

## CHULA VISTA

# State turns down plan to expand power plant

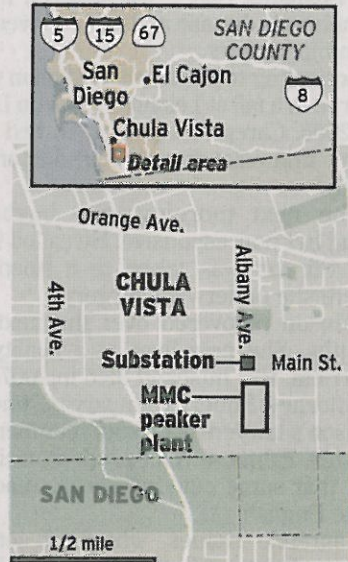
By Tanya Sierra  
STAFF WRITER

A two-year battle to double the size of a power plant in a residential neighborhood in Chula Vista ended yesterday when the state Energy Commission denied the expansion.

The plant is close to a school and homes, and several nearby residents opposed its expansion. The 44.5-megawatt power generator, known as the MMC peaker plant, provides electricity during peak demand. The original applicant, MMC Energy Inc., made the request to double its capacity in August 2007.

The California Energy Commission unanimously denied that request yesterday because it violates Chula Vista's zoning laws and general plan, which bar major toxic emitters within 1,000 feet of schools and homes.

Last month, MMC Energy sold its Chula Vista and Escondido power plants for \$5 million to Wellhead Electric of Sacramento. MMC is going out of



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business.

Hal Dittmer, president of Wellhead, said that as soon as the sale is final, company representatives will meet with city officials and explore other options.

SEE Power plant, B5

## ► POWER PLANT

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# Commission panel opposed plan in January

For two years, residents and environmental activists have pressured the City Council to oppose the expansion. They accused Mayor Cheryl Cox and other council members of not caring about the welfare of residents in southwest Chula Vista.

Laura Hunter of the Environmental Health Coalition attended yesterday's hearing in Sacramento with Councilman Rudy Ramirez.

"We had an amazing victory today for community health," Hunter said.

In January, a commission committee recommended denying the expansion application.

The MMC plant expansion was one way to expedite the removal of the South Bay Power Plant on the waterfront. City officials believe the state will allow the plant to close when more peaking power is available elsewhere.

The Chargers football team is interested in building a stadium at the plant site, but it can't be dismantled until other energy sources come online, including the Sunrise Powerlink and the Calpine base-load plant in Otay Mesa.

In January, when the Energy Commission issued its preliminary decision, Cox said the city would look for other possible power-plant sites.

New sites have been scouted south of the landfill, said Assistant City Manager Scott Tulloch. But city officials haven't had discussions with Wellhead representatives and don't know their plans.

Cox said yesterday's decision allows Chula Vista to move on to other opportunities.

"It's time for Chula Vista to work on fossil fuels in a location best for the region," she said.

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