

Channel Islands Neighborhood Council Report on the 9.13.18 Regional Water Quality Control Board Hearing

On Thursday, September 13, approximately 70 concerned residents and the Board of the Channel Islands Neighborhood Council, as well as several notable public officials including Mayor Flynn, Supervisor Zaragoza, Councilman Perello, C.I. Harbor Director Sandoval and numerous representatives from the City of Oxnard and the County attended the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board Hearing at the Government Center in Ventura.

With speeches, videos and presentations in hand, the attendees were prepared with their arguments to present to the Board as to why the NPDES Permit issued to NRG, the operator of the Mandalay Generating Station, should not be ended.

This State-issued Permit sets forth the environmental regulations which must be met during operation of the steam generating station including the water pumps that are integral to the plant operations. NRG petitioned the State Water Board to end the Permit because all generating operations at Mandalay Bay have been confirmed by the State as closed down.

This item, which typically would be on the consent section of the meeting's agenda, was placed on the "Contested Agenda" due to the huge outpouring of community letters sent to the Board. Over 150 letters were acknowledged to have been received, which the Board acknowledged was a clear indication of an engaged and very concerned community.

Nearly all who spoke before the Board argued that that Operator had an obligation to "stay at the table" because the cessation of the water pumps has contributed to the "water quality crisis" in Channel Islands Harbor. It was reasoned that the presence of an open NPDES permit would be the incentive needed to bring NRG to the table so that public agencies, stakeholders, and NRG could work out a "Plan B" to replace the generating station's pumps. The pumps enable the south-to-north circulation flushing of the Channel Islands Harbor.

Despite the pleas for "just give us more time to work out an answer before releasing NRG", the Board voted 5-0 to end the Permit. Citing that they have no legal basis to not release the Permit, the Board concurrently assured the attendees that it will stay involved in the issues confronting Channel Islands Harbor. The Chair, Madelyn Glickfeld, as well as almost every Commissioner, pledged on-going support to both the public agencies and the Water Board "eyes" on what is going on.

Stay tuned for the next steps Channel Islands Neighborhood Council and concerned residents will take to make certain this issue stays front and center.