



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Catharine Young

Repowering of Dunkirk Announced

CATHARINE YOUNG December 17, 2013

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DUNKIRK – State Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I - Olean) today enthusiastically cheered the announced repowering of the NRG coal-fired plant to a clean, natural gas electricity generating facility.

“It’s a Christmas miracle. Everyone is bursting with joy because Governor Cuomo’s announcement is the best gift ever for the greater Dunkirk community. Not only has Dunkirk been saved from disaster, but we have a bright future now,” Senator Young said.

“We sincerely thank Governor Cuomo for listening to our voices and responding by working out a solution. Converting to natural gas will stabilize the tax base and avert devastating tax hikes and deep service cuts, retain and create jobs, ensure a reliable electricity source to power our homes and businesses, and give us cleaner air to breathe,” she said.

“Governor Cuomo has shown bipartisan leadership by bringing all of the stakeholders to the table to reach a resolution that benefits all of the parties involved,” Senator Young said.

“Getting to this point has been a long, hard road. I heard time after time over the past couple of years that repowering the plant was an impossible dream. We did not give up or give in. We believed that a miracle could happen,” Senator Young said.

“The community came together with one voice and stood up to say that we needed to repower the plant because our future depended on it. So many people worked hard to make this happen, and I could not be prouder of the unity that everyone has shown,” she said.

“The real possibility of the plant closing for good became apparent when NRG Energy filed a notice of intent with the New York Public Service Commission (PSC) to mothball units 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Dunkirk’s 635 MW coal plant in March of 2012. The cost of operating with coal as an energy source had become uneconomic. Everyone’s hearts dropped because the ramifications were enormous. The Payment-In-Lieu-Of-Taxes (PILOT) to the school district, city and Chautauqua County totaled \$8.4 million annually. Losing that revenue is like a nuclear bomb exploding. The community would never recover,” Senator Young said.

Realizing the dire situation, leaders came together to work towards a positive alternative. In July of 2012, Senator Young helped organize business, civic, and labor groups as well as federal, local, and state elected officials to launch a coalition to support repowering NRG into a natural gas plant.

Senator Young inserted language into the 2013-14 state budget that directed the PSC to consider broad economic and tax impacts, electricity system reliability, ratepayer savings, and environmental benefits while determining the Dunkirk plant’s future.

“Governor Cuomo and Assemblyman Andrew Goodell worked with the Senate to support the budget language that gave a framework for a solution. Their leadership set the path towards today’s victory,” Senator Young said.

In June, Senator Young wrote a letter to then PSC Chairman Garry Brown, requesting that the PSC hold a public hearing regarding repowering NRG in the community so that area residents could voice their concerns directly.

“Usually, these PSC hearings are held in Albany. Since Chautauqua County is the furthest point in the state away from the State Capitol, I felt it was only right that the PSC come here so that people could have their voices heard. To his credit, Chairman Brown honored my request,” Senator Young said.

On July 15, the PSC hearing was held at the Williams Center on the SUNY Fredonia campus. Despite brutally hot temperatures on a day that turned out to be the first of a more than week long heat wave, more than 2,200 community members turned out to show their fervent support for repowering.

“The PSC told me that our hearing shattered every attendance record in the state’s history. We really made Albany take notice. It was a turning point in the decision-making process,” Senator Young said.

“The community continued to stand up for repowering just last week, when we held a rally in the freezing cold with snow and winds whipping off Lake Erie. Hundreds showed up. It was another demonstration of the community’s concern and tenacity,” she said.

“It just goes to show that we even when the mountain seems too high to climb, we can make a profound difference when everyone pulls together. The sun is shining on Dunkirk today,” Senator Young said.

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