

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 74

Approved February 21, 2024

WHEREAS, Countless City Council resolutions have been passed over the last 20 years urging National Grid's burial of the high voltage transmission lines on the Providence waterfront at India Point Park; and

WHEREAS, Over the past 20 years, 2,100 petition signers, more than 70 governmental agencies and citizen organizations, and multiple elected officials have urged the state to bury the power lines on the Providence waterfront; and

WHEREAS, The burial of the India Point Park power lines, which date to 1918, would eliminate the public health risk of exposure to electromagnetic fields for nearby residents, and would increase resilience for the lines located at the bull's eye of storm surges during this era of rising sea levels and severe flooding; and

WHEREAS, RI Energy and four independent consultants have found that burial is feasible, and none have found it is infeasible; and

WHEREAS, Overhead transmission lines detract from the beauty of India Point Park and obstruct views of Narragansett Bay from the I-195 gateway to the City; and

WHEREAS, Burying the waterfront power lines would also remove them from the view sheds of Corliss Landing Park in Providence, the Seekonk River pedestrian bridge, and Bold Point Park in East Providence; and

WHEREAS, Providence Mayor Brett Smiley has long supported burial, and former Providence Mayor David N. Cicilline stated that the city's India Point Park waterfront is "the entering crown jewel of the city," and "one of Providence's greatest assets" and "it is imperative that Narragansett Electric bury the unsightly power lines that ...frame, and therefore diminish, the area"; and

WHEREAS, The late Senator John Roney from Fox Pt, wrote to Mayor Cicilline, "Nothing we do will last as long as those power lines. If we let them stay above ground, they will be a dramatic, permanent reminder of our lack of will and our ineffectiveness"; and

WHEREAS, One of the 2,100 signers of the petition to bury the lines wrote, "Providence's historic charm and the beauty of its waterfront are important parts of our economy and our identity. The power lines depress both."; and

WHEREAS, Route I-195's interstate water views are seen by approximately 10 million travelers a year who speed past Providence on their way to the Cape and the Islands; and

WHEREAS, India Point Park is listed in many travel guides as the top attraction for residents and visitors to the city of Providence and used by more than 150,000 people a year, according to the Providence Parks Department; India Point Park is one of the city's most popular parks, frequented by people from across the city, state, and region, representing one of the most diverse populations of any city park; and

WHEREAS, The burial of the power lines would benefit the entire city, through increased economic development, tourism, and the beautification of four waterfront parks - India Point and Corliss Landing in Providence, the Seekonk River pedestrian bridge, and Bold Point Park in East Providence -- by removing power lines from their view sheds; and

WHEREAS, \$20 million, more than half of the \$30-35million estimated cost of burial, has been raised, and ISO-New England, the regional grid, could contribute an additional \$9 million toward burial after updating its 2006 contribution of \$1.5 million; and

WHEREAS, If the power lines are rebuilt overhead, as proposed, they will be adjacent to and even more conspicuous from the I-195 gateway to the City, and will likely leave an industrial scar etched across the face of Providence for another 100 years; and

WHEREAS, Chattanooga, Louisville, San Antonio, and other mid-size cities have buried shoreline wires and reaped major economic and civic benefits for decades by creating enhanced attractive waterfront destinations that draw millions of people; and

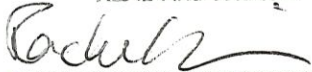
WHEREAS, Other investor-owned utilities have been burying highly visible, strategically located power lines like ours for decades by spreading the incremental cost among a large base of ratepayers; and


WHEREAS, National Grid in the UK plans to spend \$1 billion burying power lines in British National Parks and other scenic areas, so that "the mistakes of the '50s would not be repeated," according to a National Grid/UK official.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Providence City Council hereby requests the General Assembly and our Federal Delegation Consider Making an Appropriation of Funds to Contribute to the Burial of the waterfront Power Lines at India Point Park.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That upon passage, copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Speaker of the House, members of the Providence Delegation, the Honorable Governor Dan McKee and the United States Congressional Delegation from Rhode Island.


IN CITY COUNCIL
FEB 15 2024
READ AND PASSED



RACHEL M. MILLER, PRESIDENT


CLERK

I HEREBY APPROVE.



Mayor

Date: 2/21/24