

Utility makes best case

Article :

The forces opposed to Kansas City Power & Light's planned expansion at Iatan, Mo., are passionate. Their case, however, remains weak.

And their preparation for testimony for the Missouri Public Service Commission last week underlined the frailty of an argument built on emotion.

At one point, the KCP&L attorney pressed a key environmentalist witness on whether the witness had even looked at the utility's full plan for expansion. "I didn't need those materials to form my basic argument," the witness said.

We believe KCP&L officials have put together a \$1.3 billion package that prepares Kansas City and Northwest Missouri for a period of growth.

A state-of-the-art plant will generate a projected 850 megawatts of power in a market that now needs about 500 megawatts. The cushion is critical for growth.

The plan also promises to spend \$300 million to \$350 million over the next five years on legitimate environmental concerns. In addition to building a new plant at Iatan that meets or exceeds new air-quality standards, KCP&L will invest money in existing plants in Kansas and Missouri so that they also meet or exceed tougher air-quality standards.

The improvements will enable KCP&L to operate two plants at Iatan that produce fewer emissions than the existing plant generates today. That is progress.

And if the opponents had taken the time to look, they would have seen that KCP&L is investing in the vary alternative energy source that environmentalists champion most. The utility plans to install enough wind turbines in Kansas to generate as much as 200 megawatts of clean power.

Finally, the new construction will bring jobs to Northwest Missouri. Officials estimate the new plant will translate into a \$300 million payroll that will employ 1,000 workers during the peak building period.

KCP&L delivered a convincing argument for the new plant during the hearings in Jefferson City. Its critics fell short. The PSC should give this important project a green light when it votes later this month.

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