

Competitive Power Ventures hosts ceremony for new power plant in Oxford

BY BILL BITTAR **REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN**

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OXFORD – Competitive Power Ventures executives and dignitaries dedicated its new 805 megawatt power plant in a ceremony held under a tent on Woodruff Hill Road on a chilly Wednesday afternoon.

The CPV Towantic Energy Center is a dual powered facility, running on natural gas with an “ultra-low-sulfur” diesel fuel back up. Original plans for the plant date back to 1997. After the project stalled, CPV took over in 2011 to see it through.

“We have a lot to celebrate,” Tom Rumsey, CPV’s senior vice president of external and regulatory affairs, said from the podium before close to 130 guests. “It’s a great day for CPV, the town and the region.”

“It’s a great milestone for this facility.” said Gary Lambert, chief executive officer of CPV. “We’re now operational. It’s been a tough, long road to get us to the point we’re at today.”

After the ceremony, guests took bus tours of the facility, which has been operational since the spring.

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Rob Klee, commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, said the new Oxford plant has the lowest emissions per hour of all fossil fuel plants in Connecticut, allowing the closure of older and dirtier plants.

CPV touts it as “one of the most efficient and environmentally responsible electric generators in the world today.”

Lambert thanked Gemma Power Systems, which built the plant, and GE Power, which produced the turbines. He said more than 900 construction jobs were created to build the facility and there are 25 permanent, full-time, skilled jobs to operate it.

Colin M. Kelly, a CPV vice president in charge of the work site, touted the safety record and how everyone worked together harmoniously to complete the project on time and under budget.

The town of Oxford negotiated a \$117 million tax agreement over 22 years and CPV is donating \$50,000 a year for community support.

Andrew Bazinet, vice president of CPV and the lead developer for the project, called First Selectman George R. Temple a stalwart supporter. "He stuck with us through thick and thin," Bazinet said. "Most people know George as someone who's quick with a joke, but he's a very tough negotiator who always kept his constituency in mind."

Temple credited fellow selectmen and town boards for acting in the best interests of the town. He called CPV a good corporate citizen, recalling how it donated money toward the move into Oxford's new library. He also said the company has met with neighbors to address concerns.

Paul Coward, of Traditions Court South, and Wayne McCormack of Oxford Greens, who were members of the group, Stop Towantic Power, are resigned to the fact the plant is here to stay.

"We have to live with it, I guess," Coward said. "I'm sure there's some advantageous features about the plant. It's built and they're trying to be a good neighbor, but what remains is it's still a health problem."

McCormack said those living closest to the plant complain about noise, though that has not been an issue for him. He said CPV has been nice, meeting with residents, answering calls and emails and even giving them a tour.

"We do have serious light complaints," McCormack said. "They said they will do a light audit to reduce the number and intensity of the lights. It's just like Times Square. It's a huge light city, but they say they will address it. They're meeting us again in early November."

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