

DOCKET**06-AFC-3**DATE JAN 03 2007RECD. JAN 03 2007

From: Bill Pfanner
To: "LauraH@environmentalhealth.org".GWIA.gwia
Date: 1/3/2007 10:04:55 AM
Subject: Re: Another Voice Article on Power Plants!

Thanks Laura. I think the meeting between the City and the Port will be on Jan. 18th, not the 19th (as stated in the article). Did you want this information docketed? If so, you should also email it to Dockets (see email address above). Otherwise, it is at my discretion whether the information is docketed or not.

Bill

>>> "Laura Hunter" <LauraH@environmentalhealth.org> 01/03/07 9:32 AM >>>

Wow! Another day, another great article by the Voice of San Diego!!!! Laura
<http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/articles/2007/01/03/news/02business.txt> WHAT'S IN OUR AIR
 Big Polluters Graying as Region's Energy GreensWhatever replaces two local power plants will be a major source of San Diego County's pollution for at least 40 years.By ROB DAVIS Voice Staff
 WriterWednesday, Jan. 3, 2007 | The biggest source of federally regulated pollution in San Diego County is getting old. So is the third-largest source.

Both are power plants, and both began operating before John F. Kennedy was president.

In Carlsbad, the Encina Power Station spit out 3.9 million pounds of pollution in 2004, the result of the plant's natural gas combustion. In Chula Vista, the South Bay Power Plant emitted 2.3 million pounds.

As plans to replace the plants are discussed, the pollution they cause is largely absent from the energy industry's discourse. But decisions about those plants will impact our future air quality. Whatever replaces them will be a major source of San Diego County's pollution for at least 40 years.

With the region on the cusp of a clean-energy, renewable future, some wonder whether the plants' replacements and the accompanying pollution are unwarranted. Three years ago, the region got less than 1 percent of its energy from renewable sources such as solar and wind. That has grown to 6 percent today. San Diego Gas & Electric aims for 16 percent by 2010.

Energy experts, regulators and power producers say natural-gas-fueled replacements for the Encina and South Bay plants will be a bridge between the region's dirty fossil fuel past and a cleaner energy future. But the region cannot yet rely on major renewable sources that remain unaffordable or unproven, they say.

"We're not there yet. It's not like there's a wind farm out in East County just waiting to give us 500 megawatts of capacity," said Scott Anders, director of the Energy Policy Initiatives Center at University of San Diego. "So we have to be careful about the choices we make to keep the lights on. I see a greener future, but I don't see it by 2010. And I don't necessarily think that putting in a power plant precludes that future."

But the Environmental Health Coalition, a National City-based environmental justice group fighting the South Bay plant, disagrees that replacement plants will serve as a bridge to a cleaner future. They argue that new plants will pollute long after the time when renewable energy is readily available." It's not like there's a wind farm out in East County just waiting to give us 500 megawatts of capacity. So we have to be careful about the choices we make to keep the lights on. I see a greener future, but I don't see it by 2010."— Scott Anders,

Director of University of San Diego's Energy Policy Initiatives Center"These two power plants are old. It's time for them to go," said Laura Hunter, director of the coalition's Clean Bay Campaign. "How we do that, I hope we have some vision, I hope we have some equity."

The discussion here is starkly different than debates occurring nationwide, where coal plants -- larger

polluters than natural gas -- are still being built as a cheap energy source. As Democrats take control of Congress and signal that legislation to address global warming is coming, companies are scrambling to secure approval for what could be the county's last generation of dirty, coal-fired plants. A Texas company, for example, is currently proposing the controversial construction of 11 coal-fired plants.

In California, all new power plants are natural-gas fired. No nuclear, coal or oil-fired plants have opened in 20 years, said Irene Stillings, executive director of the San Diego Regional Energy Office, an independent nonprofit group. Local regulations introduced in 1997 prohibited power plants from burning fuel oil except in emergencies, which along with new technologies helped to significantly cut pollution.

Bill Powers, a San Diego-based engineer fighting to make the Texas coal proposal cleaner, described the natural-gas technology now proposed here as "squeaky clean."

"We could Band-Aid those things (Encina and South Bay) for another 20 years," Powers said. "But realistically it would be better to replace the old dogs now, and as they are no longer needed just back off."

The South Bay plant is closest to being replaced. LS Energy, a New Jersey-based company, assumed the 706-megawatt plant's lease from Duke Energy in May. The company plans to replace South Bay plant with a more efficient 620-megawatt gas-fired plant that would create enough energy to power about 600,000 homes. The replacement would use technology that creates energy about 2.5 times more efficiently and free up 115 acres of bay front land for redevelopment.

"It's like saying trading in your old pickup truck for a new hybrid Prius," LS Energy spokesman David Hicks said. "It's a gigantic leap forward. That's the only way to look at it."

Opponents argue that the new plant, while more efficient, would pollute nearly as much as the existing plant, which has operated at 30 percent of its capacity the last two years. LS Power says the net emissions would be lower than the existing plant's, and has agreed to not exceed the current plant's emissions during 2004-2005.

"Are we really improving our air quality or not?" Hunter asked. "We certainly should be, or we're making a serious mistake. This is a 50-year decision we're making."

The Environmental Health Coalition suggests building smaller plants, using an old landfill in South County as one option. Other potential sites for smaller plants have been identified, Hunter said.

The current South Bay plant, which opened in July 1960, requires millions of gallons of seawater to cool its internal processes. Its replacement will not need the bay's water, which would be a boon for sea life that gets trapped and killed by water intake. Opponents say that affords the perfect opportunity to move the plant out of western Chula Vista or to replace it with a smaller, less-polluting plant and an emphasis on renewable technology.

Hicks, the LS Power spokesman, said the existing site is the best option, because it already has the needed transmission lines and natural gas pipeline in place.

To build the replacement, LS Power is seeking a 30-year lease with two five-year options from the Unified Port of San Diego, which owns the plant and the land on which it sits. The Environmental Health Coalition is asking the port to delay the lease.

The city of Chula Vista and the port jointly meet Jan. 19 to discuss the replacement plans.

No formal replacement has been proposed for the Encina site, but it's well-known that its operator, NRG Energy, is considering replacing it.

Please contact Rob Davis directly with your thoughts, ideas, personal stories or tips. Or send a letter to

the editor. Close Window

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