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**NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION**

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RE Columbia Generating Station

Docket Number: 50-397

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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10 CFR 2.206 PETITION REVIEW BOARD (PRB)

CONFERENCE CALL

RE:

COLUMBIA GENERATING STATION

+ + + + +

FRIDAY

JUNE 12, 2015

+ + + + +

The conference call was held at 1:30 p.m.,  
George Wilson, Chairperson of the Petition Review  
Board, presiding.

PETITIONERS: CHARLES JOHNSON & PEGGY MAZE JOHNSON

PETITION REVIEW BOARD MEMBERS:

GEORGE WILSON

Deputy Director

Division of Operator Reactor Licensing

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C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction of Participants.....	3
Introduction of Proceedings.....	7
Chairman Wilson Remarks.....	7
Summary of the Petition.....	9
Presentation by Charles Johnson.....	11
Presentation by Peggy Maze Johnson.....	15
Presentation by Charles Johnson.....	17
Public Comment.....	19
Comment by Mr. Gregoire.....	20
Summary of Comments.....	21
Closing Remarks.....	22

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

1:31 p.m.

1  
2  
3 MS. WATFORD: Okay, I'd like to thank  
4 everybody for attending this meeting today. My name  
5 is Maggie Watford and I am an NRC Project Manager in  
6 the Division of Operating Reactor Licensing at the U.S.  
7 Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

8 We are here today to allow the Petitioners,  
9 Chuck -- Charles or Chuck Johnson and Peggy Johnson,  
10 to address the Petition Review Board regarding the  
11 2.206 Petition dated March 13, 2015.

12 I am the Petition Manager for this  
13 Petition. The Petition Review Board Chairman is  
14 George Wilson. As part of the Petition Review Board's  
15 or PRB's review of this Petition, Chuck Johnson and  
16 Peggy Johnson have requested this opportunity to  
17 address the PRB.

18 This meeting is scheduled from 1:30 p.m.  
19 to 2:30 p.m. Eastern. The meeting is being recorded  
20 by the NRC Operations Center. And will be transcribed  
21 by a Court Reporter.

22 The transcript will become a supplement to  
23 the Petition. The transcript will also be made  
24 publically available.

25 I'd like to open this meeting with

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1 introductions. The PRB Chair is George Wilson. I'd  
2 like the rest of the Petition Review Board to introduce  
3 themselves.

4 As we go around the room, please be sure  
5 to clearly state your name, your position, and the  
6 office that you work for within the NRC for the Record.  
7 So, I'll start off.

8 Again, this is Maggie Watford. I'm the  
9 Petition Manager, and I'm with NRR [Office of Nuclear  
10 Reactor Regulation].

11 CHAIRMAN WILSON: George Wilson, I'm the  
12 Deputy Director of the Division of Operating Reactor  
13 Licensing. And I'm the PRB Chair.

14 \*MR. SHERMA: Amen Sherma, Nuclear  
15 Security Branch, NRR.

16 MR. GULLA: Gerry Gulla, Enforcement  
17 Specialist, Office of Enforcement.

18 MS. BANIC: Lee Banic, Petitioner  
19 Coordinator, NRR.

20 MS. WATFORD: All right. That is  
21 everyone at NRC Headquarters. Are there any NRC  
22 participants from the Regional or from the Headquarters  
23 first on the phone?

24 MR. MARKLEY: Mike Markley, NRR Branch  
25 Chief, DORL [Division of Operating Reactor Licensing].

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1 MR. SINGAL: This is Balwant Singal,  
2 Project Manager for Columbia from Headquarters  
3 [Division of Operating Reactor Licensing].

4 MR. PURTSCHER: And this is Pat PURTSCHER.  
5 I'm a member of DE, the Department of Engineering, EVIB  
6 [Vessels and Internals Integrity Branch in NRR].

7 MS. JEHLE: Patricia Jehle, Office of the  
8 General Counsel with NRC.

9 MR. POEHLER: Yes, this is Jeff Poehler  
10 from NRR, Division of Engineering, Vessel and Internals  
11 Integrity Branch.

12 MS. WATFORD: Are there any other NRC  
13 participants from Headquarters on the phone?

14 MR. STEVENS: Yes. There's a Gary  
15 Stevens, NRR Vessel and Internals Integrity Branch.

16 MS. WATFORD: All right. Are there any  
17 NRC participants from the Regional Office on the phone?

18 MS. GEPFORD: Heather Gepford, Branch  
19 Chief for Plant Support, Branch 2 in Region IV.

20 MR. DRAKE: Jim Drake, Senior Reactor  
21 Inspector, Region IV.

22 MS. WATFORD: Are there any other NRC  
23 members that I missed?

24 (No response)

25 MS. WATFORD: Okay, are there any

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1 representatives for the Licensee on the phone?

2 MR. GREGOIRE: Yes. This is Don  
3 Gregoire, Regulatory Affairs Manager. And I'm also  
4 here joined with John Dobken from our Public Affairs  
5 organization and Steve Richter from our Engineering  
6 organization.

7 MS. WATFORD: Are there any  
8 representatives from the public on the line today?

9 MS. NEWELL: This is Nancy Newell from  
10 Oregon Green Energy Coalition.

11 MS. WATFORD: All right. I think that's  
12 all for the introductions unless I missed anyone.  
13 Okay, so Chuck Johnson and Peggy Johnson, would you  
14 please introduce yourselves for the record?

15 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Hang on just a  
16 second. Sorry, what was -- what did you just ask?

17 MS. WATFORD: Just a quick, little  
18 introduction and then I'll proceed with the rest of our  
19 intro.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. So, yes, I'm Chuck  
21 Johnson. And I'm with the Oregon and Washington  
22 Chapters of Physicians for Social Responsibility, the  
23 Joint Task Force on Nuclear Power.

24 MS. JOHNSON: My name is Peggy Maze  
25 Johnson. I'm Project Manager for Heart of America

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1 Northwest in the State of Washington.

2 MS. WATFORD: Okay, thank you. I'm going  
3 to continue on. It is not required for members of the  
4 public to introduce themselves for this call.  
5 However, if there -- oh, we already did this.

6 If there are any members of the public that  
7 wish to do so at this time, please state your name for  
8 the record. And I think we already did that.

9 I'd like to emphasize that we need -- we  
10 each need to speak clearly and loudly to make sure that  
11 the Court Reporter can accurately transcribe this  
12 meeting. If you do have something that you would like  
13 to say, to please first state your name for the record.

14 For those dialing into the meeting, please  
15 remember to mute your phones to minimize any background  
16 noise or distraction. If you do not have a mute button,  
17 this can be done by pressing the keys star six. And  
18 to unmute you can press star six again. Thank you.

19 At this time we'll turn it over to the PRB  
20 Chairman, George Wilson.

21 CHAIRMAN WILSON: I want to welcome  
22 everybody to this meeting regarding the 2.206 Petition  
23 submitted by Charles Johnson and Peggy Johnson. I'd  
24 first like to share some background on our 2.206  
25 process.

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1           Section 2.206 of Title 10 of the Code of  
2 Federal Regulations describes the Petition process,  
3 the primary mechanism for the public to request  
4 enforcement action by the NRC in a public process.  
5 This process permits anyone to petition the NRC to take  
6 enforcement type action related to NRC licensees or  
7 licensed activities.

8           Depending on the results of its  
9 evaluations, the NRC could modify, suspend or revoke  
10 an NRC issued license. Or take any other appropriate  
11 enforcement action to resolve a problem.

12           The NRC staff's guidance for the  
13 disposition of the 2.206 Petition requests are located  
14 in Management Directive 8.11, which is publically  
15 available.

16           The purpose of today's meeting is to give  
17 the Petitioners an opportunity to provide any  
18 additional explanation or support the Petition before  
19 the Petition Review Board's initial consideration and  
20 recommendation.

21           This meeting is not a hearing nor is it an  
22 opportunity for the Petitioner to question or examine  
23 the PRB on the merits or the issues presented in the  
24 Petition request. No decisions regarding the merits  
25 of this Petition will be made at this meeting.

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1                   Following the meeting, the Petition Review  
2 Board will conduct its internal deliberations. The  
3 outcome of this internal meeting will be discussed with  
4 the Petitioners.

5                   The Petitioner Review Board typically  
6 consists of a Chairman, a Manager at the Senior  
7 Executive Service level, and that's myself. It has a  
8 Petitioner Manager and a PRB Coordinator.

9                   Other members of the Board are determined  
10 by the NRC staff based on the content of the information  
11 requested. The members have already introduced  
12 themselves.

13                   As described in our process, the NRC staff  
14 may have clarifying questions in order to better  
15 understand the Petitioners' presentation. And to  
16 reach a reasoned decision whether to accept or reject  
17 Petitioners' request for review under the 2.206  
18 process.

19                   At this time I'd like to summarize the  
20 scope of the Petition under consideration and the NRC  
21 activities to date.

22                   On May 13, 2015, you submitted to the NRC  
23 a Petition under 2.206 regarding Columbia Generating  
24 Station, on which you requested a number of actions.  
25 The major actions included concern modifying the

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1 operating license and/or suspend the restart of the  
2 Columbia Generating Station until a known crack in the  
3 jet pump riser well is repaired.

4 Allow me to discuss at this time the NRC  
5 activities to date. On May 27, 2015, the PRB reviewed  
6 your request for immediate action to prevent Columbia  
7 Generating Station restart and determined that there  
8 were no significant concerns to prevent the plant from  
9 restarting as scheduled.

10 The NRC has reviewed the licensee's  
11 evaluation of the crack in the jet pump riser to riser  
12 brace well (RS9) for jet pump repair 17 and 18 in the  
13 report dated April 14, 2015 and concluded that it does  
14 not pose a threat to the reactor or other plant  
15 components.

16 Based on the review of the licensee's  
17 evaluation related to the crack in the jet pump riser  
18 weld, there were no immediate safety -- no immediate  
19 significant safety concerns to prevent the plant from  
20 restarting as scheduled.

21 Your request for the immediate actions to  
22 prevent Columbia Generating Station restart did not  
23 have adequate basis. Therefore your request to  
24 prevent the [Columbia Generating Station] -- from  
25 restarting was denied.

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1           You were informed of this decision on June  
2 1, 2015 from the PRB's decision to deny your request  
3 for immediate action. On May 22, 2015 and June 1, 2015,  
4 the Petition Manager contacted you to discuss the 10  
5 CFR 2.206 process and to offer you an opportunity to  
6 address the PRB.

7           You requested to address the PRB by phone  
8 prior to its internal meeting to make initial  
9 recommendation to accept or reject the Petition review.

10           As a reminder for the phone participants,  
11 please identify yourself if you make any remarks as this  
12 will help us in the preparation of the meeting  
13 transcript that will be made publicly available.

14           I will at this time thank you for  
15 listening. And Charles Johnson, I will turn this over  
16 to you and allow you the opportunity to add any  
17 additional information you believe the PRB should  
18 consider as part of your Petition.

19           You have approximately 40 minutes for your  
20 presentation.

21           MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you very much,  
22 Mr. Wilson. The main thing that I would ask the PRB  
23 to consider in reconsidering your decision about having  
24 the Energy Northwest repair this crack in the riser  
25 inside the -- that holds the jet pumps inside the

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1 reactor vessel, would be the additional earthquake  
2 information that has recently been reported through the  
3 Fukushima required earthquake reevaluation process.

4 There was a hearing [public meeting] on  
5 June 5 that took place after your June 1 decision, in  
6 which the results were presented to the public. And  
7 during that hearing [public meeting], I noticed that  
8 there was considerable discussion between the NRC and  
9 Energy Northwest's contractors about the question of  
10 the magnitude and frequency of potential ground motion  
11 at the site.

12 It's clear from what the decision was in  
13 terms of how -- that the NRC is requiring that Energy  
14 Northwest come back in two years with some sort of a  
15 discussion of what they intend to do about the fact that  
16 there appears to be more a potential for larger ground  
17 motion than the plant was originally designed to  
18 withstand.

19 That is a -- to me is a factor that really  
20 needs to be more -- taken more seriously when  
21 considering questions like this crack in this riser  
22 inside of the reactor vessel.

23 If we had an earthquake, a sizable  
24 earthquake, greater -- a beyond design earthquake that  
25 caused numerous problems, including some additional

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1 damage to the riser, you potentially could have water  
2 draining from the reactor vessel and an inability to  
3 cool it in the way that the plant was designed to  
4 operate.

5 And that combined with a potentially other  
6 additional problems at the site could lead to an  
7 accident. And so therefore, for that reason, I think  
8 you really need to take every one of these problems that  
9 have been identified, extremely seriously. And  
10 address them.

11 You don't want to cut into your safety  
12 margin when you know that the plant is already operating  
13 in an area that in the -- with a potential for beyond  
14 design earthquakes that wasn't known when the plant was  
15 originally approved.

16 So, that's really the -- that's the crux  
17 of why we're indicating you ought to do this. Ideally,  
18 you would do some sort of an ultrasound inside the  
19 reactor vessel to see if there's additional cracking  
20 beyond what you've already identified inside the  
21 reactor vessel.

22 For example, when you did -- when this was  
23 found in 2011, it was later determined in looking at  
24 back photographs that there were signs that this crack  
25 was appearing as early as 2001.

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1           It's possible that there are additional  
2 cracks or weaknesses inside the reactor vessel that  
3 haven't been detected yet. And its still in the  
4 susceptibility for this to happen in this case.

5           And therefore, I think it really needs to  
6 be looked at more broadly throughout the entire reactor  
7 vessel. We're not asking for that with this particular  
8 2.206 Petition.

9           We're asking simply that a known crack be  
10 fixed rather than using work around of the -- adding  
11 additional hydrogen to the water. Although we don't  
12 know because its proprietary, we don't know exactly  
13 what you're doing to compensate for the fact that you  
14 have a crack in a place where it shouldn't be.

15           And therefore, we can't forward this onto  
16 experts at Union of Concerned Scientists or Fairwind  
17 Associates for their evaluation. And that puts us at  
18 a disadvantage of really understanding upon what basis  
19 you chose to say that it's okay to continue to operate  
20 the plant and not fix the crack.

21           At this point, I think that's really all  
22 that I have to add. I believe Peggy has some additional  
23 concerns to express as well.

24           And then perhaps some members of the  
25 public. I think I heard that Steve Gilbert from WPSR

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1 [Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility] was  
2 on. I'm not sure. But, perhaps he would want to make  
3 a statement as well.

4 Thank you for your time.

5 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Peggy, do you have some  
6 statements that you would like to make also?

7 MR. JOHNSON: Maybe she got bounced off  
8 somehow.

9 MS. JOHNSON: Oh, I'm sorry, I had -- I was  
10 obeying and I had my -- I was on mute.

11 My name is Peggy Maze Johnson. And I'm  
12 with Heart of America Northwest.

13 We're an organization that's been around  
14 20 years. And the reason for our existence was  
15 checking out what was going on at the Hanford  
16 Reservation as far as the cleanup.

17 Even though U.S. DOE [Department of  
18 Energy] does not claim the Columbia Generating Station,  
19 it indeed sits right in the middle of the Hanford  
20 Reservation. And has, according to a report issued by  
21 Robert Alvarez, has as much waste generated by the plant  
22 as the whole rest of the Hanford Reservation.

23 We find that that is very serious when you  
24 consider the safety of this plant. We believe that you  
25 are essentially saying that the reactors are operating

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1 outside of the license.

2 And we don't understand why you think  
3 that's okay. This sits right at the mouth -- this sits  
4 right on the Columbia River, which we find is a precious  
5 resource for our northwest.

6 The NRC knew about the crack in 2011. But  
7 we believe that they knew that it existed in 2001. And  
8 we can't prove it.

9 But they have a history of not being  
10 transparent. And we believe that cutting corners on  
11 safety by this operator is unacceptable.

12 We have a membership in the northwest of  
13 about ten thousand people that we communicate with on  
14 a regular basis. And they have expressed their  
15 concerns about the operation of this plant.

16 After Fukushima, it was said by various  
17 people that this plant very closely replicates the  
18 Daiichi plant at Fukushima. And that there was no  
19 additional inspections because of that.

20 And because of the fact that it sits on this  
21 earthquake fault that their safety is at risk. And we  
22 find that very troubling that the NRC thinks that this  
23 is okay.

24 So we are asking to please take another  
25 look at this. To not allow them to operate outside of

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1 your safety standards. And wait another five years for  
2 another inspection. You know, what's going to happen  
3 between now and then?

4 So, please take another look at it. And  
5 allow us the information so that the Union of Concerned  
6 Scientists and Fairwind Associates can indeed say yes,  
7 this is safe.

8 So, I will stop at that. And I thank you  
9 for the opportunity to present our case to you. We find  
10 that the NRC, and I know personally that the NRC's  
11 standards are very high. And that it is unusual for  
12 you to allow somebody to operate below that.

13 So, thank you very much for this  
14 opportunity.

15 MR. JOHNSON: I have one more thing to add  
16 as well. This is Chuck Johnson again.

17 The -- I do want to mention that there's  
18 an additional factor that you ought to take into  
19 consideration in -- as to whether or not you reverse  
20 your position about allowing the continued operation  
21 without fixing the crack in the riser, RS9 riser.

22 It's basically Energy Northwest's  
23 operation -- current operating mode in that they're --  
24 Energy Northwest seems to be showing signs these days  
25 of caring more about maintaining an image of efficient

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1 operation.

2 And it looks as though in the case of this  
3 crack and in the case of the lack of adherence to the  
4 emergency plan, which the NRC is going to be holding  
5 a hearing [public meeting] with Energy Northwest next  
6 week. These are examples of Energy Northwest  
7 emphasizing production and downplaying some of the  
8 safety needs of the plant.

9 To some degree, they are being pressured  
10 regionally to show that they are economic. And we  
11 believe that consequently, they're ignoring making  
12 repairs and following procedures that are critical to  
13 the safety of the plant.

14 And this is an extremely important example  
15 of that. So, I'd ask you to consider that. There are  
16 a variety of things that could go wrong in an earthquake  
17 at the site.

18 There's this continued problem with the  
19 control blades of sticking in the GE BWR [General  
20 Electric Boiling Water Reactor] reactors. There's a  
21 couple of -- the ultimate heat sink for the plant itself  
22 is -- are two spray ponds which are linked together.

23 And if one were somehow punctured, would  
24 actually drain the other. So you potentially could  
25 lose the ultimate heat sink in an earthquake if it were

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1 bad enough.

2 So, there are things -- a bad combination  
3 of things going wrong could make this plant extremely  
4 dangerous in an earthquake. And we don't think that  
5 you should ignore repairs that need to be done.

6 That's it. With that I conclude our  
7 statement.

8 CHAIRMAN WILSON: At this time does the  
9 staff here at Headquarters or anybody in the Region have  
10 any questions? Or need any clarifications?

11 (No response)

12 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Does the Licensee have  
13 any questions?

14 MR. GREGOIRE: No, we have no questions.

15 CHAIRMAN WILSON: If there's any members  
16 of the public before I conclude the meeting, does --  
17 the members of the public may provide comments  
18 regarding the Petition and ask questions about the  
19 2.206 process.

20 However I ask that it be opened. Go ahead.

21 MR. GILBERT: Yes, this is Steven Gilbert.  
22 I am also with Washington Physicians for Social  
23 Responsibility and live in Seattle.

24 And I just had a couple of quick comments.  
25 I'm a toxicologist very interested in public health.

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1 And we're a small non-profit institute and an affiliate  
2 professor at the University of Washington.

3 In my review of a risk assessment and  
4 looking at cost benefits, you know, how we look at the  
5 Columbia Generating Station and the issues that  
6 continue to be raised, it seems like the risks are  
7 greater than the benefits.

8 So, in the effort to keep my comments  
9 short, I just want to encourage the NRC to really  
10 examine the risk from multiple angles. And consider  
11 the benefits.

12 And remembering the operating conditions  
13 of Columbia Generating Station. And whether the  
14 continued operation of an old reactor, Mark II style,  
15 is really worth the risk.

16 So I'll leave it there. Thank you.

17 MR. GREGOIRE: This is Don Gregoire with  
18 Energy Northwest. I just want to state that we do  
19 appreciate the concerns of these organizations.

20 They are things that we concern ourselves  
21 with each day living and working in the area. And we  
22 appreciate the NRC's consideration into the factual  
23 matter of the considerations there in making their  
24 decision.

25 I won't say that we agree with many of the

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1 conclusions or comments made. But we do understand and  
2 appreciate that people do have concerns.

3 And they have the right to demand that the  
4 plant is operated safely. And we expect that of  
5 ourselves.

6 And so, I would just again, thank the NRC  
7 for taking a look at the effects surrounding this. And  
8 make sure that a fair decision is made with regard to  
9 the Petition. Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN WILSON: Before we go, I want to  
11 summarize the additional comments that were made for  
12 us to consider. First was additional earthquake  
13 information of the new Earthquake information and  
14 assessment of the Columbia Generating Station based on  
15 the post-Fukushima evaluation.

16 Also, the associated effects on the plant  
17 if an earthquake would happen. The proprietary  
18 commission control associated with that and  
19 potentially trying to get information to get it  
20 independently evaluated.

21 Another factor was the current operating  
22 mode of Columbia Generating Station maintaining  
23 efficient operations of the plant. And the last was  
24 the risk of the plant being there, is greater than the  
25 benefits of the plant for an older reactor, Mark II

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1           containment.

2                       Did I catch all the additional concerns  
3           that were raised?

4                       MR. JOHNSON:   I believe so.

5                       MS. JOHNSON:   This is Peggy Maze Johnson.  
6           And one of the things I wish you would address is the  
7           location of this plant and the fact that it sits in the  
8           middle of the Hanford Reservation.

9                       The amount of waste that is there not only  
10          from the reactor but from the Hanford Reservation  
11          itself.   And I think that must be taken into  
12          consideration when you're talking about safety.

13                      CHAIRMAN WILSON:   I understand.   And I  
14          also had another one, is exactly the placement of the  
15          plant and the associated surrounding conditions of the  
16          plant with the materials that's associated around the  
17          plant if something should happen.

18                      Before we close, does the Court Reporter  
19          need any additional information for the meeting  
20          transcript?

21                      COURT REPORTER:   I do not.

22                      CHAIRMAN WILSON:   Charles and Peggy and  
23          Steven, I want to thank you for taking time to provide  
24          the NRC staff with the clarifying information on the  
25          Petition   that   you   submitted.       And   that   I've

**NEAL R. GROSS**

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1 characterized it total.

2 With that, this meeting is concluded. And  
3 we'll be terminating the phone connection.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

5 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you.

6 MR. GILBERT: Thank you.

7 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter  
8 went off the record at 1:58 p.m.)

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