

Summary Minutes of the

U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)
Commission to Review the Effectiveness of the National Energy Laboratories
Public Meeting

Commission Members TJ Glauthier, Co-Chair; Jared Cohon, Co-Chair; Cherry Murray; Wanda Austin;
in Attendance: Paul Fleury; Richard Meserve; Norman Augustine

Date and Time: 10:30 AM – 3:00 PM, Tuesday, March 24, 2015

Location: Hilton at Mark Center, 5000 Seminary Road, Alexandria, VA

Purpose: Meeting of the Commission to Review the Effectiveness of the DOE National Energy Laboratories

Presenters: Speakers
HQ Perspective of DOE Oversight
Joseph McBrearty, Deputy Director for Field Operations, Office of Science
William “Ike” White, Associate Principal Deputy Administrator, NNSA

Directives and Orders

Don Nichols, Associate Administrator Safety and Health, NNSA
Mike Schlender, Deputy Director, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory
Steve Kirchhoff, Deputy Associate Under Secretary, Office of Environment, Health, Safety, and Security, DOE

Site Office Perspective

Johnny Moore, Manager, ORNL Site Office
Mike Weis, Manager, Fermi Site Office

DOE Staff: Matt Schaub, Designated Federal Officer

IDA & STPI Staff: Mark Taylor, Susannah Howieson, Libby Turpen, Robert Mahoney, Martha Merrill, Julian Zhu, Laurie Dacus, Katie Gliwa, Kathleen Peroff, Ryan Wheelan, Vanessa Pena

Meeting Summary

The Commission to Review the Effectiveness of the National Energy Laboratories (Commission) was convened for its seventh meeting at 10:30 AM on March 24, 2015. Commission Co-Chair TJ Glauthier led the meeting. The meeting included three panels: (1) HQ Perspective of DOE Oversight (2) Directives and Orders. (3) Site Office Perspective. The panels were followed by an opportunity for Public Comments.

Opening of Public Meeting

Co-Chair TJ Glauthier opened the meeting and welcomed the commissioners, speakers, and observers.

HQ Perspective of DOE Oversight

Joseph McBrearty, Deputy Director for Field Operations, Office of Science (SC), presented a briefing on the Office of Science's perspective on DOE oversight. Joseph discussed the Site Office's role in operational activities and facilitating the Science mission. He also described the function of the SC Integrated Support Center which provides consolidated support to site offices in specialized subject areas. The Office of Science's oversight model is based off of Contractor Assurance Systems (CAS). SC has followed the requirements of CAS while maintaining its "trust but verify" role, and it has implemented CAS at the ten Science Labs, peer reviewed the results, shared best practices, and held related discussions with staff. He also shared examples of oversight considered onerous, including attendance at conferences and the accounting of de minimis lab property during collaborative efforts.

William "Ike" White, Associate Principal Deputy Administrator, NNSA, presented a briefing on NNSA's perspective on DOE oversight. NNSA provides financial, regulatory, asset liability, and safety oversight. Though they check field offices annually and as needed, there is a compounding effect of oversight with EA, IG, GAO, and DNFSB. Ike noted that a constrained budget has driven costs for environmental clean-up up over time, while decreasing their ability to self-regulate over time. Ike cited improvements in project management efficiencies, Y-12 security, efforts to minimize conference management, and NNSA engaging sites for their ideas. Ike noted that superfluous, self-imposed oversight is sometimes driven by an overly conservative interpretation of requirements and suggests that clearer directives could reduce the tendency toward excess oversight.

A Q&A session followed.

Directives and Orders

Don Nichols, Associate Administrator Safety and Health, NNSA; Mike Schlender, Deputy Director, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory; and Steve Kirchhoff, Deputy Associate Under Secretary, Office of Environment, Health, Safety, and Security, DOE participated in a panel discussion on directives and orders. It was noted that the number of directives and orders has varied over the past. There is a consensus that more could be done to streamline directives. Directives and orders have both internal and external drivers. DOE has some unique challenges as a self-regulating agency. There was discussion of the Directive Review Board and its efforts to balance mission with regulations. The cumulative effect of oversight at the field level was noted again as well as the risk aversion at many levels. It was stated that some feel pressured to operate in the most conservative interpretation of directives and orders. There is a concern that if one pushes back on directives; their competency will be called into question. It was expressed that more can be done on building community standards and training programs.

A Q&A session followed.

Site Office Perspective

Johnny Moore, Manager, ORNL Site Office presented the ORNL perspective on oversight. ORNL has a unique arrangement with eight different contractors. The oversight is intended to manage risk without stymieing creativity. The Site Office is accountable for goals and outcomes noted in PEMP, formal and informal progress monitoring as well as annual appraisal. Johnny characterized the relationship between the Site Office and the lab as being mission focused.

Mike Weis, Manager, Fermi Site Office presented the Fermi perspective on oversight. Mike characterized the role of the Site Office as owner, regulator, and advocate for the lab. They confirm outputs of the Lab Quality Assurance and Contractor Assurance Programs. The Fermi Site Office aims for less oversight as long as lab output is adequately confirmed. The site office reported that the relationship with the lab is working well generally, and the site office works hard to ensure that work continues as it should when new personnel join the lab. They have made an effort to eliminate unneeded approvals and transactional regulations including DOE parking lot regulations. Mike noted challenges regarding requirements and funding levels.

A Q&A session followed.

Public Comment

No members of the public requested the opportunity to comment.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

Matt Schaub, Designated Federal Officer

I hereby certify that these minutes of the March 24, 2015 Lab Commission meeting are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

TJ Glauthier
Co-Chair



Jared Cohon
Co-Chair

