

More questions than answers about Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant's decommissioning

BY JONATHAN PAPPALARDO
CLIPPER CONTRIBUTOR

The Duxbury Nuclear Advisory Committee sponsored a forum at the Duxbury Senior Center May 18 to outline the process and potential risks of decommissioning the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station. The forum, held in the Ellison Meeting Room at 7 p.m., was co-moderated by committee members Mary and Jim Lampert.

The Lamperts' presentation raised more questions and concerns than answers, as very little exists by way of concrete information regarding the specifics of the decommissioning process once the plant shuts down May 31, 2019. They walked the public through what might occur following shut down and touched on the possibility of Entergy selling Pilgrim to NorthStar.

Decommissioning, according to Mary and Jim Lampert, involves two main concerns: the safety and storage of the spent nuclear fuel, which is all the fuel used by Pilgrim since operations began in 1972, and restoration of the site. The spent fuel, which Mary Lampert referred to as "highly toxic" and a "major item in our thinking" is currently being stored in a spent fuel pool located on the upper levels of the reactor. It is susceptible to fire and protected by deteriorating Borflex panels and a

thin overhead roof.

The plan, she said, is to eventually move the fuel into dry casks located 150 feet from the shore, four feet above FEMA flood stage, on a concrete pad. She said the process of transferring the fuel will probably occur within five years of shut down and is driven by economic incentive. Transfer of the fuel, according to Entergy, will significantly cut down on storage costs and dramatically reduce its workforce.

"Casks are safer because they're passive," said Lampert, adding that potential leakage and lack of oversight remained major concerns. She said there is currently no technology to inspect the casks, susceptible to cracking within 30 years, which only becomes apparent through a radiation leak. She urged the public to "consider what is in each dry cask" (half the Cesium-137 released at Chernobyl) and called the pad "candlepin bowling for terrorists."

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's nuclear waste rule allows "spent fuel to stay in either the pool or in dry casks for 60 years after plant shut-down" and recognizes "dry casks of spent fuel may remain on site for a subsequent 300 years" with pads to be changed every 100 years.

"I don't get the math," said Lampert. "Who thinks Enter-



Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station

gy will even be around in 100 years?"

Another solution, off-site removal, remains a challenge. Lambert said a facility ready to accept the fuel has not been developed or approved. The Yucca Mountain Site in Nevada has been proposed as a permanent facility, but she said the site is "unsuitable" and "the state of Nevada is opposed to it."

There are safer alternatives including reinforcing the casks in a concrete building or even submerging them in the ground, but Lampert said even these solutions are not fool-proof.

"You have better security, but they're much harder to inspect," she said.

Lampert explained that the process of site restoration will see major radioactive components removed to three feet below grade. She believes that a bigger question is whether or not Massachusetts will permit

rubblization, which involves removing all equipment, decontaminating surfaces and demolishing above-ground structures into rubble. The site would then be covered, graded and landscaped. She said this process is not without drawbacks, including the possibility of contaminated rubble leaking into the soil. If completed, it would create a low-level radioactive site at Pilgrim.

"Rubblization is never 100 percent clean," said Lampert. "Any runoff, because of land, goes straight into Cape Cod Bay."

Entergy's proposal is to move forward using SAFSTOR, which means that decommissioning will not begin until 50 years after the plant shuts down and then take 10 more years to complete. NorthStar, which has been "poking around Plymouth," according

to Lampert, has reached an agreement to decommission the Vermont Yankee Plant, which is the model Pilgrim is following. Their decommissioning plan involves rubblization, "which is causing a bone of contention with the state of Vermont," she said

Jim Lampert reiterated concerns, saying the NRC is "loose on what they're allowed to do" and wondered aloud how long the overall process is going to take. He also said that no one has been allowed to see the auditor's reports.

"The money simply isn't there," he said. "The process could be accelerated if there is the money to do it."

The slides used in the Lamperts' presentation are available on the Nuclear Advisory Committee's website, which is accessible from the town of Duxbury's webpage.

Millbrook Station expansion planned

BY SUSANNA SHEEHAN
CLIPPER EDITOR

Last week, the Duxbury Zoning Board of Appeals gave the green light to local developer Michael Juliano to build three new commercial buildings at his Millbrook-area development located on Railroad Avenue and Saint George Street.

At its meeting Thursday, May 25, the ZBA voted to approve a special permit for Juliano's plan for expansion of this neighborhood business area. Juliano, owner of Juliano Enterprises of Plymouth, has renovated three existing buildings on this site, and his plans show three new buildings. One will be on Saint George Street to the right of the existing 285 St. George St. and two will be on the interior of the property behind the Oysterman restaurant and will face Railroad Avenue.

The principal of Millbrook Marketplace LLC said he is calling his development

"Millbrook Station." His application for the new buildings states that "we wish to construct commercial buildings that accommodate all uses permitted in zoning districts NB1 and NB2 as described in the zoning bylaws."

The first phase of the Millbrook area's redevelopment made space for existing tenants including a package store, a smoothie shop and a pizzeria. New space has also been rented to another pizza restaurant, a fitness studio and an interior decorator, among others. There are also six, one-bedroom, second floor apartments that are under currently construction. The site consists of 2.3 acres and the existing buildings equal 12,500 square feet of space.

The new buildings will house a mixture of retail businesses on the first floor of all buildings and offices on the second floor of two of the buildings. A salon and a cloth-

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