



Groton's health and safety is our first concern

We believe without a doubt that the proposed Washington Green development exposes the Town, Light Department, and future residents to tremendous risk.

Electric utilities end up in the most surprising places. Who would expect to see Groton Electric in at the Housing Appeals Court of Massachusetts?

We didn't see that in our future, either, but the potential danger for Groton Electric and our customers associated with the proposed Washington Green development adjacent to our substation caused us to get involved - first with the Zoning Board of Appeals' (ZBA) review, and subsequently with the defense of their denial of the application.

The parcel in question was the subject of a special permit application four years ago for eight houses (conventional development would allow five houses at most). After meeting with the Planning Board over six months, the developer withdrew the application when it became apparent that he could not satisfy the Planning Board's concerns.

The Chapter 40B application

A year and a half later, new developers filed a 40B application for Washington Green. Building under Chapter 40B benefits developers because it suspends local zoning regulations in order to encourage the building of low- and moderate-income housing. If a community has less than 10% of its housing stock qualifying as subsidized low or moderate income, the state looks favorably on 40B applications unless the community can prove a valid health or safety concern.

The new developers proposed 44 condominiums, 11 of which would qualify as affordable, for a parcel of land that earlier could not support eight houses. The proximity of these units to our substation, which is not designed to be in the midst of a dense population, creates substantial issues of liability and an unacceptable risk. Clearly, this is a valid safety concern.

Many crucial safety issues

Due to these concerns, Groton Electric presented information to the ZBA that communicated the dangers and deficiencies

A necessary investment

Litigation is very expensive and we have made a substantial investment to protect our ratepayers from future harm. We believe this is necessary, especially given the likelihood of liability due to the proximity of the development to our substation. Simultaneously, we are exploring various options designed to eliminate the liability and protect the financial integrity of your Light Department.

associated with the plan. Some of these involve quality of life issues, but, by far, our biggest worry is the safety of the children and adolescents who may come to regard the substation as a great playground/hangout spot.

Unfortunately, there have been many sad cases where the temptation or dares to youngsters and teenagers to explore electrical equipment of the nature found at the substation has resulted in tragedy. Less important, but surely of consequence, is that our equipment could be seriously damaged should our substation be vandalized. Since this is the only substation serving the town, vandalism could put the whole town in darkness for days and cost millions of dollars to repair.

We also pointed out that both the Town and the Light Department would be separately subject to litigation for personal injury or property damage claims.

We testified this winter

The ZBA denied the application based on our concerns as well as other safety and environmental issues. The Washington Green developers have appealed the ZBA's decision to the Housing Appeals Committee of the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. This spring, Groton Electric testified on the liability and safety issues, cross-examined witnesses, and participated in the case in the ZBA's defense. As the process continues to unfold, we are committed to preventing this potential liability from becoming a reality.

SUMMER TIPS

Good ideas for warm weather

Summer weather is finally here! But with it come the highest electric bills of the year for many customers, along with seasonal thunderstorms that can cause power surges.

Clean those coils and filters

Last year we had a customer with a high bill complaint. When we did a walkthrough of the house, there was a dehumidifier with a filter that wouldn't budge. It took a significant amount of effort to pull out the filter because the coils and filter had become totally encased in "goo." Over the years it had never been cleaned and kept getting dirtier and dirtier.

Even when operating correctly, a dehumidifier uses a substantial amount of electricity - as much as a window air conditioner. In this case the dehumidifier was running 24 hours a day and was no longer able to extract humidity from the air because air could not flow through the coils. Please take this example to heart and clean out those coils and filters on your dehumidifiers. And remember to clean or replace the filters in your air conditioners at least once a month during the cooling season.

Toss that old clunker

To help our customers use electricity efficiently, in January 2004 we ran a program that picked up old extra refrigerators. The results are now in. Of the 47 refrigerators picked up, some two-thirds were plugged in year round. For each of those customers, the average energy reduction from 2003 to 2004 was 15.7%. During the same time period, our average customer increased electric use by 2.9%.

Every refrigerator is different, but the refrigerators with the worst efficiency are the side-by-side, frost-free refrigerators from the 1970s. If you've got an old clunker running in your basement, think about getting rid of it this summer.



Pole climbing and safety training are regular parts of linemen training at Groton Electric Light, as demonstrated here by Linemen Dave Goodall and Ryan Andrews.

Get the urge to beat the surge

We strongly discourage buying a basic surge protector. We recommend, at the minimum, a power strip with a UL rating of 1449, a good warranty and an audible alarm.

For more details on beating power surges go to www.grotonelectric.org and download our October 2003 newsletter in the Information section.

We're on-line!

Is there anything you would like to know about Groton Electric? Check out our website at www.grotonelectric.org.