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ACUSHNET

Residents, officials have long list of LNG concerns for feds

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By Steve Urbon [Follow](#)

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ACUSHNET — The federal agency that has the final say about when and where large-scale LNG power projects are built came to town Wednesday and was met by a capacity crowd of about 150 people at the Ford Middle School.

Clearly, a lot of them had something they wanted to say. Nearly three dozen people signed up to speak, but only a handful got the chance by The Standard-Times' deadline. The LNG project is under fire from those who contend that the need for it hasn't been demonstrated. There are also concerns about safety, wetlands and property values and the nearness of the project to schools and homes.

Those who wanted to speak had to wait until after representatives of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) presented a 35-minute explanation of the process involving such projects. FERC officials were joined by representatives of the Army Corps of Engineers and by the U.S. Transportation Department, FERC's mother agency, each of which has a role to play in licensing large interstate LNG and natural gas pipelines and storage facilities.

The crowd that greeted them included at least a dozen people wearing "SouthCoast Neighbors United" T-shirts; the group is an organized and vocal opponent of the LNG project. They and other non-politicians were joined by elected officials lining up to express their objections and concerns.

Leading off were the three town selectmen, who have sent FERC a letter outlining their concerns.

Selectman Kevin Gaspar questioned the wisdom of basing LNG energy demand predictions "on a record-breaking winter with the polar vortex."

The selectmen made it clear to FERC that their letter was to be the first of many. "Please consider this letter as the first off several communications from this board identifying local concerns. The list is not exhaustive and we expect to raise further concerns as the project comes into focus through the submission by the proponents of the 13 reports that constitute their pre-filing activities," they wrote.

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The evening meeting was preceded by a smaller and lightly attended one in mid-afternoon during which selectmen sat down with the regulators and discussed their concerns face-to-face.

The meetings were preceded by a site visit to the existing LNG "peak shaving" storage facility on Peckham Road, where Access Northeast plans to build a 6.8 billion cubic foot capacity LNG facility next door to its existing one, which dates to September, 1971.

Fire Chief Kevin Gallagher, who is chairman of the local LNG advisory committee, said that the tour and the meeting were "very good meetings. There was a lot of good information."

Michael Durand, spokesman for Eversource, who is partners with Spectra Energy in the project, said that during the discussions it became clear how lengthy and laborious the process is for building a facility such as this one.

It will take many months, and perhaps years, if this project makes it to the finish line, he said. "This is going to take time," he said

The FERC is in the middle of "scoping sessions" to gather information about the project and take public comment. But the public comment period established in the law states that it will end May 31 in this case.

That has worried many, such as Mass. Attorney General Maura Healey, who objects to the notion that the official comment period will end weeks before the proponents produce a series of reports on various aspects of the plan.

Healey has asked for another 45 days; others say it should be double that.

John V. Peconom, a FERC environmental biologist who conducted the hearing, said that this meeting was likely not the last public hearing that the agency will conduct in Acushnet as time goes on. It is a long and demanding exercise to obtain a FERC license, and Peconom said that there will probably be a public hearing next when the draft environmental impact statement is rolled out.

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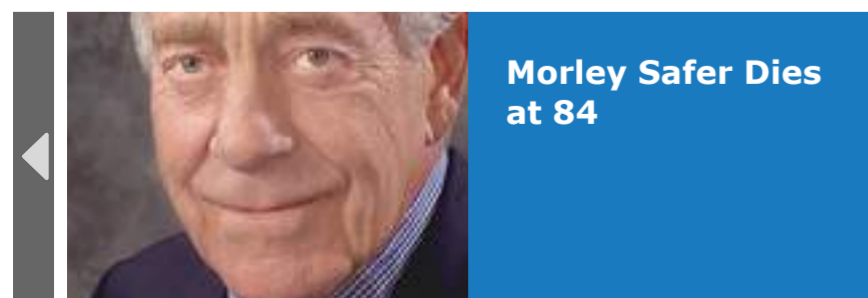
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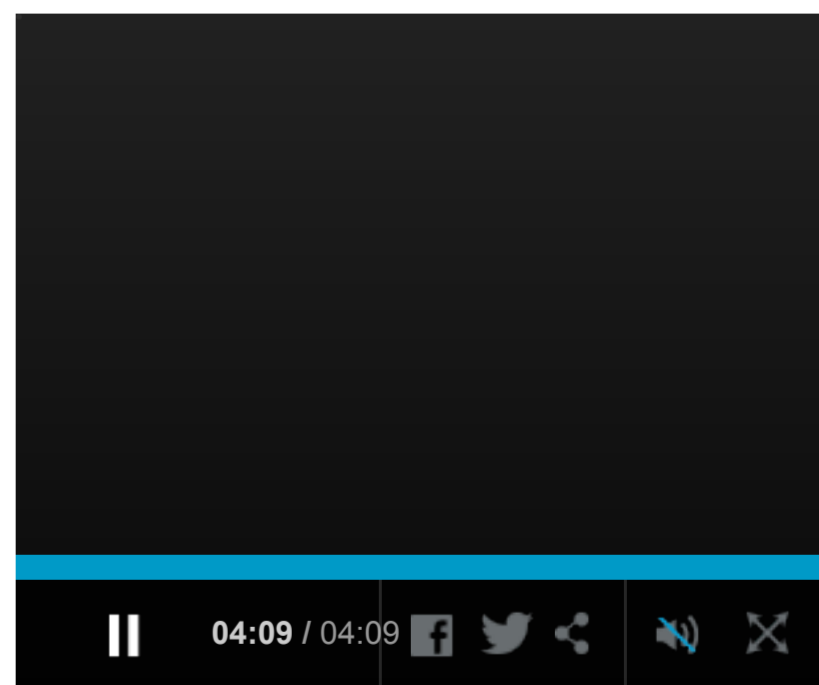
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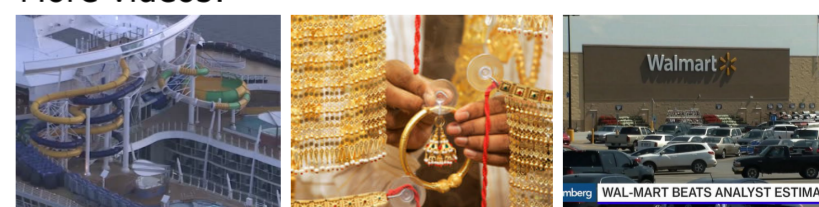
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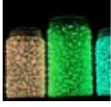






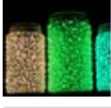



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Thursday, May 19, 2016						
	Teen Colored Sand Art					3:00 pm
	Francis J. Lawler Library					
	Teen craft project					3:00 pm
	Francis J. Lawler Library					
	Pajama Storytime at Lawler Branch					6:00 pm
	Francis J. Lawler Library					
	Parents of Murdered Children					6:30 pm
	Unitarian Memorial Church					
	Ricketson Shanty Archaeology Project at New Bedford Main Library					7:00 pm
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