



PERSON COUNTY ‘DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED’ WITH UTILITIES COMMISSION CARBON PLAN

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Roxboro, NC

Late Friday, the North Carolina Utilities Commission approved a Carbon Plan that will require Duke Energy to retire coal power plants across the state within the next 12 years, including the Roxboro and Mayo generating stations, to achieve reductions in carbon dioxide emissions and transition to more use of renewable energy, nuclear power, and natural gas. The Carbon Plan is a result of legislation passed by the General Assembly in 2021 and signed into law by Governor Roy Cooper.

The decision comes after the Person County Board of Commissioners sought to extend the life of Duke Energy’s Roxboro and Mayo generating stations by engaging outside legal counsel and an energy consulting firm, intervening in the Utilities Commission case, filing comments, and questioning Duke’s witnesses on the need to keep Roxboro and Mayo open and to support the Person County community through the transition when the plants are eventually retired.

“This is a deeply disappointing result for Person County,” said Person County Board of Commissioners Chairman Gordon Powell. “We know that the Roxboro and Mayo plants will not be here forever, but the Utilities Commission’s decision fails to provide any support for extending the life of the plants or helping Person County through the transition. The impact from Roxboro and Mayo being retired will be damaging to our county budget and to the livelihoods of so many people in our community.”

Under the Utilities Commission’s approved plan, two of the four generating units at the Roxboro Plant would be retired in 2029, with the other two units being retired between 2028 and 2034. The Mayo Plant, which has only one generation unit, would be retired effective Jan. 1, 2029.

Person County asked the Utilities Commission to keep Roxboro and Mayo online longer to provide critical support to Duke’s grid and to keep costs down for residents and businesses. The County argued in its filing with the Utilities Commission that the existing transmission infrastructure, trained workforce, and available land justified keeping the Roxboro and Mayo plants online, or requiring Duke Energy to put replacement plants on the same sites.

“We know that Roxboro and Mayo are critical to keeping the lights on in North Carolina because the plants have been here for decades and we have the transmission lines that carry the power and the people to keep the plants running,” Chairman Powell added. “These are efficient plants that provide low-cost power for a large part of the state, and this decision creates a lot of uncertainty for Person County’s future and for Duke Energy’s ability to provide affordable, reliable power across the state.”

What happens next remains an open question at this point. “We are looking at all the options to respond to the Utilities Commission Carbon Plan,” said Derrick Sims, the Vice Chairman of the Board of Commissioners.

Economic Development Commission Chairman Phillip Allen agreed, stating that “All options are on the table when Person County’s future is on the line. Person County is a party to the Utilities Commission proceeding and can request that the Utilities Commission reconsider its decision, can appeal to the Court of Appeals, or seek changes from the North Carolina General Assembly.” Chairman Allen restated the closing remarks that he made in July in his testimony as a Public Witness before the Utilities Commission, “We are proud of the fact that our power plants in Person County operated by Duke Energy have kept the lights on for millions of North Carolinians for almost 60 years. We simply ask that you NOT cut the lights off in Person County by closing our plants.” He added, “But despite our requests, the Utilities Commission order does not go nearly far enough to assure that we can keep the lights on for our Person County economy, and not be left in the dark.”

The Utilities Commission also directed Duke Energy to evaluate options for new large natural gas plants, called combined cycle plants or CCs, and for smaller natural gas plants called combustion turbine plants or CTs. Assuring that these plants are located in Person County was a key priority for the Board of Commissioners.

The Utilities Commission did not provide the certainty that we asked for and our community needs on replacement generation plants,” Chairman Powell commented. “We have had positive discussions with the Duke Energy leadership, and they committed to meet with us again this month. But we have some hard work ahead to protect our community’s future, and we will make sure that Person County has a seat at the table in every discussion about these matters, including at the General Assembly.

The Utilities Commission’s decision comes at the direction of a state law passed by the General Assembly in 2021, House Bill 951, that Governor Cooper signed into law. The legislation requires that Duke Energy reduce its carbon dioxide emissions from generation plants in the state by 70% by 2030 and to achieve “carbon neutrality by 2050”.