



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

JOINT BOARD MATTER

Supervisors Smyth, Gross, Bulova, Foust and Chairman Connolly

Wise County Power Plant February 11, 2008

Background:

Mr. Chairman: As you know, on January 9, 2007, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) issued a Public Notice on a draft permit authorizing Dominion Virginia Power (Dominion) to construct and operate a 668 megawatt (gross electrical generating capacity) coal-fired electric power plant in Wise County, Virginia. While this plant is projected to generate enough electricity to power 146,000 homes annually, it is also expected to be one of the top ten air pollution sources within Virginia. The DEQ is seeking public comment on its draft air emissions permit through February 27, 2008.

Mr. Chairman, I don't think I need to remind my colleagues that the Metropolitan Washington region including Northern Virginia and Fairfax County is currently designated in non-attainment for the federal 8-hour ground-level ozone (smog) and fine particulate matter (soot) standards as specified under the federal Clean Air Act.

While the region would benefit from the availability of new sources of electricity generation, the plant's emissions may potentially pose health risks to County residents, jeopardize the region's ability to demonstrate attainment of the federal air quality standards, and severely damage the County's on-going efforts to reduce air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions. Despite the plant's location in southwest Virginia, its emissions may affect Fairfax County. Given the prevailing winds, as much as 6 million tons of particulate matter and ozone-forming pollutants are expected to drift over our region throughout the summer and fall – the very months that pose the greatest challenge to the County in meeting federal air quality standards.

Moreover, while the draft permit proposes limits on the emissions of certain pollutants, including particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and carbon monoxide, the draft permit does not address the projected 5.4 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) that the plant is expected to emit annually. This omission is troubling as carbon dioxide is recognized as a greenhouse gas that is a major contributor to global climate change and, according to an April 2007 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, is a pollutant that can be regulated within the federal 1990 Amendments to the Clean Air Act.

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Motion:

Therefore, I move that the Board direct staff to review the DEQ's draft permit and prepare comments for Board consideration at the February 25, 2008 Board meeting. I move further that these comments should address (1) whether the DEQ draft permit requires the applicant to commit to the best available control technology (BACT) for emission reductions; (2) whether DEQ has conducted the broader environmental analysis that federal rules require; and (3) the implications of the plant's emissions for County and regional air quality.

If this motion is approved, I would ask that the County Executive's Office work closely with staff in consideration that these comments will likely be required to be submitted after the deadline has passed for submission of items to the Board's February 25 meeting.

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