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Mr. Larry Camper
Director, Division of Decommissioning, Uranium Recovery & Waste Programs
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555-0001

RE: February 19, 2015 Public Meeting, Brattleboro, VT

Dear Mr. Camper,

I am a long-term supporter of Vermont Yankee (VY). Since 2010, I've covered the operations there on a blog called Yes Vermont Yankee (yesvy.blogspot.com). I have been actively involved in describing the arguments for and against operations at the plant for a number of years. By profession, I am a chemist and an expert in corrosion. I owned my own business, and worked at EPRI for a number of years. Currently, I own a small communications company, Carnot Communications.

Why do I tell you this? Because I'm not quite sure how to report the fiasco of an "open" meeting hosted by the NRC on February 19, 2015 in Brattleboro. And I'm not sure whether to send this letter as a comment on the decommissioning record, or as a formal complaint.

Whatever this letter is, whether it is a comment or a complaint, you should know that I think that my rights were violated at that meeting. My First Amendment rights – and by extension Vermont's Open Meeting Law – were basically trashed. The NRC people in charge of that meeting did nothing to maintain a safe and open meeting. They allowed behavior that denied me (and others) our opportunity to put information on the record.

Previous meetings held by NRC in Brattleboro have had these same characteristics. At NRC meetings about Vermont Yankee, people are verbally and physically abused. This is no new thing. The NRC knows it happens, and they know who does it. They do nothing. They stand there. Those of us who would like to speak out in support of plant activities are often intimidated and silenced.

This meeting was a very difficult experience for me. I watched people be harassed and mocked. Gary Sachs was the main heckler. Early in the meeting, Sachs came over to where I was sitting near a man from Entergy. Sachs objected to what we were tweeting. (I would sometimes retweet what the Entergy man tweeted, and vice versa, which is why I say "we were" tweeting.) Sachs got right down next to us and told us that if we expected to be respected at the meeting, our tweets should be respectful. This was basically a close-up, in-your-face threat, based on a twitter stream.

That was not the only harassment that Sachs engaged in. One speaker was forced to give his notes to the NRC representative because the heckling was so severe that he could barely read them aloud. Also, if you watch the video of the meeting, you can see Mr. Sachs physically intimidating Mike Twomey of Entergy, until a security man intervened.

Mr. Sachs is a tall man, much taller than me. He seems always just on the border of being out of control, except when he crosses that border. He grabbed a microphone out of the moderator's hand, and he practically ran at Twomey. It is never clear what Mr. Sachs is going to do next. In contrast, I'm just a little chemist grandmother whose 70th birthday will be in May of this year.

He certainly intimidated me! As the other pro-nuclear man was sitting down, after barely being able to read his notes, Gary Sachs called out to me: "You're next, Meredith." Mr. Sachs' statements on being "respectful" and his direct threat that I was "next" made me frightened to the point that I did not feel safe when my turn to speak came up. I shortened my comments, not willing to stand up long in front of him. The moderator asked if I wanted to face the crowd with a microphone: I didn't. I turned my back on the crowd to avoid seeing Mr. Sachs and therefore probably encouraging him to shout at me. I am an accomplished speaker (I encourage you to watch a video of me debating Arnie Gunderson) and I don't turn my back on the crowd. Speak to the audience! But I was afraid to do so.

I had planned two points: my smoke analogy (which I delivered) and another point on the ease of measuring even very low levels of radiation. This ease encourages nuclear opponents to think that all measurable radiation levels must be decreased, because they are still measurable, and therefore, still supposedly dangerous. Instead of saying this, you can watch me say something rather incoherent about measurements. I could not say what I wanted to say, due to fear. Still, I did give my smoke analogy, and I think I did well, considering how scared I was.

The NRC people at the meeting seemed to know Mr. Sachs pretty well. They mentioned him by first name at the beginning, and even said that the meeting would be a "duet" between Mr. Sachs and the moderator. (How is that going to sound to someone who expects to speak with opinions opposite to those of Mr. Sachs? Even the moderator is afraid of him!) They referred to him by his first name repeatedly. They deferred to him very politely throughout the meeting and so forth. They gave him and others who opposed the decommissioning plan ample time to speak.

But the presence and safety of VY supporters seemed completely irrelevant to the NRC facilitators. Instead, NRC personnel permitted heckling and intimidation throughout the meeting. Those speaking in support of the plan were shut down before they could make their comments. If the NRC ran meetings in a safer and more equitable fashion, they would get a more inclusive set of viewpoints! Many people are intimidated from attending, much less speaking. Here is a summary of what NRC is doing wrong:

- The NRC does not bother to keep order at its meetings.
- The NRC shows favoritism in its preparation for meetings, and in how it handles meetings once they are in progress.
- There is a long history of such favoritism.

- The NRC is even willing to tolerate felonious attacks on pro-nuclear people.
- There is no reason to believe that the NRC will tolerate verbal attacks but will not tolerate physical attacks. I know of at least two physical attacks that were, indeed, tolerated by the NRC.

I was personally deeply affected by Mr. Sachs' threats – in fact I returned home shaking and remained upset for several days. I have considered self-censorship, shutting down the blog, and not attending any more “public” meetings. I thought about this a great deal. Well, it wasn't really *thought*. It was more like fear-flashbacks, to be honest about it.

If you see my blog post, written several days after the meeting, it is about how I had been unable to write, and how I am grateful that Rod Adams wrote a blog post about the meeting. I write my Vermont Yankee blog pro-bono, but I have writing contracts with other companies. The inability to write is not trivial for me.

At this point, I ask NRC to take several steps:

- Set up a framework for acceptable and non-acceptable behavior at its meetings, and enforce those rules without fear or favor of any person.
- Hold another meeting on VY decommissioning, with the new rules in force, in order to obtain genuine public opinion from ALL members of the public. This meeting was a sham and a shambles, and should not count as an official meeting.
- Prevent bullying and shouting and physical intimidation at its meetings. Provide appropriate training to facilitators and security people.
- Recognize its responsibility to hold public meetings that all members of the public can attend in safety.

It is important to me as a Vermont citizen, a pro-nuclear advocate and a scientist that future NRC meetings about VY (and other power plants) are safe and open. I want to continue to participate in the discussion. But I worry that the kind of behavior tolerated at the February 19 meeting will continue. It isn't fair or right for those of us who are trying to share our opinions and some pro-nuclear facts. The meeting managers allow people to intimidate us, threaten us, and even commit assault at some meetings. There can't be one rule for people of one opinion and other rules for people of the opposite opinion.

I expect the NRC will seriously consider my letter and make changes. I further expect that the NRC will acknowledge this meeting for the dangerous shambles that it was, and hold another meeting where everyone can speak.

Sincerely,



Meredith Angwin

Cc. Andrew Persinko, Deputy Director, Division of Decommissioning, NRC