



Linden reopens deal with carbon sequestration plant

By [Eliot Caroom/For the Star-Ledger](#)

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LINDEN -- Several months after Linden's council rejected an agreement to fast-track an innovative new power plant, former opponents are renegotiating a deal to move it forward.

Council president Robert Bunk told residents that a three-person subcommittee will review the prospects for a coal power plant called PurGen to be built on the 98-acre waterfront site that was formerly a DuPont plant.

The \$5 billion coal plant would bury carbon emissions beneath the ocean floor, but some Linden residents worry about air pollution or the possibility of an accident.

In October, Bunk and the council rejected an agreement by a 7 to 4 vote that would have pledged city support for the developer, SCS Energy of Massachusetts, as it sought state Department of Environmental Protection and federal Environmental Protection Agency approvals.

The new subcommittee is comprised of councilman Robert Frazier, who voted in favor of the project, and councilmen Richard Koziol and Richard Puschel, who voted with Bunk against the PurGen agreement. Bunk convened the subcommittee to negotiate a better deal with SCS Energy, and earlier this month, they met with a lawyer from the energy company.

Bunk said Monday that he voted against the first deal, but would consider a new arrangement with changes, including a scientist provided by SCS as an advisor to the city.

“(The deal) didn't have somebody we could use as a go-between...some of type of scientist that could tell us this is a fruitful project, that would protect us,” Bunk said. “The city wasn't getting any value out of this in terms of money. I wanted some type of remuneration up front.”

The project has many critics among environmental activists, including local residents concerned about air pollution and state and national advocates who oppose the idea of carbon sequestration enabling further consumption of coal, a fuel they believe is inherently dirty. Environmental groups including the New Jersey Sierra Club and the Edison Wetlands Association held a town hall meeting this month where they continued their criticisms of PurGen.

Meanwhile, former DEP commissioner Brad Campbell, a consultant for the project said Monday that SCS Energy is happy to work with the council and is still optimistic about the project's fate.

"Council president Bunk and other members of the council have raised legitimate concerns about the project," Campbell said, "and we're confident we can address those concerns."

Linden mayor Richard Gerbounka, who supports the plant, has said he hopes the subcommittee negotiates a new agreement by early next year. Bunk said the group is facing no deadline and should take its time.