

GEORGIANS FOR SMART ENERGY

RE: PROPOSED PLANT WASHINGTON COAL-BURNING PLANT

FAMILY & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH HEARINGS
PUBLIC COMMENTS TRANSCRIPT

DATE: OCTOBER 6, 2009

TIME: 6:00 TO 7:30 P.M.

LOCATION: THE BOATHOUSE
106 RIVERFRONT DRIVE
AUGUSTA, GA 30901

PRESIDING: MS. TONYA BONITATIBUS
SAVANNAH RIVERKEEPER

Reported and transcribed by Alice P. Lazenby, Certified
Verbatim Court Reporter, at the time and place above noted.

ALICE P. LAZENBY, CCR, CVR
Certified Verbatim Reporter, Georgia #A-525
1119 Rivershyre Drive
Evans, Georgia 30809
(706) 228-5308

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 October 6, 2009, 6:00 p.m.

3 [The hearing is commenced at 6:00 p.m., with Ms. Tonya
4 Bonitatibus, presiding.]

5 **TONYA BONITATIBUS**

6 MS. BONITATIBUS: My name is Tonya Bonitatibus. I'm a
7 Savannah Riverkeeper. We have joined together today to submit
8 public comments on the coal plant that is being proposed in
9 Washington County.

10 I have a Powerpoint here, and it's got thirty-six slides;
11 so I'm not going to go very slowly through all of these. I'm
12 just going to try to give you guys the highlights of what this
13 plant will mean to the Augusta area.

14 So this is Washington County: This is where the plant has
15 been proposed. There are six EMCs that are involved in trying
16 to push forward this plant -- there were eight -- two have
17 since backed out and, of course, as you can see, most of the
18 power will go to the Atlanta region.

19 So this is their nitrogen oxide emissions that their
20 plant -- based on their own applications that they put forward
21 -- 1,836 tons annually for the next fifty years.

22 This is their particulate matter: 678 tons annually, 453
23 tons for the next fifty years. This Power4Georgians, who is
24 pushing for this plant, has said it will have no significant
25 impact on the particulate matter, but yet the emissions are

1 already forty-five times higher than an EPA air permit -- what
2 would require an EPA permit. So it's equal to adding about a
3 million new cars on the road every year.

4 Mercury is something that Augustans in the past couple of
5 years learned a lot more about. It's definitely something
6 that makes us seriously concerned about this Washington Coal
7 Plant; this is our main objection to it. The Augusta area
8 already receives a significantly large portion of mercury
9 load. We have Olin Chemical here in Augusta; we have
10 Urquhart, which is directly downstream on the left. Even PCS
11 Nitrogen puts out a little bit of mercury, so we have our fair
12 share in this area.

13 This Washington coal plant, we are within the -- I
14 believe it is the ninety-five kilometer range -- we will
15 receive mercury deposition from this plant.

16 And this is a quick cycle of how mercury deposition gets
17 into ourselves and throughout the environment. Very quickly,
18 when mercury first comes out -- and if you played with it in
19 school you can hold it in your hand and it wasn't that
20 dangerous -- it's when it loses oxygen that it becomes so
21 dangerous, it methylizes and at that point becomes a
22 neurotoxin, the one we are significantly worried about in this
23 area.

24 Already the Savannah River fish --

25 -- except for the very short portion beneath the dam up

1 here and Stevens Creek, you can eat all the fish you want to
2 from right there --

3 -- but everywhere else we already have a significant
4 mercury load in these fish. Children under the age of
5 fourteen, and women who are pregnant or planning to become
6 pregnant, are not supposed to eat fish out of this river at
7 all.

8 For men, you guys get to eat a little bit -- stay away
9 from the bowfins and the catfish -- but significantly the
10 larger ones.

11 The Plant Washington mercury emissions is a hundred and
12 twenty pounds annually for fifty years. Of course, all of
13 that will make it into the Augusta area, which you are already
14 dealing with six hundred pounds with Olin, and then I'm not
15 sure what Urquhart has, so we already have a significant load
16 in this area. So any additional is something we should not
17 try to encourage.

18 This talks a little bit about the Ogeechee River. The
19 Ogeechee River is going to receive a significant amount of
20 this mercury inclusion. Also, it's a blackwater river, which
21 means that it has an even larger problem with mercury. A lot
22 of our blackwater streams and rivers in this area are
23 completely inedible.

24 This talks about the -- this is Longleaf right here, this
25 is another proposed power plant down in the Satilla River

1 basin; and then this is Plant Washington; this is the mercury
2 emissions. We have Olin here at two hundred, that actually
3 should be up near the six-hundred point. That's not taking
4 into account their fugitive emissions. The water -- this coal
5 plant will require a significant amount of water. I believe
6 that it is thirteen to sixteen million gallons of water a day
7 coming out of the Oconee River and out of the ground wells.
8 There are a lot of farmers that rely on that water, there are
9 a lot of people that rely on that water. We think that
10 thirteen- to sixteen-million gallons of water a day is a
11 little bit more than that system can handle. This is another
12 map showing the gas pipelines and the power transmission lines
13 going through Washington County.

14 Again, you guys do have a copy of this Powerpoint in the
15 back end of your package; I apologize, I should have told you
16 about that.

17 Coal combustion waste, some of the contaminants, it
18 contains arsenic, mercury, lead, chromium, and cadmium.

19 This is a little bit about the incomes in Georgia. Are
20 the health and financial risks worth it? The coal is a very
21 inefficient course of energy. We do have alternative sources
22 of energy that are out there -- i.e., wind farms, solar --
23 these things are becoming more and more viable every day.
24 This plant is going to cost 2.1 billion dollars; that's their
25 estimate. The 2.1 billion dollars is a lot of wind farms, so

1 that was why maybe spending our money in wiser ways is
2 warranted.

3 This is talking about the carbon swapping. And then at
4 the end here we are talking there are some other solutions.
5 We talk about the biomass; biomass I think it is twelve
6 percent of -- Georgia has enough biomass potential to
7 sustainably meet twelve percent of the needs in Georgia.

8 Another big one is energy efficiency. This plant might
9 necessarily not be needed if you really had much stronger
10 efficiency requirements. Georgia ranked pretty low, thirty-
11 six in the nation, for our energy efficiency right now, so we
12 have a long way that we could go.

13 And this is the offshore wind map. Offshore wind has
14 been thought of as very viable in this area and needs to be
15 looked into more as a viable resource for our energy
16 production. Southern Company and Georgia Tech have actually
17 done studies on the wind potential. Biomass: again, there is
18 a couple of biomass plants that have been talked about lately.
19 It is a viable solution alternative to coal. And then, of
20 course, there is solar power. It is, of course, it is
21 expensive for our clean energies. It is becoming less so
22 every day. The more and more these technologies advance, the
23 more and more we invest in them, research them, the more they
24 become viable options in the future.

25 There are hearings -- I should tell you guys why we are

1 holding these hearings -- everybody with the Washington Plant,
2 opposing it, asked for public hearing from the Environmental
3 Protection Division. Over fourteen hundred e-mails, calls,
4 letters were sent to Carol Couch asking for a public hearings
5 on this matter as the permit was going up. None of those
6 calls, e-mails, letters were returned. There was no reply.
7 You are allowed to submit written comments on this permit;
8 but, again, public hearings weren't being held, so we four got
9 together and we are holding our own public hearings. We have
10 a court reporter on today and what I'd ask is that each one of
11 you, if you'd like to make a positive comment, please do so.

12 We'll just work our way down the rows. When you come up,
13 please state your name for the reporter and then she will be
14 writing it up. We will submit these as written comments.
15 Before we start, is there any questions? Yes, sir?

16 A PARTICIPANT: I didn't get your name.

17 MS. BONITATIBUS: Tonya Bonitatibus, it's a mouthful, I'm
18 sorry. Sam, would you like to go first?

19 MR. SAM BOOHER

20 MR. BOOHER: I wanted to come here today to say we do not
21 need another coal-burning power plant in Georgia. Americans
22 want clean renewable energy. On the east coast of America,
23 offshore wind offers it to us with the technology already here
24 today at a cost a lot lower for the consumers. We have some
25 of the best offshore wind energy off the Georgia coast. The

1 east coast of the United States does not need thousand-mile
2 transmission lines bringing power to the east coast of America
3 from other places. Off our Georgia coast we have, twelve
4 miles out, we have shallow water. Wind farms will have little
5 or no impact on our migratory shorebirds, won't have very
6 little impact on our coastal uses of recreation and fish.

7 Right now ten European countries already have offshore
8 wind farms. In America today, Massachusetts, New Jersey,
9 Rhode Island, and Delaware want to be the first in America to
10 have wind farms. I think Georgia needs to be the first.

11 Wind farms can produce the same amount of power that a
12 coalburning power plant can and they have less stability on
13 the cost of fuel because there is no cost for fuel. Today's
14 power grid in Georgia can handle twenty percent of its power
15 coming from wind farms. The problem is, we just haven't built
16 wind farms. With wind power there is no air pollution, there
17 is no mercury poisoning, there is no asthma cases, there is no
18 mountaintop removal of coal, there is no radiation waste, and
19 they do not pollute our waterways with toxic sludge.

20 Climate change is the greatest problem facing the
21 human race. Reducing greenhouse gasses is one way with wind
22 power is a step in the right solution to solve our climate
23 change problems. And I say all of this knowing that I have
24 significant stock holdings in Southern Company. It upsets me
25 that Southern Company hasn't done more for wind power. Thank

1 you.

2 **MR. BRUCE EARNEST**

3 MR. EARNEST: My name is Bruce Earnest. I come here
4 tonight to say coal is a proven and reliable and cost-
5 effective way to generate electricity. Tremendous advances in
6 coal technology make it possible to generate more power with
7 less coal and with lower emission per unit of energy than ever
8 before. As proof of the great technology advances made in the
9 coal energy -- or coal technology -- consider the rate of
10 major emissions from coal-based electricity plants has dropped
11 by more than fifty percent since 1970 when the use of coal has
12 tripled during the same period. This plant will use the best
13 available technologies to increase efficiency and reduce
14 emission. Furthermore, when coupled with the EPD mercury-
15 reduction program, there will be a ninety-percent reduction in
16 mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants across the
17 state with Plant Washington online. Plant Washington would be
18 by far the cleanest coal-fired power plant ever built in
19 Georgia. Georgia does not have a volume of wind or sunshine
20 hours to be efficient enough to prove to be dependable on wind
21 and/or solar energy, although Power4Georgians is also
22 researching these alternatives.

23 Furthermore, when Plant Washington jobs or project will
24 establish fifteen hundred jobs during the construction period.
25 This equals to forty-five thousand person months of work or

1 one hundred eighty-eight full-time jobs for a twenty-year
2 period. Now, that's not bad, considering where we are at with
3 the unemployment in Georgia.

4 After the completion of the construction, it would create
5 a 129 full-time jobs and another 200 jobs will spin off from
6 that for the central Georgia area. It will generate over one
7 million dollars in economic growth for Washington County and
8 will create jobs and annually boost the local business as the
9 plant will require annual inspections, upgrades and repairs.
10 With unemployment rates in Georgia well over ten percent now,
11 and closer to twenty percent in the construction industry, I
12 believe we need to attract jobs from any source possible, as
13 long as they will support any working people from our state
14 and they are within the legal guidelines established by our
15 local, state, and federal officials. Power4Georgians' Plant
16 Washington does fall within these guidelines or the permit
17 would not be moving forward. I am here tonight, I am with a
18 non-profit organization called Jobs4Georgians. Our
19 organization supports jobs in Georgia being done by Georgia
20 workers, this supporting the local tax bases and protecting
21 our schools, hospitals, and et cetera from being overrun by
22 transient workers from other states.

23 Therefore I'm here to go on record with full support for
24 Plant Washington Power Plant as long as it supports our
25 families in this great state of ours, and is built within the

1 guidelines established by the State and Federal Environmental
2 Protection Division. With that, I want to thank you, and I
3 want to pose a question. How many of you have your wives
4 hanging clothes out on clotheslines instead of using a dryer?
5 Let's be efficient. We can help one another. Go home, put
6 your wife up a clothesline, tell her to cut the dryer off, and
7 go to work like we used to have to. Thank you.

8 **MR. BRETT PETREE**

9 MR. PETREE: I want to make a comment on the need for
10 affordable power. The need for additional power generation
11 among Georgia's EMCs is widespread and given the project lead
12 times, immediate, immediately. Although Oglethorpe Power
13 Corporation provides base-load intermediate and heat
14 generation for many EMCs, most also buy supplemental power
15 from the other power suppliers to meet the members' demands
16 for reliable, affordable power. Over the next five years many
17 of these supplemental power contracts will expire. Georgia's
18 electric co-ops have a responsibility to find the best, most
19 reliable energy available at the best possible price for the
20 members.

21 From a purely economic standpoint, the cost of building
22 and operating this power facility is a far more wise and
23 affordable solution for the participating EMCs and their
24 members. In continuing to buy power on the open market, Plant
25 Washington will provide the EMCs with a consistent,

1 dependable, and affordable source of electricity for may, many
2 years to come. Considering that more than half of all Georgia
3 families earn less than fifty thousand dollars a year, and
4 that studies show most of these families spend upwards to
5 twenty-five percent of their income on energy, do we really
6 want to make electricity so expensive that Georgians must
7 choose between electricity and food on the table for the
8 children? That's where we are headed if the opponents of
9 utilizing the full spectrum of resources, including renewable
10 energy, hydro, nuclear, coal, et cetera, have their way. Our
11 planning is done with the best interest of all of our members
12 in mind, and we will continue to explore new and innovative
13 ways to keep electricity flowing now and for many years to
14 come. It is essential to Georgia's future economic
15 development and quality of life for the citizens to have
16 available, affordable energy for years to come. Plant
17 Washington provides us with that. Therefore, I am here in
18 support of this project. Thank you.

19 MS. BONITATIBUS: Do we have any more comments?

20 MR. AYMANN FADEL

21 MR. FADEL: I'd like to make a comment. My name is
22 Aymann Fadel, I'm a resident of Augusta, Georgia. I am
23 opposed to building of another coal plant, because the problem
24 with the coal plants are you are going to have carbon dioxide
25 emissions. Carbon dioxide emissions are one of the causes of

1 global warming and climate change and the whole issue of cost
2 with regards to energy cannot be measured by pennies per
3 kilowatt like we are doing now because we are serializing the
4 costs of the pollution of these coal plants. So if it turns
5 out that not having this coal plant that we are not going to
6 have enough alternative sources of energy, then we'll just
7 need to start paying a price for our energy that reflects the
8 true cost of energy, not just for production but all the
9 hazards and harms that it causes people downwind from the coal
10 and in the whole atmosphere. For this reason, the arguments
11 that have been regarding the cost effectiveness of the Plant
12 Washington coal electricity production are spurious and should
13 and instead we should be looking at it as how much carbon is
14 going to be produced, how many other pollutants are going to
15 be produced, and we should have a zero tolerance for these
16 things. Thank you.

17 **MR. BEN TARBUTTON**

18 MR. TARBUTTON: My name is Ben Tarbutton. I want to
19 thank you, Tonya, for being our host for this evening and I
20 want to thank you for the good work you are doing on behalf of
21 the Savannah Riverkeeper, and we all, everyone in this room,
22 every Georgian, every United States citizen, is all for clean
23 air and clean coal -- clean coal is coming back -- it's clean
24 air and clean water, but I want to thank y'all for coming this
25 evening, I'm glad to be here. I'm a citizen of Sandersville

1 in Washington County, and I've been a lifelong resident of
2 Sandersville and Washington County, lived there with my family
3 and three young children, and I just want to state just for
4 the record that I do believe it's a little disingenuous to
5 have this meeting here this evening, when there is a public
6 meeting being held in Sandersville at the exact same time by
7 the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, and so there
8 are a couple of meetings being held, and there have been some
9 that have been held in the past; but, I fully support the
10 Power4Georgians plant and the Power4Georgians group, it's a 6
11 EMC group. They are looking to build an 850 megawatt hour
12 plant in Washington County about seven miles northeast of
13 Sandersville. I'm for this plant for many reasons, starting
14 with 130 full-time jobs that will be employed at the plant,
15 along with that 130 to 260 indirect jobs and those jobs will
16 follow the plant and they will come in the form of
17 contractors, fabricators, and other employees that are
18 providing services for this plant. I think it was stated
19 earlier, our area of Georgia has been especially hit hard by
20 this economic downturn and these jobs represent over seven
21 million dollars in wages and benefits, and a 2.1 million
22 dollar capital investment are vital for our community's
23 livelihood. The tax benefits for our county will help us
24 invest our schools, our roads, our law enforcement, our
25 emergency preparedness, it's a big deal for us. There are

1 plans for our state and its citizens, if we are going to
2 continue to have reliable, affordable electricity in Georgia
3 we need to start by providing enough supply to meet demand.
4 Whenever you hear about the supply and demand and the curves
5 meeting, and all that kind of stuff, I can guarantee you this,
6 that you do not want your demand to exceed your supply of
7 electricity, because that's when you start having brownouts
8 and blackouts and that's when not only do you see businesses
9 shutting down, but you see the very fibers that make up the
10 society start to go down with it. It's been shown time and
11 time again and I have some friends here that are promoting
12 renewable sources such as wind and solar, but it been shown
13 time and time again that Georgia is not a viable alternate --
14 or it's not a viable state, not a good candidate for those
15 types of renewable sources, and I challenge my friends in that
16 industry, how many people want their vistas destroyed with
17 wind turban farms off of their oceanfront views? How many
18 people want to see a new power line bringing in transmission
19 electricity from the ocean? And I do disagree about the
20 migratory birds, I think that's going to be a problem, so you
21 got to weigh it all. It's not just yes or no, you got to
22 weigh it all, and I think coal is proven, it's an abundant
23 natural resource. I mean, this time last year we were paying
24 four-dollar gasoline because we had cut off the supply out of
25 our very shores. We are doing the same thing with coal, it's

1 a very abundant natural resource, it's right here in the
2 United States, and we can use it in the modern technologies
3 that are going to be at Plant Washington and it makes this
4 plant much safer and environmentally friendly, much more so
5 than plants of decades ago that we're comparing to.

6 And I just want to move on a little bit to the
7 environmental side. The Power4Georgians group has gone to
8 great lengths to insure that the water and the air quality
9 will be maintained and the Georgia Environmental Protection
10 Division's own numbers show air quality improvement in our
11 part of Georgia. The EPD shared at a public meeting in
12 Sandersville in March that by 2015 the pollution controls that
13 are being put in place at Georgia Power's Plant Branch in
14 Milledgeville and Plant Scherer near Macon will be completed
15 and couple that with the addition of Plant Washington, their
16 data shows emissions will all drop, for SOx ninety-four
17 percent, NOx seventy percent, and mercury by ten percent. So
18 that's a big deal.

19 Lastly, I want to thank Power4Georgians for conducting
20 their efforts to built this plant in a transparent and fully-
21 accessible manner. They have held several public meetings and
22 have countless one-on-one meetings with individuals and
23 groups.

24 As folks in Washington County have learned the facts, the
25 citizenry there has overwhelmingly come forward in support of

1 Plant Washington. For our county, the economic benefits are
2 once in a lifetime, and for our state, Plant Washington is
3 needed to keep our electricity reliable with costs in check
4 for residents and businesses. Therefore, I support the plant.

5 MS. BONITATIBUS: Anybody else?

6 MS. MARY JACOBSON

7 MS. JACOBSON: My name is Mary Jacobson. I'm an Augusta
8 resident and I do have concerns about this plant. The sludge
9 that it is going to produce is going to pollute the water
10 which you guys and we're living in. It's going to pollute the
11 lakes and the rivers we are getting our fish out of. You say,
12 yes, the plants are going to be reducing the amount of
13 pollution they are putting out, but then you build this and it
14 just puts it all back in, so is that just a wash, is that good
15 for Georgia? It isn't good for Georgia. It isn't good for
16 our poor people. We already have problems with the residents
17 here eating out of the rivers. The arsenic and the mercury
18 that's coming out of there will be going into our rivers, will
19 be polluting our fish, will be polluting our citizens. No, we
20 don't -- now, I understand that there is an economic -- and
21 you need jobs -- but poisoning the rest of the population so
22 that you can have jobs isn't the answer. Thank you.

23 MS. BONITATIBUS: Do we have any more comments?

24 MR. FRANK CARL

25 MR. CARL: My name is Frank Carl. I don't know which

1 shirt to wear -- I am a former Riverkeeper and I'm also a
2 retired professor of biochemistry at the Medical College of
3 Georgia. Probably the latter is more relevant here. One
4 thing we've got to do or we've got to begin to do is we have
5 got to get away from antiquated energy sources. Coal is not
6 an energy source that we can continue to use because of the
7 wastes that it produces. It is cheap, it's economically
8 feasible to use coal, it's just not a good idea to do that
9 given the CO2 that's given off, given the mercury that's given
10 off, given the particulate matter that is given off, given the
11 sludge that is produced from the ash that we've seen the
12 accident on the TVA facility creates significant problems.
13 But the basic problem that an energy source like coal gives us
14 is we are trying to impose a linear system on a cyclic nature.
15 OK? Think about that for a minute. We are trying to impose a
16 linear system on a cyclic nature. Our economy has become too
17 large to impose that linear economy on a cyclic natural
18 system. Our economy must become cyclic. Coal is not part of
19 a cyclic system; it can't be. We have to begin to convert to
20 solar and wind power. To do that, we have to perfect --
21 perfect is not a good word -- we have to develop energy
22 storage systems that are viable for solar and wind. Solar and
23 wind can't be used as our sole energy source, that's true,
24 because we can't depend on it continuously, but if we develop
25 storage systems for the energy that we get from solar and

1 wind, we can begin to use that as our energy source. This is
2 plenty of sun power and there is plenty of wind power to
3 produce all the energy we need and tidal power, we can use
4 that too. But storage is the key, so we need to go to
5 storage. Thank you.

6 MS. BONITATIBUS: Thank you, was that the last comment?
7 Thank you everybody, I really appreciate everybody coming and
8 voicing your opinions. That's what it's about and that's how
9 we work, so thank you for everybody who came and expressed
10 their opinions today, we really appreciate it, and you guys
11 came from some quite a ways away, so thank you for joining us.
12 You guys have a great evening and if you have any questions
13 I'll be standing up here, and again, thank you again for
14 showing up.

15 [The proceedings closed at approximately 7:15 p.m.]
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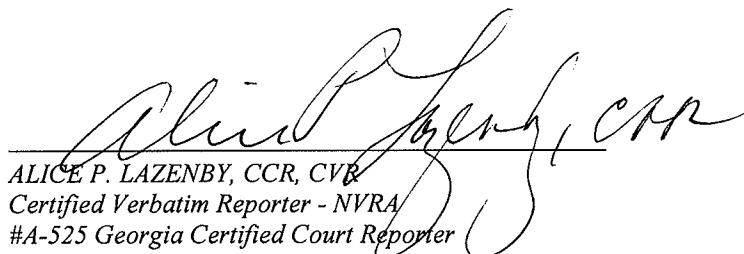
STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF COLUMBIA

CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I hereby certify that the foregoing transcript of the captioned public hearing was taken down, as stated in the caption, and the proceedings were reduced to typewriting by me; that the foregoing pages 2 through 20 represent a true, complete, and correct transcript of said hearing held on October 6, 2009.

I further certify that I am not of kin or counsel to anyone interested in the issue, nor am I in the employ of any of the parties.

This, the 8th day of October 2009.


ALICE P. LAZENBY, CCR, CVR
Certified Verbatim Reporter - NVRA
#A-525 Georgia Certified Court Reporter

