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VY Daily News

Wednesday, December 10, 2003

If you have news items to contribute contact Pat Lyman - plyma90@entergy.com

Brattleboro Reformer, Wednesday, December 10, 2003

Yankee, NEC ink secrecy contract

By TOBY HENRY
Reformer Staff <<mailto:thenry@reformer.com>>

BRATTLEBORO -- A local anti-nuclear group has agreed to sign a confidentiality agreement in order to gain access to documents relating to the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant's "uprate" proposal.

Ray Shadis, a staff adviser for the New England Coalition, said Monday that he will sign a confidentiality agreement in order to gain information related to Yankee's plan to boost its power output by some 20 percent. The coalition is an intervenor in the ongoing uprate hearings, and a ruling on the certificate of public good for the uprate from the Vermont Public Service Board is expected in mid-March.

Shadis said the requested information pertains in part to Yankee's "alternative source term" calculations, a set of criteria which gauges the amount of radioactive material that could be released from the plant in the event of a meltdown or other accident.

Yankee spokesman Rob Williams avoided specifics about the nature of the confidential information on Tuesday, stating only that it was "third-party technical information about the plant and the uprate requested from Vermont Yankee by the coalition."

This marks the first time that the coalition has agreed to sign a confidentiality agreement related to the uprate. Confidentiality agreements, intended to protect company "trade secrets" from competitors, allow interested parties to access certain information but do not allow for public disclosure of the information.

"And that was one of our original concerns with this," Shadis said. "Our belief is that everything relating to the uprate should be made public. It's not magic arithmetic people's lives are at stake, and this should be up front, open and accessible."

The board and Yankee owner Entergy entered a protective agreement on April 25, under which the board agreed to keep certain information confidential, and an order for the agreement was issued on May 9. Late last month the coalition filed a motion with the board opposing the requests for protective orders which had been filed earlier by General Electric, Stone & Webster Inc., Polestar Applied Technology and Framatome ANP.

Williams said these four companies are Yankee contractors and aided in compiling the information requested by the coalition. The coalition opposed the protective order request, arguing that Entergy had not given sufficient reasons why the information should be considered proprietary.

On Dec. 4, the board ruled against the coalition's request.

Williams said Yankee will "continue to supply discovery information on this until discovery closes in January" to ensure that the information provided is kept up to date. The coalition's discovery period ends Dec. 15, and the date for final testimony from the coalition is Jan. 2.

Rutland Herald, Wednesday, December 10, 2003

Anti-nuclear coalition gives up fight over access to documents

By SUSAN SMALLHEER

Herald Staff

The New England Coalition has given up its long-running fight over open access to confidential documents by Entergy Nuclear's consultants about the safety of its proposed power increase.

Raymond Shadis, staff adviser for the anti-nuclear group, said Tuesday that the group had agreed to sign a protective order concerning the use of the documents, something it had resisted steadfastly for the past nine months.

Last week, the Public Service Board ruled that four key consultants Entergy hired to help analyze the so-called power uprate could demand confidentiality because of concerns that its business competitors could use their work.

Shadis said his experts, who will testify when technical hearings resume before the Public Service Board in January, needed access to the documents to do a complete and thorough evaluation of Entergy's case.

"We're only doing it with great reluctance and repugnance," Shadis said. "It's a huge joke; how many layers of protection do these people need from public scrutiny?"

He said the documents under dispute deal with the safety calculation or feasibility of the uprate.

"We are an understaffed, underfunded public advocacy group which has grappled with a multibillion-dollar corporation for the last eight months, trying to extract the information that the public should have about its safety and the safety of the environment," Shadis said.

The protective order will cover work by General Electric, Framatome ANP Inc., Stone & Webster Inc., and Polestar Applied Technology Inc. Framatome is a French nuclear consulting firm, the largest in the world; Stone & Webster is a Boston-based nuclear engineering firm, and General Electric designed key components of Vermont Yankee.

Entergy spokesman Robert Williams said the protective order was needed because of the companies' proprietary work. If there wasn't a protective order, those companies' competitors could use their work without paying for it.

"We'll continue to supply discovery information until the January hearings," Williams said.

Shadis said all his consultants had signed the protective order with the exception of David Lochbaum, a nuclear scientist with the Union of Concerned Scientists in Washington, D.C.

"David Lochbaum doesn't sign these things," Shadis said.

"I don't think we've caving in. But we are down to the end of the process. We've done our best to make this information public," Shadis said. "There's no time for it; they have played the time card perfectly."

Shadis said he was particularly reluctant to sign the protective orders because of the problems it caused the coalition during the sale of the reactor to Entergy last year. Entergy took issue with statements the coalition's attorney made to a reporter and tried to have him barred from practicing in front of the Public Service Board.

"They were trying to ruin one man's career," he said of James Dumont, the coalition's attorney last year, who is not working on the coalition's case on the uprate. Shadis said the unsuccessful sanctions against Dumont were bound to have a "chilling" effect on any advocacy groups.

Shadis has been fighting Entergy for months over the exchange of documents about the uprate and won cash sanctions against Entergy, which the Public Service Board imposed. He said he is now swimming in documents.

"They're now claiming they've provided us with 9,000 documents," he said. But he said it was a strategy of too much, very late. He said Entergy continues to give him documents on a daily basis, and it also changes the standard of confidentiality after documents have been given to him in the free and clear.

He said that even assuming he spent 20 minutes reading each document, that would mean 3,000 hours, which is substantially more than the typical work year of 2,080 hours.

Technical hearings resume on Jan. 12 in Montpelier.

The Recorder, Wednesday, December 10, 2003

Utility bill hikes spark interest in alternatives

Towns looking at new choices under state deregulation

By RICHIE DAVIS

Recorder Staff

As early as next month, some Franklin County electric customers could see their utility bills rise, a development which emerging alternatives to traditional power companies hope will begin the flow of customers in their direction.

Towns - which struggle to pay for municipal buildings, schools and street lighting as part of an overall budget squeeze - began this month exploring their new choices allowed under state deregulation.

Where once a handful of large power companies held local monopolies in providing electricity, deregulation and technology changes will allow choices of power providers, just as happened with long-distance telephone service officials from several area towns met last week and heard pitches from the

Hampshire Regional Council of Governments, the non-profit Center for Ecological Technology and the independent, public Massachusetts Health and Educational Facilities Authority (MHEFA). The power brokers urged nearly 20 town representatives to begin thinking about signing up for lower-cost options for the coming day when the state-mandated, artificially low standard offer by traditional utilities disappears.

Hampshire COG expects within the next three months to begin selling power to its towns that are served by Mass. Electric Co., according to Marie Guerin, its municipal specialist.

Massachusetts Electric, which delivers electricity to nearly 14,000 customers in eastern and western Franklin County, has filed with the state to hike its standard offer effective Jan. 1 by about \$1 for the typical residential customer.

After a trial run of a few months, the Hampshire COG would hope to offer cheaper power to Mass. Electric's Franklin County towns and eventually to Western Massachusetts Electric Co. communities as well.

The Mass. Electric filing, now before the state Department of Telecommunications and Energy, would speed competition against the standard offer long before the offer's scheduled March 2005 end date, said Russell Sylva of MHEFA's Power Options Inc. at a forum on Dec. 3 sponsored by the Franklin Regional COG.

Phoebe Walker, the FRCOG's co-director of community services, said it's unclear whether her agency's Regional Issues Committee will recommend trying to organize the towns into a single buying group to broker a better price, or leave it to towns to select their own power providers.

Power Options has about 315 enrolled hospitals, colleges and other institutions around the state buying power from one month through several years.

The Hampshire COG has its 13 members and non-member communities like Northampton and Amherst, poised to buy the power it would pool from the Connecticut Municipal Electrical Energy Cooperative.

"We're setting up contracts, so that when we see the price is right, we can negotiate a rate," said Guerin, who Thursday asked representatives from Heath, New Salem, Monroe and Orange to provide their usage data so the COG can begin preparing for that point.

The Hampshire COG is one of only two regional aggregators of cities and towns, along with the Cape Cod Commission, said Executive Director Penelope Geis, and it plans to eventually roll out service to business customers and finally to residents, "to protect our citizens."

Its advantages are local control, power through low-cost municipal power cooperatives and potential reinvestment of income based on locally set goals.

"Cape Cod is getting millions and doing energy conservation, investing in local 'green' energy," Geis said. "We might even be more creative than re-wrapping your water heater with another layer of insulation," she said, adding that Cape Cod has been able to institute a program to replace high-cost electric heating in homes.

She and CET's Peggy MacLeod emphasized that communities should think beyond simply buying the cheapest power they can find, investing in renewable energy projects such as a planned wind project in Monroe and Florida and a methane project proposed for the Northampton landfill, as well as to improve the environment and set an example for residents.

Northfield solar power consultant Donald Campbell told representatives that they may also be able to find unused property in town - including rooftops of buildings and capped landfills - where they can install photovoltaic panels to generate electricity and cut their municipal electric bills.

But some of the Franklin County officials attending Wednesday's sessions were trying to simply grasp the complex issue for which there are fewer available cost comparisons available than projections of escalating costs.

"This was helpful," said Leverett Town Administrator Marjorie McGinnis. This has been an issue since 1997, and I've got a ton of information. But once the standard offer goes away, we'll truly have to make decisions."

Robert Lunny, Orange's representative to the Franklin COG, said, "I don't know if towns are even aware of the importance of this. But it's going to sneak up on them. It's something that's going to have to be dealt with."

Orange, which spends about \$35,000 a year on street lights alone, and an estimated \$200,000 on schools, wastewater treatment and other municipal uses, is typical of municipalities looking to find savings wherever they can.

"Our budgets are so close to the bone now that any increase is going to be devastating," he said.

The Recorder, Wednesday, December 10, 2003

Heath questions routes of Yankee trucks

Demolition haulers could chew up roads

By RICHIE DAVIS

Recorder Staff

HEATH - When the Yankee Atomic plant in Rowe began hauling the demolition waste from its decommissioned reactor last week, it rolled over some toes in its neighboring town.

As part of its ongoing dismantling process, the nuclear plant has stepped up its removal of nonradioactive demolition waste - sending up to 20 truckloads a day carrying as much as 80,000 pounds of debris along roads that wind their way nearly eight miles through Heath.

"They're huge," said Pam Porter, who first noticed two-trailer tandems when she was out on an early-morning

walk with a friend on Number Nine Road. "Very few people knew what was going on."

Their concern was heightened, she said, when they learned it was the first rumble of a year-long campaign to truck 21 million pounds of nonradioactive demolition debris to southern New Hampshire and then 56 million pounds of low-level radioactive waste bound for a rail siding in Palmer and then a repository in Utah.

The route - along Monroe Hill, Ford Hill, Leshure and Cyrus Stage roads in Rowe, then Groll and Number Nine roads, Route 8A, Branch Hill, Bray and Avery Brook roads in Heath and Heath Road in Charlemont - was planned to avoid two posted bridges in Charlemont, one of which is on Route 2, according to Yankee spokeswoman Kelley Smith.

"We have all of the necessary permits and approval to travel these roads," said Smith. Following a meeting with the Heath Board of Selectman last week, Yankee officials agreed to send some of the empty trucks back through Charlemont, and also to look into shipping the demolition material from the warehouse, service building and other nonnuclear structures northward through Readsboro, Vt.

The 18-wheel flatbed tractor-trailers, loaded with inter-modal steel waste containers, are traveling

between 6:30 a.m. and 11 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays -although Smith says the 11 p.m. ending "is not going to be every day."

Although some of the trucks have been twin flatbeds carrying roofing material, Smith said, most are single-bed trucks.

The short-term construction debris phase of the project is project-ed to send 578 loads of industrial waste containing asbestos on Waste Management trucks. The radioactive waste phase, scheduled to begin in January, will carry 122 trucks a month through next December -1,512 trucks in all. Ameritech Environmental Service will ship a maximum of six trucks per day, Mondays through Fridays. Twenty-eight of the loads have already been shipped.

Residents grew concerned when they learned Yankee was launching its year-long trucking campaign with-out advising town or school officials, said Porter.

"This caught us unaware," she said. "They notified selectmen the day before (last week's) meeting."

At that meeting, attended by con-cerned residents who asked whether the school had been notified, they were told that it was expected the town would alert school officials.

On Avery Brook Road, the windi-est and narrowest of roads along the route, "a passenger car has to pull over to let a truck go by, so you can imagine a school bus," said Porter.

The road is 14 feet wide at some points, according to Mike Smith, Heath road superintendent.

Beyond safety, he is also con-cerned about wear and tear on town roads, which are not posted with weight limits.

"That's a lot of truck traffic," he said. "Everybody's pretty concerned. I have trucks coming into town with salt and sand. If they start meeting on that narrow road, we're going to have a problem."

The road superintendent said it "amazes" him that one of the Route 2 bridges near the center of Charlemont is posted for a lower limit than roads and culverts in Heath.

"Occasional truck traffic of that weight doesn't worry me a whole lot," he said, "but 2,500 truck loads is a lot of truck traffic, especially in summer when the sun is shining on those roads and the aggregate becomes more pliable and susceptible to dam-age."

"This is especially a concern in winter," said Selectwoman Sheila Litchfield. "We have school buses and kids waiting on these roads. We're also hearing from our residents that they've been run off the roads, basi-cally, because another vehicle can't pass."

There have been no assurances that Yankee will pay for repair to the roads if they are damaged, she said, although plant officials have begun working with the town on alternative routes and other solutions.

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Nuclear plant's reactor to be taken to South Carolina this week
Associated Press

HADDAM, Conn. - Officials at the decommissioned Connecticut Yankee nuclear power plant plan to ship the 31-high, 820-ton reactor vessel to South Carolina on Friday or Saturday.

The vessel, which once held highly radioactive nuclear fuel rods used to make electricity, will be placed on a barge and brought down the Connecticut River to Long Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean in a voyage expected to take 10 days.

The trip was scheduled to begin Tuesday, but the weekend's snow storm delayed the start.

The reactor vessel will be encased in concrete and steel to protect people and the environment from radiation. The Coast Guard will accompany the barge on the first leg of the journey, and the state Department of Environmental Protection will make sure the vessel is securely attached to the barge.

Its destination is a 15- to 20-foot deep trench at the Chem Nuclear low-level radioactive waste disposal site near Barnwell, S.C.

"The bottom line is that it's a significant milestone," said Neil Sheehan, a spokesman for the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission. "This represents one of the most radioactive components left at the site, with the exception of the spent fuel. Once you can remove that, you can proceed with a lot of the decommissioning work."

The reactor vessel was completed in 1968 and helped produce more than 110 billion kilowatt hours of electricity over 28 years. The radioactive isotopes are expected to fully decay in 300 years.

Kelley Smith, a spokeswoman for Connecticut Yankee, told The Hartford Courant that the public will not be exposed to unsafe radiation levels during the trip to South Carolina.

A security detail will not accompany the transport barge, because Connecticut Yankee does not consider the vessel a target for terrorism, Smith said. She said it is not in a form that would be useful to terrorists.

"The removal and shipment of the reactor vessel is one of the more important decommissioning milestones because it provides us unfettered access to the containment dome to conduct a radiological cleanup that will prepare the dome for eventual demolition," Smith said.

Federal authorities have approved a transportation plan for the reactor vessel that includes safe harbor ports as a contingency for severe weather or loss of backup radio communication, and routine trip status reporting to regulators.

Sal Mangiagli, an anti-nuclear activist who lives in Haddam, said the packaged reactor vessel remains a threat that compromises the health and safety of the residents of Barnwell, S.C., a town with a population of about 5,000.

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