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A Division of the WV State Building Trades, AFL-CIO | Chuck Parker, *President* | Dave Efaw, *Secretary-Treasurer* | Steve White, *Director*

# Upper Ohio Valley Trades & BEST Hold Career Day

On September 22nd, the Upper Ohio Valley Building Trades joined with Project BEST to hold the 2021 Construction Job and Career Fair at the ice rink in Wheeling Park.

According to Eran Molz, President of the Trades Council, hundreds of students got the opportunity to learn about taking on a career in the trades.

“BEST did a lot of outreach and advertising to promote the event and I know many of our agents made personal visits to the schools to make sure they knew about the event,” said Molz.

Over 450 students from 25 high schools were in attendance from all around the Ohio Valley. Students could meet with representatives from many different trades including electricians, iron workers, roofers, laborers, carpenters, plumbers & pipefitters, cement finishers, operating engineers, painters and others who were on hand to teach them about

the construction industry.

Doug Giffin, Organizer and President of IBEW Local 141, explained that holding this annual career fair is

vital to the construction industry in West Virginia.

“I think it’s important to let the kids know what’s out there in front

of them because just like any other kids going through high school, they don’t know all the jobs that are available,” said Giffin. ■



Doug Giffin of Electricians Local 141 talks to a group of students at the 2021 Construction Job and Career Fair held in Wheeling on September 22.

## Agreement Reached on 20MW Solar Project

The North Central West Virginia Building and Construction Trades Council, WV State Building Trades, and Capon Bridge Solar, LLC signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) regarding a planned 20-megawatt solar project in Hampshire County.

The MOA means any contractor hired to build the \$17 million project will enter into a project labor agreement with North Central and their affiliates.

“The MOA means the project brings good jobs, with benefits, to local construction workers,” said Natalie Stone, Executive Director for North Central.

Capon Bridge has a Siting Certificate application pending at the WV Public Service Commission.

The WV State Building Trades has intervened in support of the project and the MOA is part of the record.

Capon Bridge is a project of Gale-

head Development, based in Boston, Massachusetts. The 20-megawatt project includes approximately 46,000 solar panels to be located on 84 acres. The estimated \$17 million cost includes connection to the adjacent transmission lines of Potomac Edison at its French’s Mill substation in Augusta, Hampshire County.

Nameplate capacity is a term used to signify the maximum capacity of power generating equipment.

For solar the actual output is around 25 percent of the nameplate capacity. Around 5-megawatts of power on average would be expected for this project.

While the company still faces many tasks before breaking ground, the project would provide good jobs for trades workers in the area and improve the economy in general.

As part of the PSC filing Capon

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# \$1 Billion Project Gas-Fired Power Plant at Longview Moves Ahead, Public Hearing Set for Air Permit

A \$900 million gas fired power plant to be built at the Longview location in Monongalia County, WV has their air permit out for public comment, which is critical to ensuring the company can break ground on the project.

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection Division of Air Quality (DAQ) has scheduled the public hearing for October 19th at 6:00pm.

Mountain State Clean Energy, an affiliate of Longview Power, originally applied to the DAQ for the required air permit in December of 2019. According to the DAQ Permit Pub-

lic Hearing Notice, a preliminary evaluation by state authorities has determined all State and Federal air quality regulations will be met by the proposed facility.

The gas-fired electric generating facility, estimated to cost \$900 million, represents part of a larger \$1 billion initiative by Longview.

In addition, the company also plans to construct a 50-megawatt so-

lar field plus pipelines, estimated to cost \$100 million.

The North Central WV Building and Construction Trades Council has signed a memorandum of agreement with Longview which ensures

the gas-fired project will be built by local union construction workers.

The solar project is primarily located in Pennsylvania, outside of North Central's jurisdiction.

"This project, which features state-of-the-art technology, will be a huge economic boost to the north central West Virginia area," said Jim Jackson, President of the North Central WV Building

and Construction Trades Council. "Once these regulatory hurdles have been dealt with, this project will provide great jobs for our people."

In late 2019, ACT commissioned a study to determine the economic impact of the project to the local community, which estimated local union workers stand to gain more than \$100 million in wages and benefits during the construction phase of

the project.

This accounts for approximately 1.5 million craft hours and a peak employment of about 600 workers to complete the project.

However, this does not include additional, non-construction staff that would be needed including supervisors, engineers, delivery, security, and office staff.

In addition to the public hearing, the DAQ is also accepting written comments from the public.

Written comments may be submitted to Edward.S.Andrews@wv.gov with "Mountain State Clean Energy Comments" in the subject line.

Comments may also be mailed to Edward Andrews, WV Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Air Quality, 601 57th Street, SE, Charleston, WV 25304.

All written comments must be received no later than 5:00pm on Monday November 1st. ■

"This project, which features state-of-the-art technology, will be a huge economic boost to the north central West Virginia area"

**Jim Jackson**

*President*

*North Central WV Building and Construction Trades Council*

## Elected Leaders Take Apprenticeship Tours



Delegates Daniel Linville (R-Cabell) (left), Josh Booth (R-Wayne) (center) and Evan Worrell (R-Cabell) (third from right) speak with representatives of IBEW 317 and signatory contractor Dixon Electric at the Electrician Apprenticeship program in Huntington, WV.

The tour is part of an effort to educate elected officials about the complexity and benefits of craft apprenticeship programs. The demand for skilled labor is often talked about without an understanding of how quality training takes place.

"It's important for our leaders to have a sense of what programs like ours are about," said Shane Wolf, Business Manager for IBEW 317. "We were excited to host them and had a great discussion about craft training."

A tour of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 625's training center was recently held in Charleston. Additional tours are scheduled for the Morgantown, Wheeling, Charleston, Huntington, and Parkersburg areas in the coming weeks. ■

## 20MW Solar Project

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Bridge hired an economist to look at the economic impact the project will bring to the county and the state.

According to the report the economic activity created by the \$17 million investment is \$2.3 million for Hampshire County and \$5.2 for the State of West Virginia.

Because the project will not sell to retail customers it is referred to as a Wholesale Generator and the regulations for the siting certificate are basic.

The filing also notes construction should start in 2022 with commercial operations expected in early 2023. ■

# PSC Rate Case Fate of 3 AEP Coal-Fired Plants Pending

As this story goes to print, Appalachian Power Company (APCo) is still waiting for a decision to be made by the WV Public Service Commission (PSC) which will determine the fate of the Mitchell, Mountaineer and John Amos power plants.

A decision is expected by an October 13 deadline set by the EPA for the company to inform the WV Department of Environmental Protection whether it intends to make pollution control upgrades to the plants.

The case will determine whether the three plants will remain open, and if so, will they remain open past 2028.

On September 24th, the PSC held a public hearing surrounding AP-

Co's request to reopen their rate case involving upgrades to three coal-fired power plants in West Virginia.

Representatives from the West Virginia State Building and Construction Trades were on hand to urge keeping the plants open to continue providing much-needed construction jobs and economic activity

in the state.

"Our membership works about one million hours at these plants every single year," said George Capel, Government Relations Director

**"I come to you this morning respectfully asking what it might look like in terms of lost tax revenue and lost commerce if these workers were displaced and forced to relocate because of the plants closing their doors."**

**George Capel**

*Government Relations Director  
WV State Building and Construction Trades*

for the WV State Building and Construction Trades. "I come to you this morning respectfully asking what it might look like in terms of lost tax revenue and lost commerce if these workers were displaced and forced to relocate because of the plants closing their doors."

While the PSC originally approved APCo's proposal earlier this year, decisions handed down by utility regulators in both Kentucky and Virginia only approved reimbursement for the first part of the

construction needed to comply with EPA regulations. Compliance with the first, but not second part of the regulations means a plant must close by 2028.

The John Amos and Mountaineer plants are subject to regulation by both the WV PSC and the Virginia State Corporation Commission,

while the Mitchell plant is under the jurisdiction of both the West Virginia and Kentucky PSC.

Now that Kentucky and Virginia have rejected paying for the second half of the proposals to upgrade the plants, the cost would fall solely on West Virginia rate payers to keep the plants environmentally compliant past 2028; a subject of some controversy during the hearing.

In addition, environmental concerns were also raised during the hearing, with some participants promoting a transition for workers at the plants to employment at other renewable facilities in West Virginia. However, Capel explained that this would not be possible and closing

the plants would effectively end their employment in the state.

"Let me be clear: we support renewable forms of energy," said Capel. "However, the fact of the matter is there is nothing on record to indicate anything comparable to the output of these facilities is going to be built in West Virginia in the near future. Because of that, our workers may have to seek employment elsewhere, most likely in another state."

According to a petition filed by APCo, the company must provide notice to the WV Department of Environmental Protection by October 13th, if they plan to make the upgrades to keep the three plants in operation. ■



*George Capel, Government Relations Director for the WV Building and Construction Trades, speaks at the PSC in favor of approving upgrades to three coal fired power plants in West Virginia.*

## Virginia AG Cracks Down on Wage Theft

Not long after the Pennsylvania Attorney General won a \$21 million case involving wage theft in the construction industry Virginia's AG has taken similar action.

On October 6 Virginia Attorney General Mark R. Herring announced felony charges were being brought against two subcontractors, GTO

Drywall, LLC and Richmond Drywall Installers Constructors, Inc. Both have been working on the construction of the Virginia General Assembly Building.

Both contractors were indicted on ten counts of felony embezzlement each by the Richmond Metropolitan Multi-Jurisdiction Grand Jury.

The charges were brought by the AG's Worker Protection Unit.

The indictments relate to alleged misclassification of workers by both subcontractors in an attempt to avoid premiums for workers' compensation and avoid paying various taxes to the state.

"West Virginia recently passed

laws making it easier to call a worker an independent contractor when in reality they are not," said Luke Begovich, Representative for the Eastern States Regional Council of Carpenters. "Pennsylvania and Virginia have realized this is wage theft which not only robs the workers but also hurts the state in lost tax revenue." ■

# Wind Repower Project Planned at Laurel Mountain in Randolph-Barbour Counties

The Laurel Mountain Wind Farm in Randolph and Barbour Counties is planning a repower project, which will increase its efficiency and extend its operating life by installing new blades and technological improvements to parts of the turbines.

Representatives from AES, the parent company of the Laurel Mountain project, anticipate construction will begin in Spring 2022.

The 61-turbine project was put into operation in 2011 and was built by local union construction workers. The company has committed the re-power project to also use local union

construction workers.

AES states in a filing made with the PSC, the proposed repowerment of Laurel Mountain only involves the “replacement of blades, drive-trains, and hubs,” the “existing towers, foundations, and medium- and high-voltage electric infrastructure will remain the same.”

When completed the maximum tip height of the project’s 61 turbines will increase by 13 to 23 feet.

The PSC is considering the company’s request that the work be considered a minor change to their existing siting certificate. Supporting

documents show continued compliance with many existing conditions are being met.

News reports of a recent presentation to the Randolph County Commission, AES representatives confirmed these plans and provided an

capacity from 97.6 megawatts to 98.8 megawatts.

In addition to these improvements, the AES filing with the PSC explained that certain “pre-construction activities” would be required including road improvements to clear



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## Apprenticeship Degree Program Advisory Committee Meets



Last month, representatives from WVU, Potomac State College (PSC), the Carpenter and Electrician apprenticeship programs, and ACT meet at the Carpenters Local 436 in Bridgeport, WV to discuss the Apprenticeship Pathway Degree Program.

The Degree program will provide apprentices with an associate degree from WVU-PSC at the completion of their apprenticeship.

The initiative was started last year, and currently the Degree Program is offered through the Carpenter’s apprenticeship.

However, plans to expand the program to other crafts are currently in the works.

While many community colleges have agreements with the trades for partial credit based on apprenticeship, this effort attempts to integrate the classwork needed for a degree into the program.

explanation for the initiative.

AES representatives told Commissioners the project would increase production and extend the project’s life.

AES claims that by taking advantage of these technological advancements, which have become available since the project was originally commissioned, the wind turbines will increase in aggregate nameplate ca-

vegetation for blade transportation as well as site clearing and grading around the existing turbine pads to allow for installation of the new parts.

During their presentation to the Randolph County Commission, AES said most of the work will begin in June of 2022 with pre-construction activities expected to commence in March 2022 with project completion by the end of 2022. ■

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