



January 27, 2010

Linden moves forward with coal plant while groups looks to possible city referendum on issue

By *SUZANNE C. RUSSELL*
STAFF WRITER

Linden is moving forward with plans for a coal degasification plant on DuPont property following Tuesday's unanimous passage of a revised agreement which offers the city a better deal.

Council members approved the revised memorandum of understanding to open up DuPont's 98-acre waterfront industrial property for redevelopment and the construction of a controversial \$5 billion PurGen coal degasification plant that will heat coal under pressure to create electricity. Council members said the new agreement includes more safeguards for the city and monetary benchmarks for the proposed developer to meet, as well as puts an end to years of costly litigation.

Under the revised memorandum of understanding, the city will receive \$2.5 million, including \$300,000 to be paid by Dec. 1, in addition to the taxes already being paid at the DuPont site, according to Council President Robert Bunk.

Not everyone is pleased with the council's action. Members of the Tremley Point Alliance in Linden had hoped that when the city was selected by state officials in 2005 as an environmental justice city it would ensure no new industrial plants would impact resident's health or safety.

The coal plant's gasification process creates carbon dioxide. To address that, PurGen plans to built a pipeline 70 miles long or more out into the ocean, injecting carbon dioxide beneath deep ocean sediment. Pressure from the ocean waters is expected to prevent the gas from escaping.

Alliance members plan to contact Gov. Chris Christie who spoke against the PurGen coal plant during his campaign, according to Beatrice Bernzott, alliance spokesperson. The alliance also is seeking volunteers to start a petition drive in an effort to put a referendum about the coal plant on the November ballot. Bernzott said a coalition of groups opposed to the project may file a lawsuit over not being able to fully present their views.

Meanwhile, the city will move forward with the Planning Board completing it's investigation of the process.

In addition the city will have to amend its redevelopment plan to include the coal plant as a use, according to attorney William Northgrave of McManimon and Scotland in Newark, the city's redevelopment counsel. He said the redevelopment plan will go from the City Council to the Planning Board for review before going back to the council for adoption.

Northgrave said the City Council also will begin negotiating a redevelopment agreement with DuPont, possibly as early as next week.

"It's a complicated agreement," Northgrave said.

Last October, the council voted against the proposed settlement between the city, DuPont, the Union County Improvement Authority, PurGen and the Morris Companies. Under that agreement, Bunk felt all the parties benefited, except for the city.

A council committee was formed to revisit the memorandum of understanding, in an effort to give the city a fair deal.

"Sometimes you have to say 'no' and be patient to get the right result," said Bunk in voting to support the revised agreement. "We need to take this first step in developing a process to stop the lawsuits and take control of our own destiny."

Besides the \$2.5 million, the revised agreement calls for a clear time line and benchmarks, access to all documents and the hiring of experts paid by the developer to oversee the project and ensure the safety of city residents.

In addition the developer will be required to hold meetings and forums in the community to discuss the project and community concerns.

"In my years of experience I've learned to be cynical about companies promising us the moon. Governing requires hard negotiation to get the right result. We were right not to be hasty and now have achieved a good and fair agreement," Bunk said.

<http://www.mycentraljersey.com/article/20100127/NEWS/1270327/-1/newsfront/Linden-moves-forward-with-coal-plant-while-groups-looks-to-possible-city-referendum-on-issue>