

Paying the Piper Up Front?

A public-private partnership for industrial cogeneration?

If EWEB were in the market for an additional supply of water from - let's say from nearby Springfield wells - would it be willing to pay a little more for that water if Springfield would guarantee a continuing high standard of cleanliness? I think EWEB would and should, because everyone's continuing good health depends on clean water. And quality always does cost a little more.



If EWEB were in the market for clean and renewable energy - let's say from wind - and even had to move that energy across the state to get it, would it be willing to pay a little more?? It's already willing and committed, because of the many public benefits that come from reducing dependence on carbon - particularly foreign produced carbon - fuels. Enlightened EWEB customers and local businesses already pay a premium for wind energy because they understand what's at stake and believe it's worth it.

So, here's my question? Why wouldn't it make sense for EWEB to be willing to pay a little more for the energy created by the proposed Seneca biomass project so that the bi-products of this giant fireplace could be properly cleaned and monitored, since we all breathe the same air trapped here at the end of the valley? Aren't our lungs, bodies and overall health worth it? There is bound to be more industrial bio-generation. Why not start right and set a high standard? Think of it as conservation of our respiration.

There are a number of ways this might work.

The first is called: **Make 'em do it.**

I know there are people out there who don't trust the Jones because of their long record of anti-environmentalism. Such is the "reaping of the whirlwind." Their checkered past generates hard feelings, devilishly draconian urges and a delight in the potential comeuppance of a "trust but verify" regime.



In a whirlwind scenario, EWEB would be politically pressured to use pricing to force the desired public outcome. They would pay less or more per kilowatt depending on Seneca's record of successful elimination of particulate, smog-makers, and other toxics in the quality of air produced. The low-ball figure would be set so that the business model for cogeneration would fail without compliance.

With verified success, the high-end figure would make everyone breathe easier. At the end of each year, the accumulation of assorted carrots and sticks could be burned to create bonus power.

A better way I think is called: **Help 'em do it.**

Rather than what we're probably going to get, which is a political pushing of some of the toxic costs of the plant into the public commons - in this case, our vulnerable air shed - and a toothless regulatory process, EWEB could become a much less passive partner in the project. They could provide some needed leadership in the development of "green AND clean" energy production by finding the best way to finance the pollution control and monitoring that would make energy conservation healthy and real.

Evolution out of antediluvian political philosophies is a slow process, I know, but we are all environmentalists now. It's clear cut that we need to protect our forests, our water and our air. Everyone's body is in ongoing process with the air, water, food and ideas that move through us.

For better and sometimes for worse, they are in, around and of us. It's time to pay the piper up front. Especially in this case, since it's a very big pipe and probably not the last of its kind.

