

*Alachua County Chapter**Florida League of Conservation Voters*

Comments Presented at the City Commission Meeting  
Gainesville, Florida January 31, 2005  
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At the last meeting of the City Commission, January 24, 2005, we referred to the need to address Gainesville's energy needs without jeopardizing the health of human and other living populations. Over many decades, scientific studies have demonstrated that effluents of coal-fired plant pollutants include sulfur, lead, cadmium and mercury and these by-products of burning coal adversely affect our lungs, nervous systems, immune system and more.

In light of that meeting, there are a number of significant questions to be asked:

1. Do we actually need additional energy beyond our current capacity? Do we actually need an additional electric-generating plant? Why is there such pressure to move ahead now?

After all, the Florida Public Service Commission has complimented GRU on its energy operation and stated that our energy needs can be supplied by our plant for at least the next 10-12 years.

2. Why should we lock ourselves into a polluting technology when in that interim of some years cleaner technologies may arise?

3. What are the correct data regarding the toxic effluents of our existing GRU plant?

At the last City Commission meeting, it was pointed out by a citizen that the figures used by GRU were not current and therefore underestimated the volumes of toxic emissions.

4. What are the correct chronological dates referred to in the GRU proposal?

It was pointed out at that same meeting by another citizen that there appeared to be incorrect sequences of dates.

5. Couldn't Gainesville develop a strong, energetic program of conservation?

The American Institute of Architects published a paper some years ago indicating that conservation alone could reduce the energy demand of the American people by 50%. With all the talent available in Gainesville, a program could be developed as a successful model for others.

6. Couldn't Gainesville follow the example of Tallahassee where citizens opposed coal-burning plants in the early 1990's?

No coal-burning plants have been built there since; citizens have opted for gas.

The following organizations are opposed to constructing new coal-fired plants:

The American Lung Association, the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, the Florida League of Conservation Voters and our local Greenspace Preservation Association and Glen Springs Preservation Association. These organizations support strong conservation policies and the combined use of alternative technologies.

Robert McIlvaine, a coal industry consultant in Illinois, said that fossil fuel is attractive to many utilities because of the financial benefits it promises. "Basically, the decision is environment vs. economics..." (Gainesville Sun 1/31/05) Here in Gainesville, we can protect our environment and our economic health, thus avoiding McIlvaine's unscientific either/or attitude.

The issues of energy-generation, energy-consumption and the toxic by-products of a coal-fired plant will affect the health and lives of all of us who live in Gainesville, and, indeed of Alachua County residents, as well. We must take all the time that is needed for citizens, their City Commissioners, their staff people, independent consultants, et al. to be involved in full community discussions; so that whatever is decided about our energy options, the concerns of our community will be fully and satisfactorily addressed.

In our democratic form of government, every effort must be made to reflect the will of its citizens. As an initial action, we urge you to establish a committee of independent, expert consultants and to schedule a series of workshops for citizens.

Protecting the health, safety and welfare of citizens is the sworn oath of our City Commissioners and the dedicated commitment of our citizens.