



Mike Helenthal/Tuscola Review

Above, Rural Tuscola resident Sue Patterson studies information provided at a recent open house for the FutureGen plant. Above left, Tuesday's open house featured a hands-on science exhibit to show how FutureGen technology will work.

Some concerns voiced outside of public eye

By Mike Helenthal
The Tuscola Review

Brian Moody was not as happy as he should have been the day after the FutureGen scoping meeting and open house last Tuesday.

He should have been able to continue riding the wave of enthusiasm that was practically washing out of the Community Center the night before, as more than 250 members of the community, local and state officials and public dignitaries sang in unison the praises of the state-of-

the-art, near-zero emissions power plant.

But as the director of Tuscola Economic Development Inc. watched speaker after speaker approach the microphone with praise of the plant, and its siting in Tuscola, he couldn't help but think someone's opinion was being left out.

That someone was Sue Patterson, a Tuscola resident who since 1958 has lived next to what is hoped will be the site of the FutureGen plant.

And by Thursday, Moody
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had set up a meeting to talk with Patterson about her concerns.

Patterson said she is not against the project, per se, but she is worried about the impact of it — especially as it pertains to her living next door.

Flooding, traffic and the contamination of the family's water well have weighed in on Patterson's worries.

She attended the open house on Tuesday, but skipped the public comment portion. The fact that she would have been the only speaker at the event speaking even remotely against the plant was nothing less than daunting. Instead, she filled out a comment card, which were handed out at the meeting and will be

accepted through Sept. 13.

"I'm just looking for some guarantees," she said at the open house Tuesday.

Sue and husband William have already experienced some flooding and use sump pumps. They are worried about runoff from the construction site and the long-term impact of their property.

"I don't want it to end up in our basement," Sue said. "Anytime you've got human beings, you've got mistakes. I'm not mocking the county or Tuscola, I'm just worried."

Patterson said she actually became somewhat upset when orange construction barriers were placed near her property without notification from anyone.

"They should have knocked on my door," she said.

"She is exactly who the

Department of Energy People wanted to see," Moody said after visiting with the Pattersons. "That was the whole reason for this meeting."

Moody said the scoping process and environmental impact study are both designed to cover every issue related to FutureGen being built in Tuscola.

"You don't want a bunch of questions to come up later," he said. "I think we've been able to give them some answers."

Barbara Scott, a Champaign resident who also attended the open house and owns land in the area, was more skeptical of the promise of technological salvation.

"You don't see until after they've done the damage," she said. "And then you can't repair the damage."

She is especially worried about the water in the Kaskaskia basin and said she attended the meeting to

ensure the project didn't resemble long-wall coal operations blamed for causing property damage in other counties.

Scott Klara, deputy director of the DOE's National Energy Technology Laboratory, office of coal and power research and development, said it is surprising how many original questions come up during the scoping process. Just when he thinks he has answered every question about the project, someone brings something new and unexpected up.

But many times, he said, confusion arises over the science involved in the project. In this case, liquified and captured CO2 from coal burning would be pushed under capstone rock and into natural, geologic spaces picked for absorbancy. The capstone keeps the CO2 from rising to the surface.