

August 15, 2007

Paul Gunter and Beyond Nuclear in the [Washington Post](#)

Officials Support 3rd Nuclear Reactor
Agency Describes Process to License Calvert Cliffs Plant
By Dan Morse

Washington Post Staff Writer

More than 300 people filed into a hotel conference room in southern Calvert County last night for a meeting on the licensing process of a proposed nuclear power reactor in nearby Lusby, a project that could become the first of its kind in the United States in about 30 years.

Based on audience reaction, which included vigorous applause for statements made by nuclear supporters, Calvert appeared to remain hospitable to nuclear-generated electricity. Kicking off the public comment portion of the meeting, Wilson H. Parran (D-At Large), president of Calvert's Board of Commissioners, delivered an unequivocal endorsement. Calvert already has two reactors that have established a remarkable safety record since the 1970s, he said.

"The fact is, U.S. nuclear power plants are safer today than they have ever been," Parran said. Earlier, he and four other commissioners had unanimously signed a letter in support of building a new reactor at the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant.

"From a national perspective, nuclear energy is our largest source of clean energy and a critical piece of our nation's energy strategy," the letter says. "It is imperative to reverse the growth of greenhouse gas emissions, and Calvert County stands ready to share in our nation's responsibility to provide resources that produce energy."

The meeting was organized by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission to explain the evaluation process for proposed reactors. The meeting was prompted by Constellation Energy Group's partial application last month with the commission, asking it to review environmental plans for a 1,600-megawatt reactor that could cost \$4 billion.

Public opinion was on display at the meeting, held at a Holiday Inn Select in Solomons. Even before the meeting started, interest groups displayed brochures and research papers.

On one side as people entered were environmentalists. Paul Gunter, speaking for Beyond Nuclear, a Takoma Park group, said that a total assessment has not been made of the 11 nuclear plants within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. He said in an interview that nuclear power hasn't solved its waste and security issues: "This is a failed technology, let's be clear." Across the hallway were representatives from groups such as the Nuclear Energy Institute.

In the conference room, Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials described how the licensing process works. Then audience members spoke, about 15 in support of the reactor and 11 against. Others were neutral.

A few county business leaders praised existing plants and urged the commission not to get bogged down. Constellation is expected to file the safety part of its application by early next year; the NRC technical review could last more than two years, with another year for hearings.

Clyde Thomas, who works at the plant, said experience makes him feel confident the

area is safe.

"I wouldn't live in the blast zone if I didn't," he said.