

# State utility charge irks local officials

By JANE K. DOVE

Lewisboro residents will see their utility bills increase this month by \$3.83 to provide financial support to three upstate New York nuclear power plants that can't survive without additional subsidies.

But the \$3.83 charge won't show up on a separate line on monthly electric bills because the Public Service Commission says it wants to "limit customer confusion."

In a decision made last summer, state officials guaranteed up to \$7.5 billion in new revenue to the three upstate nuclear power plants between now and 2029. The funds that come from New York state's electricity customers will compensate the power plants for producing "zero emission" power.

Town Supervisor Peter Parsons is outraged over the PSC move.

"This surcharge has a significant impact on our town residents' finances," he said this week. "The estimated total cost of the subsidy for Lewisboro residents alone is \$245,438."

He continued, "I strongly object to the state making power companies upstate financially whole by putting this surcharge on our electric bills. It seems small, but on an annual basis it

comes to almost \$50 per household. Personally, I would like to decide what to do with my own money and not just have it taken each month."

To express opposition to the PSC's action, the town of Lewisboro filed a "friend of the court" motion, or "amicus curiae," March 31, to support the large lawsuit now being brought against the PSC by other New York state municipalities and individuals to halt the rate hike.

The Town of Bedford joined with Lewisboro in opposing the surcharge. "Regardless of one's view on nuclear power, the rate hike is completely contrary to the town's participation in the 'Green Power' program of Westchester Power promoting 100 percent renewable power," town officials said in the March 31 "What's New" bulletin.

The surcharge for Bedford residents works out to \$4.13 per customer and a total annual cost of \$403,800, according to town estimates.

The PSC claims that, statewide, the average monthly cost to its customers is \$2. All three plants being subsidized are majority owned by the Chicago-based Exelon Corporation, which made \$1.1 billion in profits last year.

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# New utility surcharge riles local officials

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"I am completely fed up with the state not being upfront about taxes they want to levy. Like their proposed changes to stormwater regulations, the cost is simply pushed off onto the towns," said Mr. Parsons.

Downstate consumers are irate about paying for power that will never reach them. Even nuclear groups contend that nuclear plants are not "zero emission," saying they give off heat and radiation along with small amounts of carbon and leave nuclear

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waste behind.

The three plants threatened with closing are R.E. Ginna, Nine Mile Point Unit 1 and the James A. Fitzpatrick nuclear power plants. Taken together, these three facilities em-

ploy more than 2,000 workers in high-paying jobs and the plants pay tens of millions in property taxes.

The brief says the proposed surcharge is patently unfair.

The legal brief joined by Lewis-

boro and Bedford also objected to the commission's bootstrapping the plants' operating subsidy onto a proceeding to establish "Clean Energy Standards."

"Had there been adequate notice of a proposal to impose a surcharge on the ratepayers, or had there been adequate notice of the intent to use that surcharge to subsidize nuclear power plants in another part of the state, the amicus curiae might have chosen to participate more actively," the document said.