

VILLAGE PRESIDENT
Ray Danford

VILLAGE CLERK
Jerry Menard

VILLAGE TRUSTEES
Rita Baker
Charlie Mattern
Kevin Groth
Corby Valentine
Steve Smith
Tony Miller

VILLAGE OF FREEBURG

FREEBURG MUNICIPAL CENTER
14 SOUTHGATE CENTER, FREEBURG, IL 62243
PHONE: (618) 539-5545 • FAX: (618) 539-5590
Web Site: www.freeburg.com

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATOR
Dennis Herzing

VILLAGE TREASURER
Bryan A. Vogel

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR
Ronald Dintelmann

POLICE CHIEF
Melvin E. Woodruff, Jr.

VILLAGE ATTORNEY
Stephen R. Wigginton

May 11, 2009

NOTICE

MEETING OF THE ELECTRIC COMMITTEE (Valentine/Smith/Miller)

An Electric Committee Meeting of the Village of Freeburg will be held at the Municipal Center, Executive Board Room, **Wednesday, May 13, 2009, at 5:30 p.m.**

ELECTRIC COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

I. Items To Be Discussed

A. Old Business

1. Approval of April 8, 2009 minutes
2. Switchover of Ameren to Freeburg power
3. Village of Freeburg utility needs analysis
4. Replacement of old power plant doors
5. Arc flash study
6. Loss Control Inspection

B. New Business

1. IMEA's Power Cost and Energy Efficiency Forum
2. Voltage Regulators
3. Regulation of carbon dioxide
4. Dusk to Dawn Lighting (moved from Legal & Ordinance Committee)

C. General Concerns

D. Public Participation

E. Adjourn

At said Electric Committee Meeting, the Village Trustees may vote on whether or not to hold an Executive Session to discuss the selection of a person to fill a public office [5 ILCS, 120/2 - (c) (3)], litigation [5 ILCS, 120/2 - (c)(11)] personnel [5 ILCS, 120/2 - (c) (1) a.]; or real estate transactions [5 ILCS, 120/2 - (c)(5)].

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Tony Miller
Rita Baker
Seth Speiser
Charlie Mattern

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ELECTRIC COMMITTEE MEETING Wednesday, May 13, 2009 at 5:30 p.m.

The meeting of the Electric Committee was called to order at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13, 2009 by Chairman Corby Valentine. Committee members present were Chairman Corby Valentine, Trustee Steve Smith, Trustee Tony Miller, Mayor Ray Danford, Village Clerk Jerry Menard, Village Administrator Dennis Herzing, Public Works Director Ron Dintelmann, Assistant Public Works and Director John Tolan. Guest present: Janet Baechle.

A. OLD BUSINESS:

- Approval of April 8, 2009 minutes: Corby asked Ron if he heard anything back on the web deflection testing and Ron advised the committee he talked to someone from Altorfer who said it was their recommendation the new Catepillar units did not need to be tested. Ron sent a letter to John Osseck of Chubb Insurance advising him of this. We have not received a response back from him. Corby also asked about Eaton's visit on May 11th to repair the breakers and Ron advised that has been moved to May 26th. Corby asked about Tim's training and Ron advised he did go to one week of the schooling. He was scheduled for two weeks but the school made a mistake so he was only able to go to one. The class will be rescheduled. *Trustee Steve Smith motioned to approve the minutes of April 8, 2009 and Trustee Tony Miller seconded the motion.* All voting aye, the motion carried.
- Switchover of Ameren to Freeburg power: Dennis said Ameren sent an email stating they want our request in writing and thinks this is their latest stall tactic. Dennis will prepare the list of properties and letter. The committee wanted a date put in the letter of when we will start switching over customers if we don't hear from them. Ron thinks we should give them to the 1st of June and the committee agreed to May 29th. Ron said apparently they are working on it because he did receive a call from the engineering people with some questions.
- Village Utility Needs Analysis: Ron said there is nothing new right now. There will be some discussion on June 4th about this.
- Replacement of old power plant doors: Ron will continue to work on this item.
- Arc flash study: Ron received Corby's pamphlet. There was another company HD Supply had suggested we use and he will look into it.
- Loss Control Inspection: Ron sent a letter to them advising the tests will be done the last week in May.

B. NEW BUSINESS:

1. IMEA Power Cost and Energy Efficiency Forum: Ron said for anyone who wants to go to send their name to Julie and she will register everyone.
2. Voltage Regulations: Ron explained we had problems with some regulators on the south circuit and sent them to Solomon for repair. The evaluation came back and he talked to Dennis about them. Ron said we had one with a bad coil inside and it was non-repairable. We purchased one rebuilt unit for \$6350 and the spare unit will be repaired. We went ahead with the work because we are approaching the warm weather.
3. Regulation of carbon dioxide: Ron said the carbon tap and trade bill won't make it out of committee until this summer and further said it is probably dead for this year. He said they are going to give away carbon credits for 15 years but after that they will start charging utilities.
4. Dusk to Dawn Lighting: Dennis explained Kevin had put this on the Legal & Ordinance agenda. At the Legal & Ordinance meeting last week, it was decided it should be talked about in this committee. Dennis will provide a copy of the ordinance to the trustees before the next meeting.

C. GENERAL CONCERNS: Tony said a panel is hanging on the light pole by AnRus and Ron said he will take a look at it. The street lights are up on Cemetery Road and Willow Springs Road.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None.

E. ADJOURN: *Trustee Steve Smith motioned to adjourn at 5:52 p.m. and Trustee Tony Miller seconded the motion. All voting aye, motion carried.*



Julie Polson
Office Manager

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ELECTRIC COMMITTEE MEETING Wednesday, April 8, 2009 at 5:30 p.m.

The meeting of the Electric Committee was called to order at 5:37 p.m. on Wednesday, April 8, 2009 by Chairman Corby Valentine. Committee members present were Chairman Corby Valentine, Trustee Steve Smith, Trustee Tony Miller, Mayor Ray Danford, Village Administrator Dennis Herzing, Public Works Director Ron Dintelmann, Assistant Public Works Director John Tolan and Office Manager Julie Polson.

A. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Approval of March 11, 2009 minutes: Trustee Steve Smith motioned to approve the minutes of March 11, 2009 and Trustee Tony Miller seconded the motion. All voting aye, the motion carried.
2. Switchover of Ameren to Freeburg power: Ron had a face-to-face meeting with Ameren who said it will be a couple of weeks before they get back to us. Ron will call them and find out what is going on. Corby said after this next contact with them, if we have some customers ready to go at a minimal expense, let's get started with them.
3. Village Utility Needs Analysis: Ron talked to Ron Earl at IMEA who has promised to schedule a meeting about this to coincide with the newly elected officials meeting. He thinks it is either June 4th or June 9th at the Collinsville Convention Center.
4. Replacement of old power plant doors: Ron will continue to work on this item.
5. Arc flash study: Ron received some information from Corby. Ron also received a quote from another company of approximately \$10,000 - \$15,000. He will have something for the next meeting.
6. Loss Control Inspection: Ron has tried to contact John Osseck regarding the crankshaft deflection test but John has not returned his call. The lube analysis is in process. Ron said under new business, he has a proposal to fix problems with some of the switchgear. When the company is out to do this, he will have the testing of the switchgear done and also the megger testing. The repair to the breakers is scheduled for May 11th. While the switchgear is open, Ron will also have the infrared testing done. Ron will ask John on whether to include the Catepillars and the cold storage units as well.

B. NEW BUSINESS:

1. IMUA Annual Conference: Ron would like to attend the conference. The committee agreed to send him at a cost of \$185.00 plus hotel costs.

Electric Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 8, 2009
Page 1 of 2

2. BHM&G Reliability Study: Ron explained BHM&G sent this out in response to the ice storms in Missouri. They are trying to get people trained to assist at other power plants in emergencies. Ron is not interested in doing this study. Ron said he has three trained operators other than himself.

3. Repair of breakers: Eaton will be here on May 11th to repair the breakers. Ron said he is being told the preventative maintenance should be done every three years. It is a safety issue for everyone. Ron said the timing was critical before it got hot outside and the load was too high.

Ron talked to the committee about some additional training he felt Tim Kunkelmann should have in preparation for the upcoming Lab C training in October. He prepared a memo and provided it to the committee for review. They instructed Ron to make the training mandatory and not optional. Ron advised he would also take this to the Personnel Committee.

Ron advised Randy Kasper will have surgery on his knee and off work for about 4 - 8 weeks.

C. **GENERAL CONCERNS**: Tony advised a request has been made for a street light on Apple Street by Willow Springs Road. The committee agreed it would be a good idea and to put one between Mathews and Rudy. Dennis said he has received a request from Ken Bald for a street light on Cemetery Road around his house and the committee agreed to install one there also. Ron said they will also do some ditch work when that culvert on Cemetery is being worked on.

Ron advised West Street will be closing Monday for the culvert work and Cemetery Road will close on the 20th. West Street and Cemetery Road can be closed up to 20 days each for the culvert work.

John reported the meters at Deerfield have all been replaced with the radio read meters. Ron reported three of the meter bases (in service) had burned up our meters that will need to be changed. Dave can change them out but they have to get a permit and be inspected by the County.

Tony asked if there was a problem with the Meadowbrook lift station and Ron advised no. He said John put the basket in and it has to be cleaned at least once a week.

D. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**: None.

E. **ADJOURN**: *Trustee Tony Miller motioned to adjourn at 6:33 p.m. and Trustee Steve Smith seconded the motion. All voting aye, motion carried.*



Julie Polson
Office Manager



3400 CONIFER DRIVE, SPRINGFIELD, IL 62711
217-789-4632 / FAX 217-789-4642

A Special Invitation:

IMEA's Power Cost and Energy Efficiency Forum

In June, IMEA will hold a series of special regional presentations for its power purchasers to discuss in detail how IMEA provides for your system's energy needs, how it incurs its costs and how it passes those costs onto its purchasers. Also addressed will be the related subject of energy efficiency and conservation and the programs being developed by IMEA.

Who is invited: The elected, appointed and utility officials of all the IMEA full requirements power purchasers.

Where and when: There will be four meetings around the state for the convenience of those invited. Each will begin at 6:30 PM with a 30 minute reception and last approximately two hours total. The dates and places are:

- **Tuesday, June 2** – Thelma Keller Convention Center, 1202 N. Keller Drive, **Effingham** -
 - for the communities of **Bethany, Sullivan, Altamont, Greenup, Marshall, Carmi, Fairfield, Flora, Metropolis, Cairo, Rantoul, Farmer City and Casey**
- **Thursday, June 4** - The DoubleTree Inn, 1000 Eastport Plaza Drive, **Collinsville** –
 - for the communities of **Breese, Highland, Waterloo, Carlyle, Mascoutah, Freeburg, Red Bud, Chatham, Riverton and Roodhouse and the RECC**
- **Wednesday, June 10** – Pheasant Run Resort, 4051 East Main Street, **St. Charles** –
 - for the communities of **St. Charles, Naperville, and Winnetka**
- **Thursday, June 11** – AmericInn, 2120 Claude Bailey Parkway, **Princeton** –
 - for the communities of **Princeton, Rock Falls, Peru, Ladd, Oglesby and Bushnell**

As noted, a hosted reception will precede each presentation. Ample appetizers will be available so please plan on eating with us prior to the meeting.

What should you do: Please provide this invitation to the appropriate officials and then RSVP with the number of those attending to Tammy Kesterson of our staff at tkesterson@imea.org. **Please RSVP no later than May 22.**

Additional information and directions will be made available closer to the dates.

This is a very important meeting for all of us and we look forward to seeing you there.

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ILLINOIS MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC AGENCY
ILLINOIS PUBLIC ENERGY AGENCY
ILLINOIS MUNICIPAL UTILITIES ASSOCIATION
WWW.IMEA.ORG



Powerful Transformer Solutions

SOLOMON CORPORATION

DATE: 4/24/09

Job #: _____

VOLTAGE REGULATOR EVALUATION REPORT

Customer: Freeburg Munic Light

Date Tested: _____

Address: 14 Southgate Center

Make: GE

City: Freeburg State: IL

Voltage: 2500 KVA: 75

IC #: 109025144

Amp: 300 Voltage as Found: 2500

Tank Serial #: _____

Panel Box Serial #: L193459W

Preliminary Tests

Evaluation by: _____ Neutral Lt Switch: x

Turn Ratio: Failed Op Count Switch: x

Potential Windings: Failed ByPass Arrestor: _____

Megger Reading: 500 Lightning Arrestor: _____

Motor Capacitor is remote mounted: Yes _____ No x

Control Cord length: Short

Comments: Caps & Trans

Control

Type: ML-32

of Operations: 140,344

Manual Operation: No

Auto Operation: No

Op Counter: No

Neutral light: No

Data Pak: Yes _____ No x

VLC: Yes _____ No x

VRC: Yes _____ No x

MCI: Yes _____ No x

Repair Costs

Maintenance, Labor, Bake Out, New Gaskets, Motor Capacitor,
Pressure Relief, Testing and Paint

New Oil: 52 Gallons: _____

Unit is not repairable. Replacment unit 100 KVA w/CL-6B Control \$6,350.00

Regulator Total: _____

Control Total: _____

Grand Total: \$0.00

Additional Comments: _____



Powerful Transformer Solutions

SOLOMON CORPORATION

DATE: 4/24/09

Job #: _____

VOLTAGE REGULATOR EVALUATION REPORT

Customer: Freeburg Munic Light Date Tested: _____
 Address: 14 Southgate Center Make: GE
 City: Freeburg State: IL Voltage: 2500 KVA: 50
 IC #: 109025145 Amp: 200 Voltage as Found: 2400
 Tank Serial #: M130673PP7 Panel Box Serial #: M048072PLP

Preliminary Tests

Evaluation by: _____ Neutral Lt Switch: x
 Turn Ratio: OK Op Count Switch: x
 Potential Windings: Ok ByPass Arrestor: _____
 Meggar Reading: 30K Lightning Arrestor: _____
 Motor Capacitor is remote mounted: Yes _____ No x
 Control Cord length: Short
 Comments: _____

Control

Type: VR-1
 # of Operations: 166,360
 Manual Operation: OK
 Auto Operation: Ok
 Op Counter: Ok
 Neutral light: Ok
 Data Pak: Yes _____ No x
 VLC: Yes _____ No x
 VRC: Yes _____ No x
 MCI: Yes _____ No x

Repair Costs

Maintenance, Labor, Bake Out, New Gaskets, Motor Capacitor,
 Pressure Relief, Testing and Paint
 New Oil: 62 Gallons: _____
 2044 Gear _____
 2045 Gear _____
 Short Cord _____
 3) U Bolt Assem _____
 2) Bushings _____
 Screw in oil sight _____

 Option 2 \$4,200.00 w/CL-6B Control _____

Regulator Total: \$2,950.00
 Control Total: _____
 Grand Total: \$2,950.00

Additional Comments: _____

Shimkus' food for thought at hearing prompts snickers

4/2/07

It may seem out of character for Republican U.S. Rep. **JOHN SHIMKUS**, R-Collinsville, to help disgraced former Democratic Gov. **ROD BLAGOJEVICH** with anything — but he did.

Yes, during a lull in the nationwide laugh-at-Blagojevich telethon, Shimkus admirably filled in as the Illinois politician caught in the media crosshairs, thanks to comments he made about global warming and God's will during a U.S. House subcommittee hearing last week.

The discussion led to Shimkus "winning" the title of "worst person in the world" Tuesday night from **KEITH OLBERMANN** of MSNBC.

And a number of Web sites, including www.progressillinois.com, sponsored by the Illinois State Council of the Service Employees International Union, have posted video of the discussion, which took place at the March 25 hearing of the U.S. House subcommittee on energy and environment of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

At one point in the hearing, Shimkus is discussing the issue of carbon-based pollution in the air with **CHRISTOPHER MONCKTON**, an adviser to former British Prime Minister **MARGARET THATCHER** who has expressed doubt about global warming. Monckton reportedly regards the controversy as stoked by "the need of the international left for a new flag to rally round."

At the hearing, Monckton noted that research shows there was as much as 7,000 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the air 175 million years ago, compared to less than 400 ppm today. He also called the gas a necessary plant food — a point Shimkus jumped on.

"So if we decrease the use of carbon dioxide, are we not taking away plant food from the atmosphere?" Shimkus asked.

"Yes, indeed you are," Monckton replied.

"So," Shimkus said of those seeking to lower CO2 emissions, "all our good intentions could be for vain. In fact, what could be doing just the opposite of what the people who want to save the world

are saying."

"You could indeed," Monckton said.

"You're quite right."

Another segment of the video shows Shimkus discussing and reading from a Bible.

Shimkus read a portion of the book of Genesis that follows the great flood of Noah: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man," God says in the excerpt, "even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood, and never again will I destroy all living creatures as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."

Shimkus also referred to a biblical promise that "the earth will end only when God declares it's time to be over. Man will not destroy this earth. This earth will not be destroyed by a flood." Shimkus said members of the clergy were in the room. "I appreciate having panelists here who are men of faith, and we can get into the theological discourse of that position," Shimkus said. "But I do believe God's word is infallible, unchanging, perfect."

"Today we have about 388 parts per million in the atmosphere," Shimkus added, back on the CO2 thing. "I think in the age of dinosaurs, when we had the most flora and fauna, we were probably at 4,000 parts per million. There is a theological debate that this is a carbon-starved planet — not too much carbon. And the cost of a cap-and-trade (a plan proposed by the Obama administration to lower emissions of certain pollutants) on the poor is now being discovered."

Shimkus also held up a picture of coal miners, and said some mines were closed in Illinois specifically because of Clean Air Act amendments nearly two decades ago. Olbermann wasn't the only liberal talk-show host on MSNBC who had fun with this stuff this week.

"In other words, we shouldn't bother trying to reduce the amount of carbon in our atmosphere because the dinosaurs did just fine with the tons of carbon that God gave them for their atmosphere," said **RACHEL MADDOX**. "Also, the doob

bird are plenty of cholesterol, and the saber-toothed tiger never even flossed. Stop worrying, people.

Olbermann, in response to Shimkus' statement that God will determine when the world will end, said, "So, the man pressing a button to start a nuclear war that would be God's infallible word? Well then why do we bother trying to govern? I mean, can't he do something about the budget deficit?"

"Oh, by the way," he added. "As you hit me over the head with your Bible, congressman, there ain't a word in it about those dinosaurs you mentioned earlier."

Asked about the criticism Wednesday, Shimkus responded through a spokesman: "One of the great things about our country is the right of free speech, allows people to offer their thoughts about elected officials. I welcome all debate on what may be one of the most crucial issues we face."

Endorsement flap

A bit of questioning followed the endorsement by the Springfield and Central Illinois Trades and Labor Council of **J.C. "JAY" HARRISON**, an independent for Springfield Township highway commissioner, over the incumbent, Democrat **GEORGE RUZIC**.

ROSE RUZIC, George's wife and Sangamon County Democratic Party secretary, said her husband received a questionnaire from the labor council only a day or two before the deadline to respond.

George Ruzic, who won the job in 2005, noted he's a 38-year member of Operating Engineers Local 965. He wondered why no call came when he didn't turn in his questionnaire, but also said he thought it uncomfortable to be asked if he would "commit yourself to this, commit yourself to that."

"To me, it was a lot of personal stuff that I didn't think was any of their business," he said.

TERRY REED, new president of the labor council, said he doesn't know either candidate, and he notes that union members aren't always endorsed by the full group. He said questionnaire responses are required of endorsed candidates, and the questions deal with issues important to working men and women.

"None of them are personal," he said



Nick Stoutamyer, at left in a campaign filer, is facing Erin Conley in Subdistrict 2.

School board candidate admits to rookie mistake

Springfield School Board candidate **NICK STOUTAMYER** says it was just a "rookie mistake" that one of his campaign filers includes a picture of himself taken on state property. The photo was taken while sitting at his wife's desk. She works for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

"I picked up my wife for lunch one day," said Stoutamyer, a Teamsters member and driver for Henry Neich and Son. "I had my suit on. She said, 'Let me get a picture of you. That's one of the pictures she really liked.' A dead giveaway of the location, outlines hunting and fishing regulations."

"I'm new to this thing," said Stoutamyer, who is running in Subdistrict 2 against board president **ERIN CONLEY**. "I know now that it was a rookie mistake."

CHAD FORNOFF, executive director of the Illinois Executive Ethics Commission, said state law doesn't allow employees to "intentionally misappropriate state property or resources by engaging in political activity." The act does not define "misappropriate," and the commission has not interpreted this formally or informally, he added.

Fornoff said DNR might have its own policy. "Employees should seek the advice of their agency's ethics officer when they have questions about particular conduct," he said. "We are aware of this situation," said **CHRIS MCCLOUD**, DNR spokesman. "At this time it is not clear what, if any, actions depicted in the photo constitute a violation of the ethics act. We are conducting an investigation to make a determination."

Stoutamyer has been endorsed by the Sangamon County Republican Party, while Sangamon County Democrats are in Conley's corner. The school board is officially nonpartisan. The election is Tuesday.

of the questions.

Harrison, a retired truck driver for AER freight who has a retiree card from Teamsters Local 916, said he had "a couple days or so" to fill out the questionnaire and did so.

"I didn't see anything in there that I ... could say anything derogatory about,"

Harrison said. "I just gave them the best answers I could. I do definitely appreciate their endorsement."

Bernard Schoenburg is political columnist for The State Journal-Register. He can be reached at 788-1540 or bernard.schoenburg@sjr.com.

Dennis Herzing

From: "FPWD" <FPWD@FREEBURG.COM>
To: "Dennis Herzing" <Herzing@freeburg.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 05, 2009 11:08 AM
Attach: Shimkus Climate Change 4-02-09.pdf
Subject: Fw: Illinois Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign is shedding few tears for owners of coal power plants...

----- Original Message -----

From: [David Stuva](#)
To: [RECC Ayers Jimmy](#) ; [RECC Dowson Ted](#) ; [RECC Eigenmann Cassie \(Home\)](#) ; [RECC Lee W. RECC Marten](#) ; [RECC Melvin L. RECC Repscher](#) ; [RECC Shores Ervin D.](#) ; [RECC White David](#) ; [RECC Wilcox Chris](#)
Sent: Tuesday, May 05, 2009 10:10 AM
Subject: Illinois Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign is shedding few tears for owners of coal power plants...



Posted on Sun, May. 03, 2009

Carbon trading could hurt coal industry Electricity prices would go up, industry says

BY MIKE FITZGERALD
News-Democrat

When the Prairie State Energy Campus cranks out its first kilowatt hour of electricity -- which is scheduled for two years from now -- it could end up costing ratepayers way more than anyone had predicted.

That's because of recent efforts by the Obama White House and Democrats in Congress to begin the regulation of carbon dioxide, the chief greenhouse gas blamed for global warming. More than half the world's industrial CO2 comes from coal power plants.

The Prairie State Energy Campus is a nearly \$4 billion power plant and coal mine project under construction in Washington County. It's designed to generate electricity for 2.5 million customers in nine states.

Whereas the Bush White House fought off efforts to regulate greenhouse emissions, the Obama administration already has signaled that, environmentally at least, a new sheriff is in town.

In late April, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency made the first move toward regulating greenhouse gas emissions. It announced plans to declare them a cause of global warming and a danger to public welfare.

Then, a week later, hearings began in the House of Representatives on a hotly debated climate bill that aims to set a price tag on carbon emissions through a cap-and-trade system.

5/5/2009

Such a system could force coal power plants to undertake measures that would raise the prices their customers will pay by as much as 50 percent.

Peter DeQuattro, Prairie State Generating Co.'s top executive, wrote in an e-mail for this story that while his firm supported the EPA's effort "to take meaningful steps" to reduce our carbon footprint, "we believe advanced technologies and a more diversified fuel supply are the solution to improving our nation's environmental profile."

The EPA's endangerment finding, if enacted under the Clean Air Act, "would have far reaching consequences on every sector of our economy," DeQuattro wrote. "The financial implications on our region's workers, consumers, families, and communities could be devastating to our already fragile economy."

Verena Owen, chairwoman of the Illinois Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign, is shedding few tears for owners of coal power plants. They "knew this was coming. Global warming is real. People realized that a long time ago," Owen said. "To build a coal plant these days -- I am not sure why people would do that."

Republican lawmakers, including U.S. Rep. John Shimkus, of Collinsville, have drawn a line in the sand regarding the Democrats' climate bill. During hearings more than a week ago, Shimkus called it "the largest assault on democracy and freedom in this country that I've ever experienced."

Shimkus also criticized plans to cut carbon dioxide emissions, claiming they are "taking away plant food from the atmosphere."

David Byford, a spokesman for Houston-based Dynegy Inc., which owns the coal-powered Baldwin Energy Complex in Baldwin, echoed DeQuattro's assessment, contending that a cap-and-trade system "would raise the price of electricity for consumers throughout the U.S."

Byford noted that 30 years ago, the electric power industry was faced with the problem of trying to eliminate sulfur dioxide and other pollutants blamed for acid rain.

The industry found solutions "that reduced those emissions significantly, up to 90 percent," he said. "Just because there isn't a commercial solution right now doesn't mean there won't be one tomorrow."

The problem is, no one can say what form that technology will take. The only technology being touted on a large scale for coal-based electricity depends on a system where the coal is not burned, but baked, with the carbon dioxide chemically extracted and stored deep underground.

But the technology remains unproven, with a big question being whether the carbon dioxide will stay put or slowly leak out -- a vast variable in view of the fact that human activities combine to emit almost 7 billion tons of carbon dioxide annually.

Meanwhile, time is running out, according to most climate scientists.

To avert truly catastrophic climate change -- such as mass species extinctions, droughts and flooded coastlines -- the nations of the world must ratchet down their greenhouse emissions by 80 percent by 2050. That's no small trick, since America, China and other major polluters

continue to emit higher levels of such gases year after year.

The only large-scale project to demonstrate the feasibility of carbon dioxide capture-and-storage was set to be built 140 miles north of Prairie State, amid rolling cornfields outside Mattoon.

Called FutureGen, the \$2 billion project was supposed to be a shining example of "clean coal" technology: a near zero-emissions coal-fueled power plant that would generate hydrogen and electricity while storing at least one million tons of carbon dioxide each year for four years.

But last year, the U.S. Department of Energy -- the project's chief funder -- announced it was pulling the plug because of higher than anticipated costs. Recently, energy department leaders announced they will reconsider the project after concluding a math error had led them to overstate its costs.

Owen, of the Sierra Club, called for a ban on all new coal-fired power plants until capture-and-storage technology can be proven safe and effective.

"By all means, until we know for sure, let's not build any more coal plants," she said.

Contact reporter Mike Fitzgerald at mfitzgerald@bnd.com or 239-2533.

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<http://www.belleville.com>

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