

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2013

The Honorable Allison Macfarlane
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
11555 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Chairman Macfarlane:

We write to urge the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to alter its plans to hold “open house” style meetings to review the 2012 performance of both the Pilgrim Nuclear Generating Station¹ and the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant², because they enable only small group or one-on-one question and answer sessions rather than a more transparent “public meeting” in which all attendees can hear the responses to all questions that are asked. We additionally request that appropriate NRC technical subject matter experts be present and available at this meeting to answer questions the public may have, and that the NRC presentations provide plant-specific operating, enforcement and safety information and statistics, utilizing plant engineers to supplement headquarters staff to respond to questions as appropriate.

Last year, Reps. Markey and Tierney requested³ that a public meeting be held regarding Seabrook in response to a similar NRC plan to move to the more restrictive “open house” format. Then, like now, residents of Massachusetts and New Hampshire contacted our offices to express their strong opposition to this apparent effort to restrict the historically more open nature of NRC meetings. The Commission ultimately decided to hold this safety-related public meeting at Seabrook. However, the “open house” format has been used for the past two years at the Pilgrim Nuclear Generating Station. According to one attendee, this format is “the equivalent of a cocktail party where folks chat to each NRC official. It is simply a PR event. Perhaps if they served cocktails it may not be a total waste of time!”

We have also learned that even the formats of recent public meetings left much to be desired. For example, we have been informed⁴ that last year at Seabrook “no engineers from Seabrook were expected to address the plant's operating experience as a responsible engineer or plant executive. We did not know who was there from the plant in the room. The NRC tightly controlled the proceedings with little reporting as they focused the majority of their time on a slide presentation of safety assurances post Fukushima and not focused on the plant's regulatory compliance or operating experience. ... The slide presentation was a canned presentation and not plant specific.”

¹ <http://pbadupws.nrc.gov/docs/ML1307/ML13072A678.pdf>

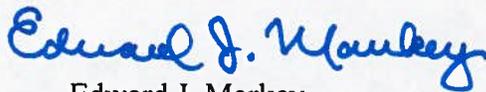
² <http://pbadupws.nrc.gov/docs/ML1307/ML13073A186.pdf>

³ <http://markey.house.gov/press-release/markey-tierney-call-local-public-meeting-seabrook-nuclear-power-plant-discuss-safety>

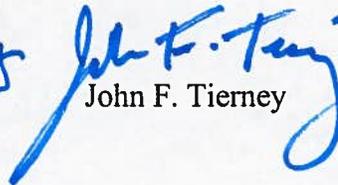
⁴ Email from an attendee at last year's Seabrook public meeting to Rep. Markey's office.

We believe that NRC's failure to conduct a public meeting to assess the 2012 performance of both Seabrook and Pilgrim would further undermine the public trust in the Commission's ability and willingness to assure the safety of these reactors. We urge you to alter the format of the "open house" meetings currently planned, and make every effort to ensure that the sort of reactor-specific information and knowledgeable personnel are included and available. We look forward to your prompt response to this request.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey



John F. Tierney



Bill Keating