

Plant boss explains export project

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Members of the Calvert County League of Women Voters (LWV) met Wednesday with an official from Dominion Cove Point Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Plant to discuss the Lusby facility's pending expansion project. The brief session was held at Calvert Library in Prince Frederick. Michael E. Gardner is the manager of LNG operations at the plant. Currently, the facility on the Chesapeake Bay conducts import operations for LNG. The plant has seven storage tanks and an offshore pier.

The expansion project would give the plant liquefaction and export capabilities. The construction project is still in the permit obtainment stage. The estimated construction cost is between \$3.4 billion and \$3.8 billion. Expanding the plant would be one of the largest construction projects ever in Maryland.

The economic implications are huge. Gardner said Maryland would collect an estimated \$59 million in income and sales taxes through 2040 and the operation would increase Maryland exports by almost \$5 billion a year.

Peak construction of the facility will support approximately 3,000 temporary jobs and generate approximately \$20 million in income taxes during the construction phase. Once the new facility is completed and operational about 175 new jobs will be available. The facility is expected to increase property tax payments by approximately \$40 million per year, a 27 percent increase over current tax revenue.

Gardner also told LWV members that the labor income associated with the employment creation is expected to exceed \$300 million and countywide business sales supported by the construction and operation are expected to exceed \$2 billion.

"There is no liquefier like this in the United States," said Gardner.

Concerns expressed by the meeting attendees included plant emissions, use of water, frequency of ship dockings and road access.

Gardner pointed out that the project and the plant will be subject to substantial federal and state oversight, most notably by the U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The federal and state regulators will conduct a public hearing on proposed plant emissions prior to the issuance of a permit. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will give Dominion emission limits, which will be routinely monitored.

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