Talking Points: Duke Energy's Proposed Gas-Replacement Plan for the Asheville Coal Plant and N.C. Utilities Commission Public Hearing

What we know

1. Duke Energy is retiring its existing 379 megawatt coal-fired power plant in Asheville and seeking approval to build new natural gas-fired units: two 280-megawatt "baseload" units to be built by 2019 and a third 192-megawatt "peaking" unit to be built in 2023 if electricity demand at that time requires it.

2. In Duke Energy's announcement of the revised Western Carolina's Plan, Duke stated it is **"eager to ramp up our efforts in working with the community to reduce power demand across the region through energy efficiency, demand response, renewable energy and other technologies to work collectively to avoid building additional generation in the area for as long as possible"**

3. Duke Energy has stated they have future plans to build 15 megawatts of new solar generation and 5 megawatts of utility-scale solar storage in WNC. **They are not at this time submitting an application for any tangible plans to reduce electricity demand or building new renewable energy installations**.

4. **The public will only was only given 11 days to review Duke Energy's application (filed on 1/15/16) before the public hearing on 1/26/16.** Due to the fast-tracked process for approval of this plant set forth in the 2015 Mountain Energy Act, the North Carolina Utilities Commission is required to make a final decision on the plan no more than 45 days after receiving Duke's application.

5. **This is the only official opportunity** for the public to make their voices heard. Attend the public hearing on Tuesday, January 26, 7pm at the Buncombe County Courthouse.

6. The coal plant and transmission line are **off the table**. Duke's current application does not mention any new transmission line routes.

Duke Energy's plans don't match it's public statements and support clean energy solutions

1. **Replacing the coal plant with an oversized gas plant does not support a clean energy economy here in North Carolina.** While it is good news that there's an end in sight to coal ash pollution, sulfur dioxide, and carbon pollution from this coal-fired plant; the current plan keeps our region dependent on fossil fuels for decades to come.

1. **Duke's request for approval of a third natural gas unit (192-MW peaking unit) is premature.** Duke told the public that this third inefficient unit designed to run when power usage is at its highest, won't be needed until 2023 and only if the new clean

energy partnership it is forming with the City of Asheville and Buncombe County is unsuccessful.

2. **. Historically, Duke has overestimated our region's electricity demand and need to show the public how it has calculated future energy needs. The utility and its shareholders make larger profits by building larger power plants. But their customers and the environment deserve better.**

Duke Energy should invest in truly modern, affordable, attainable solutions to offset as much natural gas capacity as possible. While the personal, societal and environmental costs of fossil fuels are high, renewables and energy efficiency create many benefits on the individual and collective scales.

1. **Instead of wasting consumer's money on an overly large and unnecessarily expensive power plant, Duke Energy should invest in low cost, job creating clean energy and efficiency programs.**

2. Efficiency is the lowest cost, most sustainable option for meeting electricity demand. Thirty percent of the energy use that goes into our buildings is wasted from air leaks, poor insulation, outdated appliances and inefficient or malfunctioning equipment[1]. We should fix those problems before building a third "peaking unit".

3. **Energy efficiency is the proven least-cost resource compared with new generation capacity.** For utilities, efficiency costs 2.5 cents per kWh while natural gas generation costs 7-9 cents per kWh[2].

4. Multiple studies show **efficiency CAN meet forecasted growth demand** needs[3].

5. Investments in energy efficiency **create jobs and keeps more money in your pocket by saving on your monthly bills.** Basic efficiency measures can save the average household $250-$480 annually. [4]

6. Energy efficiency improves the quality of life of inhabitants. Efficient buildings are more comfortable, making them more enjoyable and productive spaces in which to live and work.

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[1] www.energystar.gov
[2] American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. "Avoiding a Train Wreck: Replacing old coal plants with energy efficiency". 2011 bit.ly/1NkgSGx
[3] American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. "Avoiding a Train Wreck: Replacing old coal plants with energy efficiency". 2011 bit.ly/1NkgSGx
[4] U.S. Department of Energy http://1.usa.gov/1JYcPou

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7. Energy efficiency retrofits improve occupant health and well-being, particularly among vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly and those with pre-existing illnesses[5]. Potential benefits include reduced symptoms of respiratory and cardiovascular conditions, rheumatism, arthritis, allergies and fewer injuries[6].

Jobs and Economic Benefits of Clean Energy

1. A United Nations report finds that new investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy generates more jobs for a given amount of spending than investments in fossil fuels[7].
2. **In North Carolina there are at least 1,208 firms working in the clean energy industry, employing 22,995 full time positions. There has been a 15% per year increase in revenues generated by clean energy activities in NC since 2012, reaching $4.8 billion in 2014. This far outpaces the 2.3% per year increase in gross state product since 2012.**
3. Energy efficiency jobs are local, compared to utility-generated jobs many of which are out of the local community being served. These are well-paying jobs in a growing industry, many available to employees without higher education[8].
4. Energy efficiency and renewable energy investments result in a larger percent of jobs with above-average earnings potential for low-credentialed employees (29% compared to 13% for the fossil fuel sector[9])

Duke Energy lags behind many other utilities that prioritize energy efficiency and routinely achieve aggressive goals

1. Even though Duke is the largest investor-owned utility in the U.S., it ranks 22nd out of the top 32 largest utilities when it comes to annual energy efficiency savings as a percentage of sales and 19th for alternative energy[10].

Climate Change and Environmental Impacts of Duke's Replacement Plan

1. Duke Energy claims that natural gas is more environmentally friendly than coal, however **natural gas, especially when extracted from fracking, pollutes air and water at the site**

[5] International Energy Agency. Capturing the Multiple Benefits of Energy Efficiency. bit.ly/20eAEN4
[6] International Energy Agency. Capturing the Multiple Benefits of Energy Efficiency. bit.ly/20eAEN4
[7] Global Green Growth: Clean Energy Industrial Investment and Expanding Job Opportunities. 2015. bit.ly/1PpGhjD
[8] American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. Energy Efficiency and Economic Opportunity. bit.ly/1UbIt2i
[9] Robert Pollin, James Heintz, and Heidi Garrett-Peltier. 2009. The Economic Benefits of Investing in Clean Energy. Table 10
[10] Ceres Inc. and Clean Edge, Inc. "Benchmarking Utility Clean Energy Deployment: 2014". 2014.

of extraction and along pipelines. There's no way to know if the gas that will be burned in Asheville will come from fracking, or if it's harming another community.

2. Natural gas is primarily made up of methane, which is 25 times more powerful than carbon dioxide when it comes to contributing to global climate change. A continued reliance on fossil fuels will not enable us to meet the needed greenhouse gas reductions to head off the worst impacts of climate change[11].

3. Here in the Southeast we're already paying the high costs of climate change including significant variations in climate patterns, shifting seasons, droughts, more powerful storms and hurricanes and the associated infrastructure and property damage, deaths and greater prevalence of pests.

4. Between 1980 and 2009, the Southeast experienced 254 climate-related disasters causing over $1 billion worth of damage, the highest of any region in the U.S[12].

[11] Union of Concerned Scientists. The Climate Risks of Natural Gas. http://www.ucsusa.org/clean_energy/our-energy-choices/coal-and-other-fossil-fuels/infographic-climate-change-risks-natural-gas.html#.Vp6zdSvF8qI

[12] NOAA. Billion DOllar Weather and Climate Disasters. https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/