

CITIZENS CONSULTING GROUP, LLC PROPOSAL TO SAVE THE J.H.CAMPBELL GENERATING PLANT

Our Mission

To advise the Board of Ottawa County, as well as other local stakeholders, including Ottawa County citizens in general, on how to prevent the planned closure and demolition of the J.H. Campbell Generating Plant scheduled to begin in May 2025, but instead transfer of the title to a member-owned electric cooperative (likely to be named Citizens Electric Cooperative), which would operate it past May 2025. This proposal was prepared with the assistance of a regional team of advisors.

The Proposal

Michigan law says the following:

“A county charter adopted under this act may provide for 1 or more of the following: ... (c) The authority to perform at the county level any function or service not prohibited by law, including, but not limited to, police protection, fire protection, planning, zoning, education, health, welfare, recreation, water, sewer, waste disposal, transportation, abatement of air and water pollution, civil defense, and any other function or service necessary or beneficial to the public health, safety, and general welfare of the county. Powers granted solely by charter may not be exercised by the charter county in a local unit of government that is exercising a similar power without the consent of the local legislative body... (d) The establishment and maintenance, either within or outside of the county corporate limits, of roads, parks, cemeteries, hospitals, medical facilities, airports, ports, jails, water supply and transmission facilities, sewage transmission and disposal systems, all public works, or other types of facilities necessary to preserve and provide effectively for the public health, safety, and general welfare of the county...”¹

Electric utilities are within the scope of this provision. A county has the legal right to municipalize electric utilities within the county, and it has the duty to do so if there is a reasonable basis for believing if it does not do so that electric service may be endangered for a significant portion of the county residents. This legal right is certainly vested in counties with a county charter stipulating such. Michigan law also vests the County Board of Commissioners with significant powers over electric utilities:

“Article VII, § 15 County intervention in public utility service and rate proceedings. Sec. 15. Any county, when authorized by its board of supervisors shall have the authority to enter or to intervene in any action or certificate proceeding involving the services, charges or rates of any privately owned public utility furnishing services or commodities to rate payers within the county.”²

This should extend to delay of any closure and demolition of an electric utility under precarious circumstances, and when there are avenues to operate the plant without carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere.³

Ottawa County would not be the first county in Michigan at this time exploring the possibility of municipalization of its electric utilities. For example, Washtenaw County is exploring such, as is the City of Ann Arbor within Washtenaw County.⁴ There are a number of counties in the USA which own and manage

¹ [https://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(ag5qv3lk132bcduguj1tf5on\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-45-515](https://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(ag5qv3lk132bcduguj1tf5on))/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-45-515)

² [https://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(mjvru145ok0j2t45djc2hyer\)\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Constitution-VII.pdf](https://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(mjvru145ok0j2t45djc2hyer))/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Constitution-VII.pdf)

³ <https://savethecampbell.com/the-application-of-allam-cycle-technology-so-there-would-not-be-atmospheric-carbon-dioxide-emissions-from-the-campbell-plant/>

⁴ <https://www.clickondetroit.com/all-about-ann-arbor/2023/03/02/washtenaw-county-board-of-commissioners-in-favor-of-exploring-alternative-options-to-dte-consumers-energy/>

their electric utility, and there are many electric cooperatives in Michigan and beyond which serve certain geographic areas, like a county.

Our proposal would utilize municipalizing provisions but then seek the transfer to a local member-owned electric cooperative, to better ensure funds paid by utility consumers would not be intermixed with government funds. In addition, we would seek a good working relation with Consumers Energy, in which Consumers Energy would continue to own and service electric assets in Ottawa County (save for the J.H. Campbell Generating Plant) as a contractor of the electric cooperative. Consumers Energy would retain a secured interest in the J.H. Campbell Plant until the electric cooperative would have paid off the note payable to Consumers Energy arising from its purchase of the J.H. Campbell Plant.

A “Save The Campbell” petition drive has been launched to place the charter question on the ballot.⁵ Around 12,000 signatures are required to place the issue on the ballot as the first step in becoming a home rule charter county. So, Lord willing, there will be a vote to “place upon the ballot the question of electing a commission to frame a charter.”⁶ The ultimate goal would be that the County electors would approve a charter drafted by such commission in accordance with Michigan law,⁷ and that charter would include a provision bringing all electric utility services in the County under the management of member-owned electric cooperatives or cities in the County.

⁵ <https://savethecampbell.com/>

⁶ [https://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(mjvru145ok0j2t45djc2hyer\)\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Constitution-VII.pdf](https://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(mjvru145ok0j2t45djc2hyer))/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Constitution-VII.pdf)

⁷ [https://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(mjvru145ok0j2t45djc2hyer\)\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Constitution-VII.pdf](https://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(mjvru145ok0j2t45djc2hyer))/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Constitution-VII.pdf)

The Significant Role of the J.H. Campbell Generating Plant in the Electrical Energy Picture of Ottawa County and Its Value

The J.H. Campbell Plant is the largest coal plant Consumers Energy runs in Michigan and provides power to a million customers and hundreds of jobs to others.⁸



J H Campbell

Plant id: 1710 | Operator: Consumers Energy Co | Operator code: 4254
 State: MI | Sector: Electric Utility | [View in dynamic map viewer](#)

TIME-SERIES
COLUMN CHART

? HELP | DOWNLOAD

Generation	Consumption	Water	Annual emissions	Annual	2001 - 2019		
				2016	2017	2018	2019
PIN API							
J H Campbell							
Net generation (megawatthours)							
All primemovers (ALL)							
All fuels (ALL)							
Bituminous coal (BIT)							
Distillate fuel oil (DFO)							
Subbituminous coal (SUB)							
Combustion (gas) turbine (including jet engine design) (GT)							
Distillate fuel oil (DFO)							
Steam turbine (ST)							
Bituminous coal (BIT)							
Distillate fuel oil (DFO)							
Subbituminous coal (SUB)							

⁸ <https://www.wzzm13.com/article/news/local/lakeshore/what-will-happen-to-the-jh-campbell-plant/69-522203712>

⁹

Here is the electrical energy picture of Ottawa County:

ENERGY CONSUMPTION







Total Consumption	2,929,853 MWh
Consumption per Capita	9.74 MWh

ENERGY PRODUCTION

Total Production	10,975,815 MWh
Production from Renewable Energy	4,094 MWh
Production from Non-Renewable Energy	10,971,721 MWh
Production per Capita	36.48 MWh

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Ottawa County, Michigan Electricity Overview

-  Ottawa County uses non-renewable fuels to generate 36.47 megawatt hours per citizen, making them the 265th highest county in the country for non-renewable production per capita.
-  During the previous year, Ottawa County has experienced a 8.34% increase in production of electricity from solar sources, up from 3,779 megawatt hours each year to 4,094 megawatt hours each year.
-  As the 4th highest producer of electricity of all 83 counties in the state, Ottawa County generates 10,975,815.02 megawatt hours of electricity from various fuels.
-  Ottawa County had a 5.32% drop in CO2 emissions per capita during the course of the preceding 12 months.
-  Ottawa County is the 244th most populated county in the United States, with 300,873 citizens living within its borders.
-  Residents of Ottawa County pay about 1.53% less than the \$112.53 state average monthly residential electricity bill.

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[generation&columnchart=ELEC.PLANT.GEN.1710-ALL-ALL.A&linechart=ELEC.PLANT.GEN.1710-ALL-ALL.A&maptype=0&pin=](#)

¹⁰ <https://findenergy.com/mi/ottawa-county-electricity/>

¹¹ <https://findenergy.com/mi/ottawa-county-electricity/>

In other words, the J.H. Campbell Generating Plant provides the preponderant share of electrical energy production in Ottawa County. If this plant is closed, our whole electrical energy picture changes significantly.

In addition, the County would be losing a major asset with the demolition of this plant. In the hands of Consumers Energy the plant will be a net liability, because it will require a substantial expenditure to phase it out, demolish it, re-purpose the property on which it is located, and assist Port Sheldon Township to transition to a new use. In contrast, in the hands of Citizens Electric Cooperative it would be one of Ottawa County's premier assets, given its multifaceted beneficial role:

- Reliable and economic source of electric energy for the County
- Generator of funds for the County, making it a net exporter of electric energy
- Providing hundreds of jobs for Port Sheldon Township and Ottawa County
- Providing a significant tax base for Port Sheldon Township and Ottawa County
- Providing necessary infrastructure for homes and businesses in the County, especially manufacturing, food processing, and farming
- Helping sustain property values in the County

The Rationale for Non-Closure

Since Consumers Energy is a regulated utility, the consumers of the J.H. Campbell Generating Plant in Ottawa County and the other counties it serves have effectively been the ones to pay for this plant, since its commissioning in 1962.¹² Since Consumers Energy has agreed to and plans for its closure, the County users of it should be allowed to decide if they want it to continue operation beyond the planned May 2025 closure date, as well as whether they want to continue with having Consumers Energy as their electric service provider. (This was 15 years before the earlier planned closure date.)¹³ A member-owned cooperative should be formed to take over operation of this utility plant if a substantial majority of Consumers Energy customers in Ottawa County want it to continue operations past May 2025. Furthermore, Ottawa County and Port Sheldon Township should recognize its closure in May 2025 and subsequent demolition may represent a significant risk and endangerment to its citizens, and thus should help its citizens avoid its May 2025 closure and subsequent demolition, if a 60% or more majority of its County customers indicate such closure and demolition should be stopped at that early date. Consumers Energy has needlessly endangered the energy security of West Michigan consumers in its quest to be “among the first utilities in the nation to go coal-free by 2025.”¹⁴ Furthermore, Consumers Energy's stopgap measure of demolishing a coal plant and expending money to purchase existing natural gas facilities is misguided from an environmental and economic perspective, as explained in a Yale School of Environment's article entitled “How Climate Activists Failed to Make Clear the Problem with Natural Gas”.¹⁵

The best use of the plant property is its current use. Other uses, such as ones outlined below, are lame at best:

“The study says some of the land is best suited for parks, homes and businesses, while other sections could remain industrial. The fly ash landfills could also have another use. On that property, there's the potential for some battery storage. There may be some small-scale solar, but I get the feeling it wasn't the highest and best use for that area,” Sabatino said.”¹⁶

¹² <https://www.power-technology.com/data-insights/power-plant-profile-jh-campbell-coal-fired-power-plant-us/?cf-view>

¹³ <https://www.craigslist.com/news/energy/breach-of-contract-dispute-surrounds-early-closure-plan-for-ottawa-co-coal-plant/>

¹⁴ <https://www.consumersenergy.com/news-releases/news-release-details/2022/06/23/20/43/plan-to-accelerate-end-of-coal-era-provide-reliability-and-protect-environment-earns-approval>

¹⁵ <https://e360.yale.edu/features/how-climate-activists-failed-to-make-clear-the-problem-with-natural-gas-mckibben>

¹⁶ <https://www.hollandsentinel.com/story/news/local/2023/06/07/planned-campbell-plant-closure-opens-up-property-for-development/70292298007/>

“A Midwest environmental law group is launching a “major new” initiative this year to work with utilities, municipalities and conservation groups to study the potential reuse of Michigan coal plants as public parkland as well as renewable energy production. The Chicago-based **Environmental Law and Policy Center**’s (ELPC) “power plants to parklands” project is in the early stages of examining the reuse of at least four coal plants along each of the Great Lakes that Michigan touches.”¹⁷

Furthermore, it more appropriately addresses the breach of contract that Cadillac-based Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative Inc. has alleged in this earlier closure, as well as significant concerns regarding energy security and reliability.¹⁸ Wolverine stated the following: “Consumers’ reckless actions in effectuating an early retirement of Campbell 3 in 2025 not only jeopardizes the reliable supply of electricity throughout rural Michigan, but also significantly damages Wolverine for Consumers’ benefit,” according to Wolverine’s suit...The company added that while the premature closure of Campbell “jeopardizes Michigan’s ability to keep the lights on, particularly at a time when our state faces rolling blackouts due to disorderly plant retirements, this case is about Consumers’ actions in breach of the contract and the resulting damage to Wolverine’s 260,000+ members.”

Port Sheldon Township would be adversely impacted by the closure:

“Like most rural communities on the fringe of developing urban areas, Port Sheldon Township is faced with growth pressures due to the demand for residential and commercial opportunities. In addition, the announcement of the early closure of Consumers Energy's J.H. Campbell Generating plant, scheduled for decommissioning in May of 2025, presents significant challenges for land use and strategic planning. The potential loss of tax revenue from the largest single payer, warrants an Economic Resiliency Response Plan, which will address future economic needs, and strategic planning for resiliency beyond the decommissioning of the coal plant. Additionally, the Master Land Use Plan was written in 1995 and last updated in 2017, and in its current form is less than adequate to meet all the Township’s current and future needs, especially in light of the large amount of land which will be involved through the decommissioning.”¹⁹

“While environmental activists are pleased with Consumers' announcement, local officials are adjusting to a timeline which will be a major change for the community. The plant is the largest source of tax revenue for Port Sheldon Township and the Grand Haven Area Public School District... "It took us by quite a surprise," Port Sheldon Township Supervisor Howard Baumann said of Consumers' announcement. "Just three years ago we were meeting with them, and they were looking at closing Units 1 and 2 in 2031 and Unit 3 even later than that. The plant makes up nearly 30 percent of the township's tax base, Baumann said. It also employs 310 workers.”²⁰

This comes at a time that the Biden Administration has been pursuing a misguided energy policy characterized by eroding natural gas infrastructure,²¹ off-lining coal-based energy without adequate offsets,²² and significant environmental hazards such as associated with solar panel disposal.²³ The planned battery storage of significant quantities of electrical power that accompanies use of solar and wind reliance is subject to significant reliability

¹⁷ <https://www.craingsgrandrapids.com/news/energy/power-plants-to-parklands-initiative-explores-public-access-clean-energy-at-former-michigan-coal-plants/>

¹⁸ <https://www.craingsgrandrapids.com/news/energy/breach-of-contract-dispute-surrounds-early-closure-plan-for-ottawa-co-coal-plant/>

¹⁹ <https://www.miottawa.org/Departments/Planning/pdf/Port-Sheldon-Economic-Resiliency-RFP-2023.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.hollandsentinel.com/story/news/local/2021/07/04/what-does-early-closure-jh-campbell-plant-mean-west-michigan/7839793002/>

²¹ <https://www.instituteeforenergyresearch.org/the-grid/nerc-warns-of-potential-power-shortages-this-winter-amid-limited-natural-gas-infrastructure/>

²² <https://www.wsj.com/articles/s-o-s-for-the-u-s-electric-grid-pjm-interconnection-blackout-supply-renewables-subsidy-report-fossil-fuel-4cbdd56e>

and <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/north-america-faces-power-reliability-challenges-again-this-winter-nerc-2023-11-08/>

²³ <https://www.hazardouswasteexperts.com/are-solar-panels-hazardous-waste-are-solar-panels-recyclable/#:~:text=Solar%20panels%20contain%20toxic%20heavy,recycle%20or%20dispose%20of%20them>

and environmental concerns.²⁴ Shortages of electrical energy production to meet demand can lead to voltage instability, frequency fluctuations, load shedding, blackouts, and equipment damage.²⁵ The risks and harms of closure are significant.

DTE coal plants on the east side of the state are not scheduled to retire until 2032,²⁶ so why should a coal plant on the west side of the state have to close in 2025 with all of the risks that entails?

Furthermore, “coal is the world’s most affordable energy fuel, and as such, the world’s biggest commodity market for electricity generation”.²⁷ China and India produce almost 60% of the world’s coal, and are expected to increase their production by more than 200 million tons per year, collectively.²⁸ Why is West Michigan shooting itself in the foot while other parts of the world are expanding use of coal for electrical energy production? Could money be talking?²⁹ If there is going to be departure from coal, should it not be worldwide?

Much of the economic analysis of Consumers Energy and other parties is predicated on the taxpayer-funded incentives of the Biden Administration’s Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).³⁰ Should those non-market incentives go away, the economics of the closure of the J.H. Campbell Generating Plant, and its replacement by solar and wind, looks much worse. Why should we trust those incentives will remain in place long term? Will Biden even win the 2024 election? How can the nation indefinitely afford the huge incentives of the IRA given the public budget deficits it is engendering?

One of the chief objections to the J.H. Campbell Generating Plant is its emissions other than carbon dioxide. However, Consumers Energy invested “\$1 billion to reduce emissions out of their stacks. “We’re removing mercury, we’re removing nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, so it does not get up in the air,” he said.³¹

A Member-Owned Energy Cooperative as New Owner and Operator

The non-profit electric cooperative would be focused on electric utility operations and patterned after Cloverland Electric Cooperative in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.³² Another model which would be looked to as an example is Grand Haven Board of Light and Power. Such a cooperative would seek close working relations with Wolverine Power Cooperative, in contrast to the bad relations that have characterized Consumers Energy’s relations with Wolverine Power Cooperative in recent years. The electric cooperative would consider joining MECA in order to help protect its legal interests.³³ The electric cooperative would also seek good working relations with Consumers Energy, even contracting services with them at a mutually agreeable billing rate.

Such a cooperative would have a board of directors elected by members. Michigan law recognizes and protects the rights of such member-owned electric cooperatives.³⁴

“Converting to a cooperatives is good for the community within and around the enterprise. Cooperatization can...

²⁴ <https://www.publicpower.org/periodical/article/battery-storage-devices-need-more-scrutiny-ensure-reliability-nerc-wecc-report-finds> and <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1364032119300334>

²⁵ <https://www.city-journal.org/article/the-states-power-down> explains the dangerous course we are on with our electric power grid as reliable power sources are rapidly oflined.

²⁶ <https://www.bridgemi.com/business-watch/settlement-critics-dte-energy-agrees-faster-coal-phase-out>

²⁷ <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/future-of-global-coal-production-2021-2024f/>

²⁸ <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/future-of-global-coal-production-2021-2024f/>

²⁹ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LX5pOggb3JpTt4_dCDG5YYK0C_NiYiJ/view

³⁰ <https://www.atr.org/irafailure/>

³¹ <https://www.wzzm13.com/article/news/local/lakeshore/what-will-happen-to-the-jh-campbell-plant/69-522203712>

³² <https://www.cloverland.com/about-us/your-cooperative/>

³³ <https://www.meca.coop/>

³⁴ [https://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(anj3livlj2x1bf55uieg1eyy\)\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-167-of-2008.pdf](https://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(anj3livlj2x1bf55uieg1eyy))/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-Act-167-of-2008.pdf)

- Distribute risk and maximize institutional and community independence
- Satisfy unmet social, economic needs and correct market failures
- Provide true community ownership, buffering communities from impact of outsourcing and market centralization
- Generate, circulate, and retain community wealth”³⁵

The Legal Background of the Planned Closure

Consumers Energy entered into a settlement agreement with various parties.³⁶ Highlights of the agreement as described by its proponents:

- “Closure of three units at the J.H. Campbell coal-fired power plant in Ottawa County’s Port Sheldon Township in 2025, resulting in a reduction in environmental pollutants as the company works to retire coal and replace it with cleaner natural gas and renewable energy resources.
- Consumers’ purchase of the Covert Generating Station, a natural gas-fired power plant in Van Buren County’s Covert Township, in 2023, which will add 1,114 zonal resource credits (ZRCs) to the Midcontinent Independent System Operator’s (MISO) Zone 7 from PJM Interconnection, which serves southwest Michigan. MISO is the regional transmission organization that covers the greater part of Michigan, and Zone 7 covers the Lower Peninsula except for the area served by PJM. Addition of the Covert plant to MISO will boost reliability for Consumers and provide additional capacity to Zone 7 for the next MISO planning year and beyond.
- Not accelerating to 2023 the retirement of Consumers’ D.E. Karn Generating Complex’s units 3 and 4, which run on natural gas and fuel oil. Instead, the two units would continue operating through May 2031.
- Bringing thousands of new megawatts (MW) of solar energy capacity online in the next several years as part of the company’s plans to add about 8,000 MW of solar generation by 2040, the year by which Consumers pledges to be carbon-neutral.”³⁷

This legal agreement failed to include the party at the table most affected by it: residents of West Michigan, especially Ottawa County, many of whom were not even aware of the discussions. They should get to vote on it and so voice their assent or dissent as to its going forward as planned. They effectively paid for the plant in their utility bills and it is in their county, and they will be the main ones to suffer from its closure and demolition.

Resources on the Topic of Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide as a Pollutant

Even if one believes atmospheric carbon dioxide is a pollutant and the J.H. Campbell Generating Plant should thus be closed, there are still reasons to delay its closure until the region is better prepared with the alternatives. But the question of whether atmospheric carbon dioxide is a pollutant should be closely examined, because it is the central rationale for its closure.

Dr. William Happer of Princeton University presents excellent information on why it is not a pollutant.³⁸ On January 13, 2024 Dr. E. Calvin Beisner and Steve Gorham held a symposium on the topic: “Climate Change Fact or Fantasy?”³⁹ Both have laid out the case that atmospheric carbon dioxide should not be regarded as a

³⁵ <https://www.co-oplaw.org/knowledge-base/legal-guide-cooperative-conversions/>

³⁶ <https://mi-psc.my.site.com/sfc/servlet.shepherd/version/download/0688y000003KjSDAA0>

³⁷ <https://www.michigan.gov/mpsc/commission/news-releases/2022/06/23/mpsc-approves-consumers-irp-takes-steps-improve-capacity>

³⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CA1zUW4uOSw>

³⁹ <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/climate-change-fact-or-fantasy-tickets-765171437367>

pollutant.⁴⁰ MIT scientists have evidence of significant negative feedback: “a study by MIT researchers in *Science Advances* confirms that the planet harbors a “stabilizing feedback” mechanism that acts over hundreds of thousands of years to pull the climate back from the brink, keeping global temperatures within a steady, habitable range... A likely mechanism is “silicate weathering” — a geological process by which the slow and steady weathering of silicate rocks involves chemical reactions that ultimately draw carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and into ocean sediments, trapping the gas in rocks.”⁴¹ There is significant evidence that atmospheric carbon dioxide is benign and even beneficial at current or likely future levels.⁴²

Money is being poured into atmospheric carbon dioxide alarmism, but a careful analysis of the data raises significant questions about its veracity.

“SAVE THE CAMPBELL” Campaign

Citizens Consulting Group, LLC has officially launched the “SAVE THE CAMPBELL” campaign, for the purpose of informing the public of all of the reasons to keep it operational past May 2025.⁴³

⁴⁰ <https://heartland.org/opinion/to-protect-the-poor-ten-reasons-to-oppose-harmful-climate-change-policies/> and <https://www.stevegoreham.com/climatefacts/>

⁴¹ <https://news.mit.edu/2022/earth-stabilizing-temperature-1116>

⁴² <https://co2coalition.org/publications/a-primer-on-carbon-dioxide-and-climate/>

⁴³ <https://savethecampbell.com/>