

KC Nuke Plant: Plans Move Forward

Joshua J. McElwee | Nov. 6, 2009 NCR Today

The plan to develop a new Kansas City Plant cleared a key step on Friday.

Meeting in a room full of supporters and critics alike the city's Planned Industrial Expansion Authority (PIEA) unanimously voted to approve a development agreement for the new property, located about 13 miles south of downtown Kansas City, Mo.



"We live in a real world that is a dangerous world, and there are threats of all kinds," said PIEA member Charles Erickson. "A facility of this type may, unfortunately, be necessary to preserve our way of life."

As reported on this site, the Kansas City Plant is a major nuclear weapons manufacturing center located about 5 miles south of downtown Kansas City, Mo. The plant is planned to be relocated to a newly developed facility further south.

The vote on Friday brings the new plant closer to receiving \$41 million in tax abatements and incentives with the PIEA agreement. The cost of the entire project is estimated at \$673 million.



Before the meeting several critics of the plans

held signs outside the building to show their opinions. During the public comment portion of the meeting they voiced their opposition on several fronts.

Alicia Dressman, a member of PeaceWorks Kansas City, quoted testimony by Dr. Everet Beckner, former deputy administrator of defense programs at the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), as saying "the reduced workload at the Kansas City Plant will bring into question the need for the proposed third party financed manufacturing facility at that site."



"Here is Dr. Everet Beckner, and he is making his assessments as to what the nuclear weapons complex needs right now," said Dressman. "He says we do not need to expand and make a new plant site and we need to stay where we're at right now."

In order to move forward with the proposed development, the PIEA first had to have the land area in question designated as blighted. Tom Klammer, host of the local radio show *Tell Somebody*, said that the area in question contains a functioning soybean field.

"They've taken millions of dollars from the school district and the library system which are trying to do development in truly blighted areas and handing it to things that aren't remotely blighted," said Klammer. "Real blight areas get money taken away from them? phony blight gets 40 million dollars."

Members of the PIEA were also asked to consider the needs of the poor in their decision.

"I come here today to ask us whether this budget allotment stands in the priority we are giving it relative to the least among us, those whose voices we try to cry out with and on behalf of, in saying that if all this money is available, isn't it the least that deserve the nod?" Br. Louis Rodemann asked.

Rodemann is a De La Salle Christian Brother and member of the Holy Family Catholic Worker House in Kansas City, Mo., along with this reporter. A portion of his statement can be seen in video below.

Local group 'The Recipe' also gave a spoken-word performance objecting to the plans. The group consists of Theodore "Priest" Hughes and Desmond "337" Jones. A portion of their performance can be seen in video below.

After the public comment portion of the meeting PIEA members questioned the attorneys for both the PIEA and CenterPoint Zimmer LLC regarding the new plans. CenterPoint Zimmer LLC was awarded the contract to design and build the plant for the NNSA.

?Who?s going to be responsible for any contamination at the new facility?? asked PIEA member John Wood.



?At the end of the day the United States of America has the primary statutory responsibility for the existing conditions and the continued management and cleanup,? said PIEA outside council Steven Sparks. ?The new facility will incorporate all best management practices. The new facility is more modern and reflects the rules that are in place today.?

The executive director of the PIEA, Alfred Figuly, declined to be interviewed for this report.

With Friday?s approval the plans for the new plant now come before the planning committee of the Kansas City Council.

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