

Providence Sunday Journal

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsightly power lines have got to go

When Providence revitalized its riverfront and placed overhead utility lines under bridges, it made WaterFire possible, which attracts a million visitors and adds \$100 million a year to the city's economy. WaterFire is unique, but burying shoreline power lines is not. Cities like Chattanooga, Tenn. and Louisville, Ky. buried high-voltage power lines decades ago and have reaped the benefits of upgrading their waterfronts for citizens and tourists alike ever since.

Unfortunately, Providence has not followed suit on its waterfront at the head of Narragansett Bay, which remains defaced by overhead power lines and massive, 100-year-old towers. Approximately ten million travelers speed through Providence on I-95 toward the Cape and the Islands every year. If just 1% of them were enticed by an upgraded waterfront to stop and spend \$100 here, our economy would gain \$10 million a year.

State law mandates that all utility siting decisions "will enhance the socio-economic fabric of the state." Yet National Grid has proposed leaving the power lines overhead for the foreseeable future, and making them even more conspicuous by having them cross the Seekonk River over the pedestrian bridge park next to I-95. The company persists in advocating its retrograde plan, despite 19 years of public support for burial, major advances in undergrounding technology, and \$18 million raised for burial, plus at least \$9 million more that would likely be available from the regional grid.

In response to Pennsylvania Power and Light's effort to acquire National Grid, we join Friends of India Point Park in urging PPL to abandon National Grid's long-standing "no-can-do" attitude toward ridding the city's iconic waterfront of its obtrusive scar.

Sally Lapidés, president, Residential Properties Ltd.

Mark Hellendrung, CEO, Narragansett Brewing Co.

T. J. McNulty, CEO, Grand Festivals (aka RI Seafood Festival)

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Fairness and National Grid

Regarding the burial of overhead power lines, we agree with Robert Amman ("Power lines and the question of race," Letters, July 31) that National Grid has a responsibility to its ratepayers "to treat them all fairly." That is exactly what the company has not done.

For 19 years, National Grid has refused to bury a mile of power lines in India Point Park despite support for burial from 2,100 petition signers in all 39 cities and towns, and 70 state and local government agencies and private organizations. When advocates raised nearly all the \$18 million needed for burial, National Grid stalled the process while the cost estimate rose. Today, the lines could still be buried at little cost to statewide ratepayers.

In 2016, just four months after a few citizens and a city councilor objected to building three miles of overhead power lines through Narragansett, National Grid, in partnership with Deepwater Wind, buried the lines in town and under Block Island Sound, funded by statewide ratepayers. The project has garnered for National Grid what the state Public Utilities Commission chairman calls a "ridiculous" \$46 million in windfall profits.

In 1994, National Grid readily agreed to the demand of 37 homeowners on Cindy Anne Drive in East Greenwich that three miles of power lines be moved to reduce their exposure to cancer risks from electro-magnetic fields, at a cost of \$6 million, funded by statewide ratepayers.

Mr. Amman would learn a lot about how fairly National Grid treats its ratepayers if he were to compare the demographics of Narragansett and East Greenwich's Cindy Anne Drive to India Point Park, where the diversity of park goers is unmistakable to anyone who looks around.

*Nick Cicchitelli, Daisy Schnepel and Amy Mendillo
Fox Point Neighborhood Association*