

FutureGen meeting caps whirlwind of action

By Greg Brown
The Tuscola Review

The open house meeting and public comment session tonight (Tuesday) on the FutureGen project represents the culmination of a flurry of activity that began July 25, when the city was named one of four in the nation that could host the project's \$1 billion coal gasification power plant.

Tonight's open house, featuring detailed information on FutureGen, along with models, exhibits and project engineers on hand to answer questions, starts at 4 p.m. at the community center and is a must for anyone interested in the project or concerned about its effects. And anyone wanting to have their say on the project can stick around for the official public comment period starting at 7 p.m.

But between July 25 and now the intervening month has rarely seen a dull moment. On Aug. 10 an array of federal, state and local officials assembled at the Iron Horse Golf Club to announce \$730,000 in state funding to help meet deadlines for Tuscola and Mattoon



Mike Helenthal/ Tuscola Review

Tuscola Economic Development Director Brian Moody, left, and U.S. Rep. John Shimkus look over materials Aug. 22 before a press conference announcing measures to finish their environmental pledge bi-partisan support in impact statements, and to both the state Legislature and

Congress.

The following week officials from the Batelle engineering firm conducted two days of panel discussions with nine different groups: property owners near the plant site and near the carbon dioxide injection site, homeowners, local service clubs, local educators, University of Illinois officials, business and community leaders, concerned citizens, press and media, and township officials from outside of Tuscola.

The discussions covered wide-ranging topics and the Batelle officials, aided by Douglas County Engineer James Crane, fielded a host of questions from the different panels. Brian Moody, execu-

tive director of Tuscola Economic Development Inc., who helped coordinate the event, said the various groups had anywhere from two or three to 14 members. Moody said he regretted he wasn't able to get to some local landowners, but would look for ways to involve them in the process, and recommended that they attend this evening's open house session.

State and federal lawmakers were back in town Aug. 22, to announce plans to even the playing field with two competing Texas cities by introducing bills at both federal and state levels to indemnify the FutureGen project from the conse-

quences of any leaks of carbon dioxide, the main waste product of the plant, from its deep injection well prison. The Texas Legislature had previously passed such a bill.

After tonight's sessions, FutureGen officials will be taking a closer look at the plant site, and Moody will be working with Crane and other officials to wrap up the environmental impact review. In the meantime, Moody is on the talk circuit, addressing local government bodies and service clubs, getting FutureGen booster shirts printed, and generally doing anything he can think of to land the project here, in Illinois, and hopefully in Tuscola.