

METROPOLITAN NEWS

N-site concerns stall Tonawanda development

Town's waterfront plans are on hold until radioactive waste issue is settled, Calabrese tells officials

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The Town of Tonawanda's hopes for waterfront development are on hold, Supervisor Carl J. Calabrese told federal officials Monday, because of uncertainty over plans for storage of radioactive waste nearby.

"If a low-level nuclear storage facility is placed on our waterfront, all of our waterfront plans are dead in the water," he said.

Calabrese spoke at a meeting of local officials with Rep. John LaFalce, D-Town of Tonawanda, and Rear Adm. Richard Guimond of the U.S. Department of Energy, about the cleanup of four low-level radioactive sites in the town.

The town wants to move River Road 1,000 feet inland to open more than 80 acres of waterfront property for residential and commercial development, but developers do not want to invest

next door to a permanent, low-level radioactive waste storage facility, Calabrese said.

The DOE had suggested that all 8,000 tons of Manhattan Project waste in the town be collected and stored at the old Ashland Refinery property on the east side of River Road.

But the agency backed off that plan in April and pledged to work with the community to find other solutions.

Calabrese urged the DOE to recognize the importance of the town's plans, in conjunction with the Horizons Commission, to redevelop the waterfront.

He said the state has set aside the funds for moving River Road but has not proceeded on the project because of uncertainty about where the waste will be stored.

Guimond, the DOE's principal deputy assistant secretary for environmental management, promised to take a "fresh look" at the problem and make the waterfront development one of the criteria in deciding on a cleanup plan.

"We want to begin a dialogue on where to go next," said the Public Health Service admiral, who was here earlier this summer to gauge community disapproval of a DOE recommendation that the waste be consolidated at one of the sites.

That visit, he said, made it clear that the DOE's five-year study had considered public safety and environmental issues in the Manhattan Project cleanup but had fallen short on the economic development issue.

Local officials at the meeting also demanded a timetable for selecting a cleanup plan. Guimond said he would present a draft timetable and work plan in six to eight weeks.

He also discussed other alternatives for cleaning up the four sites:

- New treatment techniques, such as soil washing, to reduce the amount of contaminated soil. The soil is being tested to determine if it is suitable for this treatment, but results will take several months.

- Complete off-site storage at a Utah facility, a remedy that has long been pushed by the Tonawanda community.

Guimond noted that transportation costs have started to come down because of competition from alternatives such as soil treatment. But he added that cost factors are still high enough that community leaders should reconsider their demands for this option.

"Everybody wants it shipped to somewhere else," he said. "What I do here, I've got to be able to afford to do in 44 places around the country."

Estimates on cleanup costs for all 44 of the DOE-managed sites range from about \$2 billion if on-site remedies are selected to about \$5 billion if shipment to Utah's storage site becomes the standard response, he added.

- Storing the contaminated waste in a facility elsewhere in New York State.

Gov. Cuomo has suggested reopening the nuclear storage facility in West Valley for such waste.

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