

Recommendation 370
Revise the Member Appointment Process

Background

Despite the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the Savannah River Site (SRS) Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) managed to hold four meetings and conduct business starting in June of 2020. Slowed but not deterred, SRS CAB members were ready, willing, and able to return to work at full speed in 2021, holding a full CAB meeting in January and work planning meetings in early February to coordinate its efforts for the coming year.

About that same time, the CAB was informed there were significant problems with the approval of its membership package. The package was submitted as usual in late August, but a number of revisions were required by Department of Energy (DOE) Headquarters (HQ) and resubmissions made by the SRS CAB staff. It is important to note that the package has already been vetted and approved by site personnel, including SRS Manager Michael Budney. Further, 11 of the 13 applicants in the package have previously been approved by DOE-HQ, some more than once, and served on the SRS CAB. Finally, the package was submitted to DOE-HQ well before the November presidential election and is still unapproved well after the new administration came into office, which suggests the presidential transition should not have been a significant cause of delay.

This delay has left the CAB with only six members of a board that has 25 members when at full strength and well below the number of members needed for quorum for the full CAB. Recognizing that actions based on the vote of less than a third of the CAB would lack credibility and legitimacy, the SRS CAB has suspended its activities until it can regain its full strength and accumulated wisdom.

The SRS CAB has been told by DOE and SRS that community input is vital to the mission of DOE Environmental Management (EM) at both the national and local levels, yet that input is being stymied by the delayed membership package approval process and resulting absence of a full-strength board.

Recommendation

The SRS Citizens Advisory Board recommends that the Department of Energy overhaul the CAB membership approval process to ensure stakeholder involvement and input. To achieve this, the SRS CAB specifically recommends:

1. The CAB membership review and approval process should include all reasonable activities to prevent lapsed memberships. A lapsed membership is defined as: a membership held by a CAB member in good standing whose term has expired in the last calendar year but has not reached the six-year limit.

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2. The site manager should be empowered to extend board member terms until a new membership package is approved. When membership falls below 75% of all board seats due to lapsed memberships, the lapsed members shall temporarily retain their seats until new members are formally appointed by DOE-HQ. If membership still falls below 75% of all board seats, the site manager shall be empowered to appoint within 30 days a sufficient number of temporary members to achieve 75% of all board seats filled. Temporary members will serve until there are a sufficient number of official members to achieve 75% of all board seats filled.
3. DOE publishes the review and appointment process and then takes feedback from the public and EMSSAB members. The published information should identify which elements are required by the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the General Services Administration, and the EMSSAB charter, and which elements are internal to the Department of Energy, as well as where those DOE policies and procedures can be found.