



Malibu Surfside News

Malibu City Council Unanimously Opposes Woodside LNG Project

- Members Are More Concerned with Project Necessity and Impact than Design Differences

BY HANS LAETZ

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The Australian company seeking to build a liquefied natural gas terminal halfway between Malibu and Catalina Island is pointing to an erroneous number in a new City of Malibu ordinance as proof that the city's opposition to its twin LNG ship proposal is based on misconceptions.

The council Monday passed without discussion an ordinance expressing city opposition to the Woodside Natural Gas terminal proposed for 21 miles south of Point Dume, its nearest landfall.

The ordinance is almost word-for-word identical to one passed in 2006 opposing the BHP Billiton LNG terminal, right down to the sentence that places the LNG plant 14 miles off the Malibu coast, even though the Woodside plant site is 21 miles away.

"Typo," said Mayor Jeff Jennings.

"The council is well aware that it's 21 miles off the coast," he said Tuesday. "Unfortunately, there's a typo, but that doesn't change the city's position one bit," he added.

Councilmember Andy Stern, one of the most vociferous critics of local LNG proposals, said the ordinance should have been corrected before it was voted on, but he agreed with Jennings that the wrong number is insignificant.

"The Woodside folks could have attended the meeting last night, and they chose not to," Stern said Tuesday. "We have encouraged them to have a meeting in Malibu to educate the public on their project. They have chosen not to do so."

The president of Woodside's Santa Monica-based subsidiary, Steve Larson, told the council in a letter that he found it "disappointing to see this proposed action so far in advance of the issuance of the independent environmental assessment being conducted."

"It is further disappointing to see gross factual inaccuracies in the draft resolution," Larson wrote. He stressed that Woodside's "OceanWay" project was substantially different than the BHP Billiton "Cabrillo Port" plan, which was jettisoned by the state last April for more than 20 stated reasons.

Some of the differences cited by Larson, however, are at odds with the actual impact of the proposed LNG terminal, which is on indefinite hold while Woodside answers questions posed by the federal and state governments before it starts its formal year-long environmental review.

For example, Larson said Woodside's OceanWay terminal "has no permanent, fixed above-water structure, such as an offshore platform or a permanently moored barge as other projects have proposed." Under its current plan, Woodside would have one of two twin LNG ships anchored at all times on the Malibu horizon, about as far away as the Chevron oil tankers that are visible on clear days off El Segundo.

Larson told the council that its regasification would emit less smog than the BHP Billiton scheme would have created. Government agencies acknowledged this, but asked for more information on how smog emissions from the transpacific LNG carriers would be calculated and offset.

Larson also pointed out that the Woodside project would not use seawater for cooling, as the BHP Billiton project would have. And he said safety and security would be worked out to the satisfaction of the Coast Guard, but Malibu officials are worried that local officials and the public will not be privy to those plans.

After Monday's council vote, Woodside spokesperson Michael Hinrichs said the company was "very disappointed that the city council would take any action in opposition before a draft [Environmental Impact Report] is published. We are also shocked that the city council would vote on and pass a resolution so ridden with blatant and gross inaccuracies."