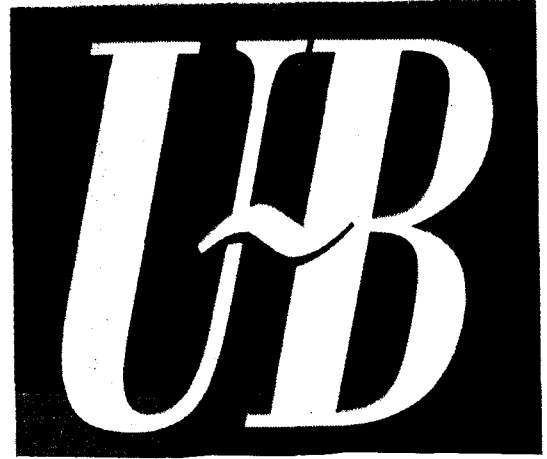


FRIDAY,
May 9, 2008

**WALLA WALLA
UNION-BULLETIN**
Bringing the Valley home to you since 1869.



Hundreds sign on to oppose coal plans

A resident delivered more than 550 signatures to Port of Walla Walla commissioners to signify opposition to a pair of Wallula projects.

By **VICKI HILLHOUSE**
of the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA — Opponents of a proposed coal-fueled power plant have collected more than 550 signatures from people who say the Port of Walla Walla should reject the project, as well as a carbon sequestration demonstration that could pave the way for it.

Walla Walla resident Norm Osterman presented a petition — which he referred to as the “first installation” of signatures — to Port commissioners at their meeting Thursday. He said the petition represents people who oppose both the carbon sequestration demonstration proposed by Battelle, and the siting of a proposed integrated gasification combined cycle power plant that hinges on Battelle’s science.

More than a dozen people, many affiliated with a citizen organization known as The Coal Plant Working Group, attended the meeting at the Port office to see the presentation. In an accompanying piece,

Whitman College students Brittany Smith, Sarah Judkins and Camila Thorndike presented a collection of photos with 800 faces of people from across the state opposed to the projects. Thorndike said the photos, which didn’t include names, were shot from Olympia to Auburn, Centralia to Seattle.

Across the state, she said, “all eyes” are on Walla Walla.

The three Port commissioners accepted the petition and photo collection, but did not comment. Port Executive Director Jim Kuntz suggested the groups also submit their petitions to Battelle and to developers of the proposed Wallula Energy Resource Center.

He also emphasized, prior to the public comments, that the Port does not have agreements to move forward with either Battelle or on the Wallula Energy Resource Center.

“There is no agreement — written, oral or otherwise,” he said.

Osterman, however, pointed out that the Port formerly did have a letter of intent that said the Port would sell land in Wallula to developers of the power plant. The letter of intent has since expired and Battelle’s project and the power plant have been put on hold. In the meantime, opponents hope neither will be allowed to move forward.

Battelle conducted seismic testing

at the Wallula Gap Business Park earlier this year. The testing was the first phase of its pilot project. However, the second phase — the drilling of a well — was postponed because Port commissioners said a number of liability-related questions need to be answered.

In the wake of the postponement, proponents of the power plant withdrew their request to the state for a potential site survey at the Wallula property, across U.S. Highway 12 from Boise Paper Solutions. Power plant proponents said they decided to wait to see if the Battelle project will move forward as anticipated in September.

Meanwhile opponents of both projects continue their efforts to squelch the possibility of either taking place here. At Thursday’s meeting, Walla Walla resident Lawrence Paoella, a retired engineer, told Port commissioners he looks back on the six years he worked in coal production and processing with shame knowing the impact it had on the environment and Earth. He said he’s opposed to the use of coal to generate any kind of electricity.

“I believe the use of coal primarily as a source of producing electric power is exactly what we don’t need.”

Vicki Hillhouse can be reached at vickihillhouse@wwub.com or 525-3300, ext. 284.