

Environmental Health Coalition

COALICION de SALUD AMBIENTAL

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Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Commission stamps permit ‘Denied’ *CEC says proposed polluting plant violates planning guidelines*

(Chula Vista, CA) – In a decision that marked a triumph for ethical development guidelines, the California Energy Commission recommended denial of the expansion of a polluting power plant that would have sacrificed the health of hundreds of families that live and work nearby.

A 400-page report issued by the CEC on January 23 states that the Chula Vista Energy Upgrade project is “inconsistent with applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards and it creates unmitigable impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).” Specifically, the CEC findings show that the location of the proposed power plant is inconsistent with the Chula Vista General Plan for land use, which prohibits locating industry near homes, schools, or hospitals.

“The commission recognized that the General Plan means what it says: energy companies can’t put a power plant within 1,000 feet of homes,” said Diane Takvorian, Executive Director of Environmental Health Coalition, which was instrumental in creating the plan. “The decision respects the efforts of community members who insisted that Chula Vista’s General Plan not allow polluting industries near homes and schools. The commission could have overridden the policies this community worked so hard to adopt, but it chose correctly and courageously to affirm those policies.”

The CEC will hold its final public hearing on the issue February 23, with a final vote expected soon after at a regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the California Energy Commission.

MMC, a New York-based corporation, was seeking to replace the current 44 megawatt peaker plant on Main St. in Chula Vista with a 100 megawatt plant located just 350 feet from homes and 1300 feet from an elementary school. MMC applied to the California Energy Commission (CEC) for certification in September 2007.

The immediate area near the plant is a community where 81% of residents are people of color and 16% are below the federal poverty level.

EHC was an official party to the CEC proceedings and officially opposed the expansion. During the more than two year review process, thousands of residents and EHC members testified in

opposition to the expansion at public hearings and participated in rallies and protests voicing their opposition.

“This decision is a testament to the power of people,” said Laura Hunter, director of EHC’s Clean Bay Campaign. “When bad decisions threaten the health of our families and children, we organize and push back. It’s a signal that we are moving away from energy strategies that sacrifice communities. The time for change is right here, right now on Main Street Chula Vista.”

The commission’s decisions recognized that the approval of the MMC project would not substantially contribute to the removal of the South Bay Power Plant, an outdated, inefficient, polluting plant that blocks public access to San Diego Bay. The decision also is remarkable and forward looking in that it recognizes that MMC’s exclusive focus on a natural-gas peaking power plant prevented analysis of more sustainable alternatives like solar panels installed on rooftops and parking lots.

CEC Press Release: www.energy.ca.gov/releases/index.html

CEC Report: www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/chulavista/documents/

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