

*Serving the South Coast of Oregon*



## LNG fans/foes debate need for gas

By Alexander Rich Staff Writer

A familiar cast of characters converged on North Bend Community Center Wednesday night to discuss the pros and cons of siting a liquefied natural gas terminal on the North Spit. The second of three scheduled meetings, the evening had a rehearsed feel until the very end, when Jesse Ricks, of North Bend, approached the podium just after 9 p.m.

"How many of you are against the LNG project?" he said, directing his question to the audience.

While somewhat depleted from the approximately 140 members at the start of the meeting, the crowd clearly had a majority of LNG opponents as a large swatch of hands were raised. (A second straw poll of those in favor of the project produced about 20 outstretched arms, many from those standing at the back of the auditorium.)

Apparently satisfied with this show of support, Ricks turned to the panel of speakers and spoke directly to Bob Braddock, project manager of the Jordan Cove Energy Project.

"The majority of people in Coos County reject this project, so what is it about the word no that you don't understand?" he asked, his voice trembling with passion, followed by a cheer of encouragement from the audience.

Braddock responded by questioning the accuracy of the informal vote.

"If this audience represented the majority of people in Coos Bay, Oregon or the United States, that would probably dictate the project shouldn't go forward," he said. "I don't think (the audience) represents the majority."

Aside from its conclusion, the meeting maintained an orderly atmosphere similar to that which imbued the first meeting held in Bandon on Sept. 27. Following introductions, representatives from Citizens Against LNG, Jordan Cove Energy Project, Oregon International Port of Coos Bay and environmental groups presented information highlighting the wide range of opinions regarding LNG energy markets, safety risks, environmental dangers and the role of government.

Jody McCaffree, representing Citizens Against LNG, opened discussions by suggesting a LNG terminal would prove to be yet another failed effort to bring jobs into the area.

"First it was a barge slip that they said would bring in industry ... but it didn't help much. Then it was a T-dock ... which sits there rotting. Then we were told that a gas line would bring companies to the area. So we voted for a gas pipeline, but (the companies) didn't come," she said.



World Photo by Madeline Steege Before the start of the informational liquefied natural gas meeting people took time to read literature displayed by Citizens Against LNG on Wednesday evening in North Bend.

Instead of providing the elusive balm to the area's economy, McCaffree suggested it might prove problematic.

"No company wants expensive foreign gas when domestic supplies are available and cheaper," she said in reference to Department of Energy studies that suggest the United States has sufficient natural gas to sustain present consumption levels for 60 years.

McCaffree also talked about the potential safety risks of allowing LNG transport ships into Coos Bay, noting ships would pass within six-tenths of a mile of local school buildings on the route to Jordan Cove.

In contrast, Braddock offered examples of the safety precautions required by the federal government for any LNG terminal as well as statistics suggesting a need for new sources of energy as Americans demand increases. He also tried to dispel the idea that the terminal's installation would only serve energy consumers in California.

He explained that while California consumes a large amount of natural gas, much of this use is confined to the southern parts of the state. Northern California, which would be the area of California served by a LNG terminal, only uses one-third of the natural gas.

He also noted that the demand for natural gas in Oregon and Washington is rising, while Northern California's appetite has decreased.

"This is just my opinion, but in the future, the two areas could use the same quantity (of natural gas)," he said.

He also noted that federal regulations would require any facility construction to be able to withstand a 9.3-magnitude earthquake and subsequent tsunami.

Steve Jones, representing Oceans of Oregon, refused to accept Braddock's contention that the facility will service areas other than California.

"All roads seem to lead to California and that includes through Oregon," he said, referring to a graph that depicted a sizeable difference between energy use of California and other western states. "California is driving this thing and Oregon land is being given away to let them get into California."

Dan Serres, program coordinator for Friends of Living Oregon Waters, broached the topic of eminent domain, a possible tactic for the state if landowners were unwilling to sell their land to Pacific Connector, the possible outfitter of a 223-mile pipeline.

"I do not think there is a credible (energy) need that requires a land grab," he said. "California businesses have developed technologies to reduce energy consumption and alternative energy solutions, such as wave energy, are being considered."

Jeff Bishop, port executive director, spoke briefly about the rationale for considering the installation of an LNG terminal.

"Our vision is to promote the optimum use of this deep water port for the enhancement of life in the region," he said.

Bishop elaborated by explaining that the port would acquire added leverage in contract negotiations with outside businesses with an LNG facility nearby.

Between presentations, Ron Metzger, head of the geology department at Southwestern Oregon Community College, offered a perspective of the risk of an earthquake doing damage to a potential LNG facility. He noted that the last recorded 9-magnitude earthquake hit the South Coast of Oregon on Jan. 26, 1700.

“We know that on average, a magnitude 9 happens about every 590 years,” he said. “The bad news is the range can be anywhere from 200 years, to 1,000 years, so we are in the early part of that window.”

During the question-and-answer segment of the evening, many audience members reiterated concerns about safety issues and environmental degradation.

In response to one question about dredging, Bishop said there were plans to cut the low bay channel to a width of 500 feet and a depth of 55 feet in order to accommodate large vessels in the shipping industry. This decision was in no way based on the possibility of LNG carriers coming into the bay, he said, noting that newer non-LNG vessels are even bigger.

Bishop went on to explain that in order to receive federal funding, the port needed to process a certain level of cargo. In recent years, the port has been at risk of falling below that benchmark, but the arrival of 80 ships with LNG per year would put it well above.

Dennis Phillips, of Coos Bay, asked if there would be a sufficient global supply of natural gas for the terminal to process if it were constructed.

“Suppliers believe they have sufficient reserves of gas on the pipe to meet demand or else they would not sign a contract,” Braddock said. “Are they right or wrong? I have no idea. But the terminal won’t be built on speculation.”

With a rare question posed to the Citizens Against LNG, Andy Marrin, of Barview, asked why the group cited excerpts of the Sandia report on LNG without including its conclusion that there is a minimal risk of accidental spills and a manageable risk of intentional spills.

Serres noted that if there were a terrorist attack and the country went to Code Red, restrictions on port access could be severe if a LNG facility were located in Coos Bay.

As the questions continued, a long line of audience members developed next to the podium as they prepared to fire questions at the panel. Finally, it was Ricks who got in the final word of the evening.

“You might put (a LNG terminal) in, but we will take it out,” he said.

Later, Ricks explained that the residents of Coos County and Southern Oregon are against the project and would “dispose of it.”

When asked to elaborate, he said, “I can't get into that.”

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