

# Nuclear Expansion Hits Minor Setback

By GINNY SCIABBARRASI  
City Editor

Officials fighting a nuclear power plant expansion received a small victory after the Nuclear Regulatory Commission ruled more information is needed before proceeding.

A three-member panel of the NRC determined on Aug. 7 that Carolina Power & Light's plans to expand its Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant warranted further research about safety measures.

The ruling is only part of a 20-month battle between county officials and CP&L, one that will continue into the coming year.

Sen. Ellie Kinnaird, D-Orange, said that while this ruling was a step in the right direction, it is now up to lawyers and scientists to work out expansion plans.

"It's a victory for citizens and their concerns over safety, but it's not a complete victory, it's just a hearing," she said.

The expansion of the plant, located in Wake County, would make it the largest high-level nuclear waste site in the nation. Jim Warren, executive director of N.C. Waste Awareness and Reduction Network, said the group plans to continue to urge CP&L to discuss safety concerns with the public.

"The company is still actively working to block a scientific hearing — the ruling doesn't necessarily require that to happen," he said. "I think most reasonable people would see this as a lack of CP&L being able to defend their position."

But CP&L spokesman Mike Hughes said the company has done everything possible to justify the expansion.

"Every one of Orange County's questions and concerns are being addressed by the NRC and the (Atomic Safety and Licensing Board)," he said. "Every aspect of review has included public hearings. Every question Orange County has raised about our plan has been addressed."

Chapel Hill Town Council member Bill Strom said it is important for elected officials to question something as controversial as nuclear expansion. "As

ected officials, we're charged with protecting health, safety and welfare," he said. "It remains an unresolved issue that I feel strongly about and the council feels strongly should be explored."

Despite growing opposition against the plant's expansion, Wake County officials have remained silent.

"CP&L probably considers itself as a good citizen of Wake County — they probably have a very good relationship with the county commissioners," Kinnaird said. "(Wake County commissioners) see this in a different way than those with a little distance."

But Hughes said this proves area officials' complaints are unwarranted.

"Wake County, where the plant is operated, does not feel compelled to act on a legitimate business," he said. No Wake County commissioners could be reached for comment.

Both sides now have until Nov. 20 to file written statements over the safety of the expansion. The ASLB will assess the validity of the filings and decide whether a formal hearing or impact statement will be needed.

"It's really in the hands of the commission," Kinnaird said. "That's what we were asking for is this hearing."

The City Editor can be reached at [citydesk@unc.edu](mailto:citydesk@unc.edu).

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SEN. ELLIE KINNAIRD  
D-Orange

# Town Dips Into Budget for Flooding Repairs

By KATHRYN McLAMB  
Assistant City Editor

Chapel Hill suffered heavy rainfall induced by severe summer storms, leaving local business owners to rebuild from damage induced by the 6 to 8 inches of water that fell.

Area businesses and residents suffered flood damage ranging from soggy carpets to massive inventory losses in the July 23 storm. Orange County was declared to be in a state of emergency after damage estimates from the storm reached the \$8 million mark.

With the virtual shutdown of Eastgate Shopping Center and the washout of portions of Piney Mountain Road immediately following the flood, cleaning up and rebuilding has become a town priority.

But the cost of rebuilding will constitute a major financial burden for the town.

Chapel Hill Mayor Rosemary Waldorf estimated the cost of repair at \$150,000 to \$200,000. "To me, this is an emergency repair, and we need to get it done as soon as we can," she said.

Although the Chapel Hill Town Council passed a tax increase in the new

budget earlier this summer, tax revenue will not be used in flood repairs.

"We set the tax rate based on projected services and capital improvement programs," Waldorf said. "We couldn't look into the future and foresee that Piney Mountain Road would wash out in July."

Instead, the town will turn to other possible solutions for financing flood repairs.

"We have bond funds available for drainage problems," Waldorf explained. "We might also delay some other capital improvement programs that we expected in the budget."

Efforts have already begun to help Eastgate merchants get back on their feet, without having to supply financial support.

As the floodwaters receded, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce called a meeting of Eastgate merchants, town officials and chamber members to address the immediate needs of shopowners.

"It was one of those things that was a clear need," said Beth Deacon, chairwoman of the Chamber of Commerce. "I don't think people were really talking together before that."

Deacon said the chamber tried to act as quickly as possible in conjunction with town officials to help merchants get the supplies they needed and to help them find emergency loans.

"It's not (the chamber's) responsibility to coordinate the Eastgate merchants as a unit," she said. "But we do see that we might be able to help them come together."

Many Eastgate merchants and some residents affected by the floods have applied for loans offered through the Small Business Administration, a federal organization offering relief to areas declared states of emergency.

"The main help that (being declared a state of emergency) triggers is that it allows SBA loans at about a four percent interest rate," Waldorf said. "That's probably less than half what you would have to pay if you went and got a home-owners loan."

Waldorf said the loans would help

shopkeepers and homeowners afford flood repairs and allow them to get back on their feet.

But Chapel Hill stormwater engineer Fred Royal said residents should not consider the July flooding a one-time event. Areas like Eastgate and Camelot Apartments lie in floodplains where future flooding is not only possible, but likely.

"The flooding was bad because it created a lot of damage," Royal said. "But it was good because it woke people up and showed them what some of our problems are related to stormwater."

"People tend to forget during the dry times, but stormwater is everyone's problem," he said.

"It is to everyone's benefit to solve these problems before the next disaster happens."

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