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# Three Mile Island radioactive waste must be properly cleaned up

*Arthur E. Morris and Eric J. Epstein*

We are writing in regard to the recent announcement by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to grant approval, without a hearing, to FirstEnergy to transfer TMI-2's license to Energy Solutions, a limited liability corporation from Utah with no assets. We speak in opposition to such a move.

Before explaining our concerns, let us tell you a little about the writers.

Eric Epstein became involved with Three Mile Island issues in December 1982 after he returned home from college. He was 23, and joined the Susquehanna Valley Alliance. Epstein has been the spokesperson or chairman of Three Mile Island Alert since 1984. TMI-Alert, a safe-energy organization founded in 1977, monitors the Peach Bottom, Three-Mile Island and Susquehanna nuclear power plants. Mr. Epstein has conducted research and provided testimony relating to decommissioning, decontamination and emergency planning before the NRC. He attended many of the TMI advisory panel meetings.

Arthur Morris, a registered professional civil engineer, was employed by the city of Lancaster from 1970 to 1980, initially as the city engineer and then the public works director. At the age of 33, he was elected mayor of Lancaster, serving from 1980 to 1990. Following the 1979 core-melt down accident at Three Mile Island Unit 2, Morris was one of 12 individuals asked by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to serve on an independent advisory panel to consult with them on the decontamination and cleanup of the facility. The

panel comprised local citizens, local elected officials and scientists. Morris served as its chair from the early 1980s until it was disbanded in 1992.

Mr. Epstein, a Democrat, and Mr. Morris, a Republican, first met in 1983 in the mayor's office in Lancaster. The meeting was rocky, but marked the beginning of a 37 year journey to ensure that the cleanup of the Three Mile Island was adequately funded.

The TMI-2 Advisory Panel met 78 times, holding public meetings in the vicinity of TMI-2 and meeting regularly with NRC. The panel provided an invaluable forum for community residents to ask questions and register concerns relating to cleanup issues including the reactor head lift, removal of damaged fuel and disposal of 2.3 million gallons of accident-generated water. One consistent theme that emerged from all sides was the desire to make sure that adequate funding was in place to fund the TMI cleanup.

Funding the TMI-2 cleanup has been problematic dating back to the accident in 1979. At that time, there were no decommissioning funds set aside. In 1982, Gov. Richard Thornburg cobbled together the Thonburgh Plan — a \$1 billion fund to pay for the removal of the damaged fuel. But, funding problems did not go away. On Oct. 25, 1988, Mr. Morris told the NRC Commissioners: "... there is no specific funding plan in place, and consequently no guarantee that monies will be in place for cleanup following PDMS [Post-Defueling Monitored Storage]...This uncertainty troubled the panel."

In 1988, almost 10 years after the accident, the NRC began requiring owners to certify that sufficient money would be available when needed to decommission their nuclear plants. Twenty years later, on March 26, 2018, the NRC estimated the decommissioning price tag for TMI-2 to be \$1.266 billion. However, the cost for the clean up, based on FirstEnergy's estimates, is \$1.4 billion. That amount doesn't cover radioactive waste removal.

The NRC recently granted FirstEnergy approval — without a hearing — to transfer TMI-2's license. The new owner, TMI-2 Solutions, is a limited liability

corporation from Utah with no assets. The problem remains the same, except the underfunded cleanup plan has been handed off from a public utility to an underfunded private venture. There is approximately \$900 million in the cleanup fund, which is \$500 million less than is needed to get the job done. Still, in defiance of logic, the NRC granted the transfer of the license to TMI-Solutions.

What happens if TMI-2 Solutions runs out of money? The NRC will allow the cleanup to stop until such time as the trust fund earns enough interest to restart. (TMI-2 Solutions, Application, p.11.) Who is going to make up the shortfall? You can bet it will not be TMI-2 Solutions. Remember that the price tag for removing the damaged fuel was underwritten by insurers, rate payers and taxpayers.

We have raised concerns for almost four decades about inadequate cleanup funding. Regardless of your position on nuclear power, or your party affiliation, funding should be in place to accomplish a complete cleanup, and ensure removal of high-level radioactive waste from Three Mile Island.

*Arthur E. Morris, former mayor of Lancaster and Chairman of the TMI-Advisory Panel. Eric J. Epstein, chairman, Three Mile Island Alert, Inc.*