



SRS Citizens Advisory Board

Nuclear Materials Management Subcommittee

Meeting Summary
November 18, 1996
Barnwell, S.C.

The Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Nuclear Materials Management (NMM) Subcommittee held a meeting on Monday, November 18 at the First Baptist Church in Barnwell, SC. Subcommittee members attending were Tom Costikyan, chairperson, Bob Slay, Ed Tant and Suzanne Matthews. Savannah River Site resource personnel attending included Donna Martin and Mary Flora, Westinghouse Savannah River Company (WSRC), de'Lisa Bratcher, Associate Designated Deputy Federal Officer, Department of Energy-Savannah River, and Jean Ridley, DOE-SR. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control was represented by James Burckhalter. Georgia Fields attended from the public.

Rocky Flats Plutonium Residue/Scrub Alloy EIS

Tom Costikyan opened the meeting by stating that the CAB subcommittee would address several different activities over the next six months. Costikyan recommended the Plutonium Residue EIS be the first issue addressed by the subcommittee since the Notice of Intent for that EIS would be out by November 19. He said the EIS will evaluate the alternatives for stabilizing plutonium residues currently in storage at Rocky Flats. Sending the material to SRS for stabilization is one of the alternatives being considered.

ITER

Suzanne Matthews brought up a news article in which Lindsay Graham said SRS experience more layoffs and downsizing over the next year and that SRS should push for new missions. Matthews then said she attended a local forum on the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER). The SRS vicinity is a contender and according to information discussed during the forum, Matthews said both South Carolina and Georgia governors were supportive of bringing ITER to this area.

Costikyan said the project appeared promising although he felt the ITER topic was beyond the charter of the CAB. Slay agreed and said the CAB probably should not get involved unless the ITER is definitely considered for this area and the CAB identifies specific issues or develops a position on the ITER.

Allied General Nuclear Services

A question on the potential of a CAB recommendation to DOE to consider the Allied General Nuclear Services Facility (AGNS) in Barnwell, SC arose as a result of a tour of the facility by several CAB members. AGNS is a facility constructed in the early 1970s as a privatization effort to recycle commercial spent nuclear fuel. A portion of SRS land was given to three companies to build the facility. If operated, the facility would have spent fuel wet and dry storage, processing and high level waste treatment capabilities. When President Jimmy Carter announced the United States would cease all processing of commercial fuel, the facility then became idle.

Georgia Fields, manager of AGNS, said since that time, DOE has considered using AGNS facilities on many different occasions. She felt politics was the reason the facility has never been used.

Costikyan asked if the subcommittee could develop meaningful questions on the AGNS facility if someone from DOE were asked to come and discuss past and potential uses of the facility. Slay said he would like for DOE to give the CAB specific reasons why the facility is not being used.

Jean Ridley, DOE-SR, said two probable reasons the facility is not being used are because AGNS is not government property, and, SRS is trying to bring all facilities to the center of the site. Ed Tant pointed out that the government did own the land 20 years ago.

Ridley then said DOE is leaving open the possibility of the AGNS facility being used for the Spent Nuclear Fuel Storage and Transfer facility. The request for proposals states that a proposal can include a facility on or offsite. Ridley added some companies have mentioned the possibility of including AGNS in a proposal. Slay suggested there may be benefit in asking an independent expert to draft questions for DOE about the history of AGNS for government activities.

Todd Crawford, CAB independent advisor, was invited to the meeting and asked if he felt the NMM subcommittee should address the facility. Crawford said two questions came to mind: (1) Why isn't AGNS considered an asset and, (2) Why has DOE chosen not to use the facility.

Crawford suggested the CAB may wish to hear the company opinion of AGNS. As an example, Crawford said Don Orth was a national nuclear materials management expert and could possibly provide some information on AGNS and its capabilities. Crawford also suggested that Donna Martin research the Site's technical library for information on AGNS.

Slay recommended an action item for the January 1997 full CAB meeting include a presentation by a DOE representative on the history of AGNS, possible uses and the DOE position on AGNS.

CAB Recommendation #26

The fourth item addressed by the subcommittee was the DOE response to CAB recommendation #26 in which DOE strongly stated that chemical processing was being phased out.

Costikyan said DOE has made the decision SRS will receive spent nuclear fuel over the next 10 years although the agency has not made a decision on how it will be treated. Slay suggested an

independent advisor may also provide an unbiased comparison of processing versus the new technologies DOE is considering to treat spent nuclear fuel.

Costikyan pointed out that DOE has not provided the technical reasons why processing is not being considered. Additionally, he questioned the opinion by many that processing supports proliferation by pointing out the final stage of processing spent fuel would be blending down the separated high enriched uranium to low enriched uranium.

According to Ridley, the choice to phase out processing is a presidential directive that other countries have also signed. Ridley added the country's position is also located in the Nonproliferation Treaty.

Slay said the decision is obviously political and having a meeting with the governor of South Carolina may be the best way to address the issue. Slay then agreed to talk with Congressmen Lindsay Graham and Charlie Norwood to hear their positions on storing and processing spent nuclear fuel before talking to the governor. Costikyan further explained the philosophy of processing is the issue, not the arithmetic of comparing processing to other treatments. At this point, Slay recommended the response to recommendation #26 should also be discussed at the full CAB meeting the following day as an agenda item.

Before the meeting's conclusion, Clay Jones, WSRC, joined the subcommittee to discuss a few additional aspects of AGNS. He stated as Ridley had earlier in the meeting, some companies are showing interest in AGNS for the SNF Transfer and Storage Facility privatization efforts. Jones pointed out bidding companies will be given the choice to build and operate to DOE Orders, or if offsite, comply with Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) requirements. And as Ridley pointed out earlier, DOE is open to AGNS being included in a privatization proposal.

Nonproliferation and Arms Control Assessment

The last item of business was the suggestion to submit CAB recommendation #20 on plutonium disposition to the DOE Office of Nonproliferation and Arms Control. The office had conducted an assessment of the nonproliferation aspects of the three major plutonium disposition options and had asked for public input. All agreed a simple letter accompanying the recommendation would suffice.

Action Items

In closing, the following were identified as action items: (1) A DOE representative would be invited to discuss AGNS at the January 1997 full board meeting; (2) Bob Slay would contact Lindsay Graham on the best way to approach the governor of South Carolina about the spent nuclear fuel issue; (3) The subcommittee would address the Rocky Flats Plutonium Residue EIS in four ways: read the notice of intent, pursue an independent advisor, contact the Rocky Flats Advisory Board and attend the December 12 scoping meeting; lastly (4) A short summary letter and recommendation #20 would be submitted to the DOE Office of Nonproliferation and Arms Control.

Meeting handouts may be obtained by calling 1-800-249-8155.