

## **AGENDA NOTE – HRPDC QUARTERLY COMMISSION MEETING**

### **ITEM #6: URANIUM MINING**

#### **SUBJECT:**

The City of Virginia Beach has requested that the HRPDC consider adopting a resolution opposing the lifting of the state moratorium on uranium mining.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

In 1982, the General Assembly enacted legislation prohibiting the mining of uranium in Virginia. This action was taken following the discovery of a substantial deposit of uranium near Chatham in Pittsylvania County. The issue was not revisited until 2007, when the price of uranium increased significantly, thus renewing the business interest in mining. This has led to reconsideration of the moratorium on uranium mining.

A series of studies has been completed by the National Academies of Sciences at the request of the Virginia Coal and Energy Commission, by several private entities and by the City of Virginia Beach since 2007. These studies have addressed the gamut of issues associated with uranium mining, including technical, economics, environmental impacts, water supply impacts and the regulatory framework.

Following the completion of these studies, the McDonnell Administration established the Uranium Work Group, consisting of staff representatives from the Virginia Departments of Environmental Quality, Health, and Mines, Minerals and Energy to assess whether the moratorium should be lifted and, if so, under what conditions.

The HRPDC Legislative Agenda for 2012 included the following statement: “The HRPDC requests the General Assembly maintain the moratorium on uranium mining or the consideration of such, until at least the 2013 General Assembly session. Furthermore, the General Assembly is requested to direct the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy to not pursue development of regulations for uranium mining until after completion of and full consideration of the studies, which are presently underway.”

In 2008, the City of Virginia Beach adopted a resolution conditionally opposing uranium mining in Virginia and the lifting of the legislative moratorium. In June 2012, the City adopted a resolution reaffirming its opposition, based primarily on the unlikely but potentially severe adverse impacts on the region’s water supply if a catastrophic precipitation event were to cause a breach of a tailings disposal cell. Attached for Commission consideration are:

1. A Resolution Reaffirming the City of Virginia Beach’s Opposition to the Mining of Uranium in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. Virginia Beach Policy Report: Uranium Mining in Virginia

Mr. Tom Leahy, Virginia Beach Director of Public Utilities, will brief the Commission on the City's concerns about uranium mining and its potential impacts on the Lake Gaston water supply.

Attachments

**Note: This matter will be considered for action at the September 20, 2012 Executive Committee Meeting.**