than five years before the date construction is planned to begin. The bill advances from two years, to one year, before the planned construction date the latest date to file an application for a major electric generating facility. It also replaces PSB authority to waive the filing period for "unforeseen emergencies" with authority to waive it for "good cause shown." Additionally, it lengthens from 7, to 15, days after the filing of an application the period during which notice must be published in local newspapers.

Intervention in a siting proceeding

(R.C. 4906.08(A)(3))

The bill removes a semicolon to clarify a current requirement that persons that wish to intervene in a siting proceeding must petition the PSB for authority to do so.

Enforcement

Prohibitions and criminal penalties

(R.C. 4906.98 and 4906.99)

Continuing law contains two prohibitions affecting owners of major utility facilities: (1) a prohibition against constructing a major utility facility without first obtaining a certificate and (2) a prohibition against constructing, operating, or maintaining a facility other than in compliance with a certificate. Local prosecutors may bring criminal actions for violations of the prohibitions. Violations are punishable by a fine of not less than \$1,000 or more than \$10,000 for each day of violation, or imprisonment for not more than one year, or both.

The bill adds to the two continuing prohibitions described above--not obtaining a certificate and not complying with a certificate--a third prohibition against a person failing to comply with an order or suspension issued under power siting law, and it extends to that new prohibition the criminal penalty and the standard of "willfulness" that continue to apply to the first two prohibitions. In addition, the bill replaces "shall" with "may" in relation to a provision specifying a court's authority to impose the criminal penalty when violations are proven.

Complaint authority, activity suspension, and forfeitures

(R.C. 4906.97)

The bill additionally authorizes the PSB to conduct a complaint hearing if it has reasonable grounds to believe that a person has committed a violation of any of the three prohibitions described above. The PSB must serve notice on the alleged violator not less than 15 days before the hearing. The notice must state the matters that are the subject of the complaint hearing. Parties to the complaint are expressly entitled to be heard, to be represented by counsel, and to have the right to compel the attendance of witnesses.

The bill also adds authority for the PSB by order or its chairperson, by written notice and after an opportunity to respond, to require that any activity that is the subject of the complaint be suspended for the duration of the PSB's consideration of the complaint. (Under continuing law, the chairperson of the PUCO is the designated chairperson of the PSB). Upon a showing by the party complained against that all matters have been addressed satisfactorily, the chairperson must terminate the suspension.

The bill authorizes the PSB, upon a finding that a person has violated one or more of the three prohibitions, to assess by order a forfeiture of not more than \$5,000 for each day of each violation. In determining the actual amount of a

forfeiture, the PSB must consider all of the following: (1) the gravity of the violation, (2) the person's history of prior violations, (3) the person's good faith efforts to comply and undertake corrective action, (4) the person's ability to pay the forfeiture, (5) the cost of the project, (6) the effect of the forfeiture on the person's ability to continue as an applicant, and (7) such other matters as justice requires. Additionally, the bill caps at \$1 million the total amount of forfeitures that may be imposed for a related series of violations.

The bill authorizes the Attorney General, upon the PSB's written request, to bring a civil action to recover any forfeiture not paid or to seek other appropriate relief, including injunctive relief. The action must be brought in the Court of Common Pleas of Franklin County, and the court must give precedence to the action over all other cases.

All collected forfeitures must be deposited into the state treasury to the credit of the General Revenue Fund.

HISTORY

ACTION	DATE	JOURNAL ENTRY
Introduced	03-19-03	p. 262
Reported, H. Public Utilities	---	---

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