



Indian Point Hearing Draws Adversaries and Proponents

By **ABBY LUBY**

Tarrytown, NY - - Last Friday's Indian Point Annual Assessment (May 11, 2012) was hosted by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission who seemed considerably toned down. Unlike last year, when the public hearing was held just after the nuclear disaster in Fukushima, Japan, the NRC found it was unprepared for a volatile and angry crowd who ceaselessly shouted down the NRC's safety evaluation presentation.

This year the NRC was on the defense. What took over 20 minutes last year to personally explain the "green" safety rating was, this year, reduced to a two minute slide projection posted at the end of the hall outside the conference space, mutely tumbling through charts, graphs and pictures. NRC agents loosely roamed the corridor and were hard to pin down. Their basic message: after several thousand hours of on-site inspections in 2011, Indian Point a safe plant.



NRC spokesperson Neil Sheehan was at Thursday's public hearing at the Tarrytown Double Tree Hotel. He indicated to *The Westchester Guardian / Yonkers Tribune* that the NRC purposely omitted the usual presentation because "it was shouted down last year." This year the time allotted was devoted exclusively to the public.

And the public was heard. Over 300 people crowded into the main room after passing through a security / search checkpoint, a new enforcement never before used at NRC annual assessment hearings. Safety issues were secondary to the impending license renewal application by Indian Point's owner Entergy, an application with an unprecedented number of contentions against the 40 year old plant. Entergy would have to cease operating by 2013 and 2015 if the two reactors' licenses were not renewed. To date, the NRC has never turned down a license renewal application by a commercial nuclear power plant. A day before Friday's hearing, a headline from another local news source erroneously cited that the green ratings would allow Indian Point to operate past 2013, clearly a misunderstanding of the difference between safety ratings and license renewal.

Facing many vehement arguments on both sides of this hotly contested issue were NRC's regional administrator, Bill Dean, John P. Boska, Senior Resident Inspector and Mel Gray, Regional Director.



State Assemblyman *Thomas Abinanti* (D-Tarrytown) pointed out the proposed new [Tappan Zee Bridge](#) . "It is feared that the bridge can't withstand seismic activity, and yet, this power plant, which is not built to spec for the predicted seismic activity in the area, is allowed to run while endangering millions in the area." Abinanti also reminded the NRC that the state was opposed to the continued operation of Indian Point.

Dr. Marsha Gordon, Business Council of Westchester president, advocated for Indian Point. "Indian Point is responsible for generating 11,000 jobs in the [Lower Hudson Valley](#)... and has reliable, affordable power, jobs, economic development, and continued prosperity."

Anti nuclear groups carefully orchestrated several chants between speakers, often interrupting with shouts of "Lies!", and "Close it down. Now!".

Peekskill Mayor Mary Foster, who supports the continued operation of Indian Point, focused on safety. "We are several hundred yards from the plant and even if it were to close tomorrow, we will be dealing forever with the spent fuel. My request is for FEMA, the NRC and elected officials to look more carefully at [the role of] our first responders."

About 50 Entergy workers and union members were present. "The operators at Indian Point are well trained and I know that the plant is safe," said Dominic Marzullo, of the Utility Workers of America Local 1-2, and who has worked at the plant since 1972.



Holding a small Geiger Counter in her hand, **Susan Hito-Shapiro**, a Goshen based lawyer and Clearwater board member, criticized the NRC for not holding Entergy accountable. "The fire departments rely on Entergy to tell them if there is a release in their town. The NRC needs to require Entergy to pay service workers for their [Geiger Counters](#)."

In a fiery attack on the NRC, Marilyn Elie, co-founder of the Westchester Citizens Awareness Network (WestCAN) charged the federal agency with granting excessive exemptions to Entergy since they purchased Indian Point in 2001.

"Those exemptions need to be looked at because they are keeping Indian Point from operating at a design basis. Why can't we get a list of those exemptions?"

Last year Entergy sought NRC approval for more than 100 exemptions from regulations. In 2007, the NRC exempted Indian Point from the required insulation protecting electrical cables against fire for at least one hour. Today Entergy uses insulation lasting only 24 minutes for cables that could prevent a catastrophic meltdown if there was a fire. Entergy is also exempt from rusty reactor dome inspection for design basis and from inspecting 60 percent of the radioactive spent fuel pool.

Elie lambasted the panel over a new evacuation ruling. "This is a watered down plan with fewer evacuation drills. What does that make you but whores to the industry."



Westchester Legislator Michael Smith, who favors relicensing, said he was representing himself supporting the "long term viability of Westchester County ." "I toured the Indian Point facility and I saw the control they had in place. I got the sense they're

looking to do the right thing."



An impassioned Mark Jacobs >>> criticized the NRC for holding back important information. "You no longer tell us about the back log [of repairs at Indian Point]. Who is overlooking the owner's paper work? Are you monitoring the radiated lakes under the plant that are the size of the Central Park reservoir?"

Lack of information was a reoccurring theme. When *The Westchester Guardian / Yonkers Tribune* requested a hard copy of the slide projection information, an NRC representative failed to produce one. NRC Emergency

Preparedness Inspector Steve Barr was asked for the new evacuation ruling change but his only copy was one he couldn't relinquish.

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