



TOWNSHIP OF WEST ORANGE
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Department of Planning and Development
Historic Preservation Commission

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MEMORANDUM

To: Philip D. Neuer, Esq.
Chair
West Orange Township Zoning Board of Adjustment

From: Brian Feeney
Chair, West Orange Historic Preservation Commission

RE: PSE&G West Orange Switching Sub-Station

Date: November 14, 2025

I am writing to the Zoning Board of Adjustment on behalf of the West Orange Historic Preservation Commission.

At the Commission's November meeting aspects of the rehabilitation plans for the PSE&G West Orange Switching Sub-Station, located at Prospect Avenue and Mt Pleasant Avenue, were discussed. In particular, the plan to replace the existing perimeter fence was the focus of our discussion.

By way of background, the sub-station is part of what is known as the Northern Inner Ring of the utility's electrical transmission system, constructed between 1926 and 1928. It encircles PSE&G's northern service territory and the state's historically urban and industrial core.

In 2012 the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) commissioned an architectural historian to conduct an Intensive-Level Architectural Survey of a number of PSE&G properties throughout the State in response to a significant upgrade plan that was proposed at that time. The survey's conclusions, confirmed by the SHPO, identified many of these historic properties as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The justification of eligibility concludes that the Northern Inner Ring Transmission System is "eligible for listing in the National Register at the state level under Criterion A in the area of Engineering, Industry, and Commerce and under Criterion C as a significant and distinguishable entity."

The report specifically identifies the West Orange Switching Sub-Station as an important contributor to the historic significance of the Norther Inner Ring. The justification of eligibility concludes that the “West Orange Switching Sub-station is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Architecture as a distinctive and well-preserved example of Industrial Art-Deco-style architecture associated with the electrical utility industry.” The West Orange Sub-station includes the central brick control room and repair shop, brick gate house, and brick and cast-iron perimeter fence.

The Commission understands that the proposed PSE&G plan regarding the West Orange Sub-station calls for removal of the existing brick and cast-iron perimeter fence and replacing it with a continuous steel fence of contemporary design.

The Commission would like to go on record as strongly opposing this plan since it will eliminate the Art-Deco-style of the original fence, something we have determined will have an adverse effect on the historic character of the property.

What we would like Township and the Zoning Board to consider is strongly recommending that PSE&G change its plan to one that would replicate the exact style of the existing brick and cast-iron Art-Deco fence. We understand that PSE&G has determined that a higher fence is needed to increase security of the sub-station; we have no objection to increasing the height.

During the Zoning Board’s review process the Commission welcomes the opportunity to assist you by reviewing and commenting on any revised PSE&G plans.

Finally, we thank the Board for your commitment to helping preserve the historic character of the many cultural resources in our Township. Working together we can help to preserve these resources for the understanding and enjoyment by future generations.