

## METROPOLITAN NEWS

# Agency seeks options on N-waste disposal

*Tonawanda residents urged to find alternatives to sending material to Utah*

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News Tonawanda Bureau

Last week, the U.S. Department of Energy backed away from its efforts to consolidate nuclear waste from four Manhattan Project sites in a cell along the Niagara River.

This week, it asked the local opposition to do the same — back away from efforts to have all the waste transported to Utah.

During a meeting Wednesday with residents and elected officials in the DOE's Town of Tonawanda office, a DOE official asked that both sides come to the table for a fresh look at options.

"I will promise to open up the process. I ask you to come up with other alternatives than sending it all to Clive, (Utah)," said Richard Guimond, an admiral in the Public Health Service and

an official from the DOE's Office of Environmental Management.

At issue is about 8,000 tons of contaminated waste from the Manhattan Project at the Seaway Landfill, two old Ashland Refinery properties and the former Linde Air Products Corp. plant in Tonawanda.

The community, led by a group of elected officials known as the Coalition Against Nuclear Materials in Tonawanda (CANIT), opposed a DOE technical study that recommended combining most of the waste at a storage facility on River Road. CANIT instead has pushed for transporting the waste to the Utah facility.

The main concerns focused on health-related issues, the environmental impact on the river and the town's waterfront development plans.

Guimond said the DOE will accept these "key values" and asked the com-

munity to recognize a major DOE concern: money.

"We have to find a way to do this as inexpensively as possible," Guimond said. "If we take all the material from here to Utah, why not do it for all the sites (across the country)."

Guimond said it would cost an estimated \$5 billion to transport Manhattan Project waste at 44 sites nationwide to a storage facility in Utah.

"Keep in mind, we've got to fund a national program," he said.

Legislator Charles M. Swanick, D-Town of Tonawanda, stressed that there needs to be real input from the community.

"Unless there is a true review of options by others 'outside of the DOE, we'll end up in the same situation we had before," he said.

"I hope consideration is given to the neighbors of this thing," said town resident Edmund Koval.

The move by DOE to take its recommendation off the table derails a process that would have resulted in a DOE decision on the cleanup by next fall.

It is still not clear exactly what happens next, said Guimond, who noted the DOE will open a dialogue with the community to come up with a more inclusive process and a new timetable.

Those who spoke during public hearings or sent in comments on the original DOE recommendation will probably not get responses, Guimond said. Almost 650 comments were received.

Under the old process, the DOE would have had to answer each one before making a final record of decision. Guimond said that is no longer necessary, although he promised concerns would be addressed during the new analysis.