

## Linden officials approve \$2.5M deal for PurGen coal-fueled power plant

By [Star-Ledger Staff](#)

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Jennifer Hulshizer/For The Star-Ledger Linden Mayor Richard Gerbounka (center) is applauded by Council President Robert F. Bunk (left) and City Clerk Joseph Bodek (right) as he prepares to deliver the state of the city address, at Linden City Hall in this 2008 file photo. Linden officials on Tuesday approved the construction of a PurGen coal plant.

LINDEN -- The prospects of \$2.5 million in payments and 150 permanent jobs convinced the city of Linden to clear legal obstacles to the construction of a unique and controversial coal-fueled power plant on the banks of the Arthur Kill.

A partnership called PurGen may now pursue permits to erect a \$5 billion, 500-megawatt electrical plant under a deal approved unanimously by the city council late Tuesday. The agreement resolves litigation that erupted over development rights to the 106-acre parcel in 2005, when the city tried to condemn the site for a redevelopment plan.

In exchange for supporting the PurGen project, Linden will receive structured payments, beginning with \$350,000 this year, and amounting to a total of \$2.5 million over the next five years. The city also will receive money to hire private consultants to monitor the project.

“The land has sat fallow for decades,” Councilman Gene Davis said. “We need to take the first step to stop the lawsuits, and take control of our own destiny.”

In a split vote three months ago, the city council had rejected a similar settlement plan that did not promise cash payments.

“The original deal didn’t have checks and balances,” explained Councilman Robert Frazier.

The settlement document states DuPont, the chemical company that owns the project site, will make the payments. But spokesmen for DuPont and PurGen said PurGen will pay the \$2.5 million under a contract by which it is buying the site.

“We’re pleased to work with the council to address their concerns and we’re looking forward to New Jersey being the host of an important climate change solution,” said attorney Bradley Campbell, the state’s former Department of Environmental Protection commissioner, who is representing PurGen.

PurGen calls its plant a “clean-energy” operation because it will combine coal gasification and carbon sequestration. Coal will be pressurized, rather than burned as in other power plants, and the carbon-dioxide exhaust will be piped 100 miles for storage at a point 2,200 yards below the Atlantic Ocean.

“The concept of clean coal is a bit of an oxymoron. It’s a bit like dry water or frozen fire,” said Henry Rose of the New Jersey Environmental Alliance, one of several groups critical of the plant’s use of coal — which they call a “dirty” fuel source.

A vocal contingent of union members, carrying large cardboard signs, attended the council meeting to support the project. Reaction from Linden residents has been mixed.

“My house is the first house that you see when you leave the DuPont property,” said resident Ron Sheehy. “Out of the 1.8 million people in a 10-mile radius, I should be concerned the most. But after doing the research, I think doing coal gasification is the way to go.”

Resident Ada Brunner is skeptical.

“Do we really want to be the city of coal plants and gas lines?” she said. “I don’t think that’s the way we want our city to develop.”