

Vermilion County Mayors' Council Meeting

October 28, 2010

Present: Sharon Simmons(Ridge Farm);Gary Simmons (Ridge Farm); Chief Eric Haase (Jidge Farm); Jeff Rouse and David Lucas (Homer); Chad Hays (Catlin, & candidate 104th); Dennis Lucas(Georgetown); Clay Woodard(Catlin); Mike Puhr(Danville, & candidate 104th); Dave Ferber(Fairmount); Nancy Null (Rossville); Terry Prillaman(Rossville); Eleanor White(Bismarck-Henning), Suzanne Jaworowski and Brent Bilsland – Sunrise Coal and Adam Aull, City of Danville/DATS, Linda Bolton

Mayor Woodard opened the meeting – introductions and welcome.

Minutes were approved

Adam Aull began his presentation about the proposed federal-level changes to the definition of urban areas and its impact upon downstate Illinois/Vermilion County

- Designation is for communities 50,000 or more; ours is one of smallest in state and we believe the smallest in the nation; the designation allows for long range planning of projects that can be all or partly supported through federal dollars – transportation dollars are directed here and there is direct funding of community block dollars, as well as funding the planning department for city
- Danville had designation in the 89's, lost it in the 90's and won it back in 2000 (as population shifted and jump distances changed
- The proposed changes would limit the distance a Metropolitan Planning group can reach out to pull in other communities from 2.5 miles as it is now (including Catlin and Georgetown) to 1.5 which cuts out both communities; that loss would likely automatically eliminate Danville from having the population necessary to maintain its urban designation
- Adam's office prepared a template letter that various officials and organizations around the county are using to create their own letters of objection to the feds; those comments will be accepted till November 22nd.
- Mayor Woodard noted that being in the MPO assisted his community with the Webster Street bridge project they could not have done otherwise

- Linda has prepared a template letter for mayors and officials; she passed out hard copies at the meeting and will email with minutes of the meeting; all mayors and officials are encouraged to use the template to create a letter to send to the feds encouraging them to re-consider the change or at the very least, consider grandfathering in existing MPOs like Danville's

Brent Bilsland President of Sunrise Coal and Suzanne Jaworowski, Sunrise Coal Communications Director were present to offer information about the coal company and answer questions

- Brent gave an overview of the project
- His family was involved in development of both Riola and Vermilion Grove, along with Ron Laswell – both were sold
- Their operation in Carlisle Indiana provides 340 jobs and mining about 3 million tons a year
- They have been doing some exploratory work – drilling and leasing – in the Allerton area for some time; they are still sampling to find the right spot to site the mine, but he knows it sits in the Illinois Coal basin which is a large bowl-shaped reserve of coal under multiple states; they had some delays in their drilling, but are starting to gather data now which will enable them to move forward
- To run the mine, they will need big power, big water, and big transportation, so they will be looking at a major investment in the county; their promise is to leave the county as they found it or better
- They have a \$23 million payroll at Carlisle and pay \$7 million in royalties
- They do room and pillar mining – not long wall or subsidence mining – by their agreement, they will not be allowed to do long wall and that is not their company's method of operation; by law they will be responsible for doing all they are able to ensure no subsidence occurs
- This part of the reservoir likely will see mining at about the 350' level – or the 6th seam as it is called; the subsidence that occurred in the Westville area and others is not likely to re-occur with today's improved mining techniques
- They are required by law to protect the water quality; by law they cannot disrupt existing water quality or availability; water on site and used to wash the mined coal is contained on site and must be processed to return it to drinking water quality;

- Safety is paramount in their operation, working well within safety guidelines
- They are currently working on a video which will feature some of the residents of the Carlisle area talking about how opposed they were to the mine and how they now feel; Linda notes that you can currently visit the Sunrise website and see a video about their operations (sunrisecoal.com) – she urges everyone to take a look at the video on the website, and when the new video is finished, copies of the DVD will be sent to all communities so mayors can share with aldermen, trustees, etc
- Mike Puhr asked about some of the rumors that surfaced in Champaign County – Brent says he cannot control a lot of that; they have been slow to release information because this is a slow process and they really have limited information right now about where the mine/portal will actually be placed – the data will help them make that decision
- roads, water and rail will all be remaining after coal is mined out – local communities can use this infrastructure for development – or if they do not want it, Sunrise will be required to pull it all out and return everything – including top soil
- There were questions about some of the truck issues in Catlin and Georgetown with former mines. They likely will put in a rail spur, because of the potential cost of trucking; coal likely would be shipped north and east – where the greatest need is; Illinois is seeing growth in coal production
- Questions about Homer were asked – they have some leases there, but frankly there is not a lot of the reserve there and the push back may make it not worth pursuing; however, they have not drilled under Homer yet to even begin to see what is there – honestly, they did not want to upset residents at this time
- There were questions about taxes and impact; Brent notes Vermilion Advantage has done an impact study...which can be sent out
- They use about 180,000 gallons of water/day at Carlisle; they almost always have to bring in water; they cannot build over aquifer; bringing in a lot of new infrastructure is part of setting up – power, water and rail spur
- There are a variety of good paying jobs; they typically have to bring in some of their management – others they can train over time, but by law you cannot supervise underground until you have 5 years experience; there will likely be several miners coming back to this mine – they currently travel 4 hours a day to work at Carlisle
- Sunrise is committed to being a good neighbor and good community partner

- They are running 4 units at Carlisle, but it takes time to move up to that level over time
- Brent could not give an exact length of time the mine may be open; there was voiced concern that in the past, we have had mines open and then close in a short time; Brent says many things can lead to that, but Sunrise plans to mine this reserve; he says honestly, if this mine is not going to last at least 15 years, they will not come here; but reality is, they will eventually deplete the reserve
- The Carlisle mine covers about 500-600 acres – this mine could be similar – but nothing definite is known yet
- It is likely at least 6 months down the road before Sunrise can file for their permits; the permitting process takes at least 18 months
- Mike Puhr asked expressed concern about worker’s comp claims – since Sunrise is used to Indiana’s system; Brent agrees Illinois is worker friendly and Indiana is business friendly; they have had to pay out very few claims
- Brent says few people realize that coal is the fastest growing fuel in the world – not in US -but in the world
- When asked, he indicated they typically only mine to within 1,000 feet of incorporated areas – else they must seek and win 100% approval from those in the community, which is largely unlikely in most communities
- Can they mine under the Fairmount Quarry – yes, earthquakes do not even impact mining process underground
- Those present asked what they can do to help; they were encouraged to ask questions, find out more, visit Carlisle, and tell the story – correct the rumors when they hear them

Topics for future meeting – Mr Ferber asked about new building code requirements that take effect July 1st for areas of Illinois where a building code has not been adopted and registered; Dwight will send Linda a copy and she will see what she can find out for an update at the next meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 27, 2011
In the 1st floor conference room of
Vermilion Advantage
28 E North Street, Danville