

# NORTH COUNTY NEWS

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## **Indian Point licensing board needs more time**

***By Abby Luby***

The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board needs more time to consider arguments that have been made against the re-licensing of the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plants.

The deadline for the ASLB panel to rule on hearings for opposing organizations was June 16, the same day the panel issued a request for more time. According to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the federal oversight agency that issues new operating licenses to power plants, the ASLB's deadline was extended to July 30.

NRC spokesperson Neil Sheehan said the panel had more than 150 contentions to consider.

"There have been motions and additional filings for the panel to sort through," he said. "It's not surprising that they are seeking the additional time."

Entergy Nuclear, the owner of the Indian Point plants, applied last year to extend their license to run the Buchanan based reactors until 2033 and 2035. The 2,500 page application was filed last April, launching a two-year process. Sheehan said that the only other license application that is as active as the one for Indian Point is the Yucca Mountain Repository, the Nevada site poised to store spent radioactive waste from the nation's nuclear power plants.

The ASLB panel determines if contentions filed by opposing organizations pose reasonable arguments against the continuing operation of the plant. If the panel rules in favor of certain arguments, the organizations are allowed to be heard in the formal license proceedings.

Among the organizations filing contentions in the fall of 2007 were Westchester County, the New York Attorney General's Office, Riverkeeper, Clearwater, Sierra Club, WestCAN, Rockland County Conservation, Connecticut Residents Opposed to Relicensing of Indian Point, Connecticut Attorney General's Office, and the Town of Cortlandt, Village of

Buchanan, PHASE, New York City Economic Development Corp, NY AREA and FUSE. Each series of contentions filed were several thousand pages that needed to conform to specific NRC formatting. The contentions required in-depth legal preparation as well.

Marilyn Elie of WestCan, a local group seeking to close the plant and who submitted contentions, said the filing was expensive and time consuming for grass roots groups. She criticized the NRC for allowing the panel extra time.

“We have jumped through hoops and worked long hours to meet NRC deadlines that were unfair and unchangeable,” she said. “Giving the panel extra time is a prime example of how they change the rules whenever it suits them. The outcome is predictable. The agency is doing everything it can to re-license the plant.”

Entergy spokesperson Jerry Nappi said, “We look forward to the Licensing Board panel completing their thorough and comprehensive review as we make our case for the continued safe operation of the two plants before the ASLB, and ultimately license approval.”

The NRC said that the re-licensing process only looks at how the utility company manages the interior components of an aging plant with attention given to age-related structural degradation of plant components like reactor cores, containment systems, pipes and electrical cables. Contentions filed have criticized the process for omitting any possibility for catastrophe including the plants location in a densely populated area, susceptibility to terrorist attacks, an inadequate evacuation plan and seismic issues.