

THE BUFFALO NEWS

 PRINT THIS

## Meeting held on former weapons sites

### *Environmental contamination was focus of hearing's discussions*

By Aaron Besecker

NEWS NIAGARA REPORTER

Updated: September 18, 2009, 8:35 AM /

LEWISTON — About 60 people gathered in the Lewiston Senior Center on Wednesday night for a public meeting about the ongoing investigation of environmental contamination on former federal weapons sites in Lewiston and Porter.

The format of the meeting included several presentations by staff and contractors for the Army Corps of Engineers, the regulators responsible for the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works and the Niagara Falls Storage Site. Members of the public were also permitted to ask questions during an open roundtable.

The 7,500-acre site was purchased by the federal government in the early 1940s to construct an explosives plant manufacturing trinitrotoluene, or TNT. It had other uses once the TNT plant closed nine months after it opened. The storage site, a 191-acre area, includes a 10-acre cell that holds radiological waste.

It was the third quarterly meeting held this year on the inquiry into chemical and radiological contamination at the site, once home to various Department of War operations and which also played a role in the Manhattan Project.

The meetings are meant to fulfill the requirements of federal law for public participation in environmental cleanups.

This format, however, has been criticized by a volunteer panel of area residents with technical expertise for failing to allow for real dialogue with community members.

The LOOW Restoration Advisory Board, the status of which has been diminished by the agency, had been engaged in technical review and previously got access to agency data and its experts.

Many of those in attendance were employees of various local, state and federal agencies, as well as elected representatives.

Village of Youngstown Mayor Neil C. Riordan asked the corps officials if there had been any progress in regaining official recognition for the group.

“It’s critical to all of us,” Riordan told corps representatives.

Bill Kowalewski, special projects branch chief for the corps’ Buffalo district, said the issue is being handled above the local agency level. Kowalewski reported there has been no movement on the issue locally.

Corps officials said the next meeting has tentatively been scheduled for early December.

Many of the questions asked of the agency Wednesday night involved schedules for future work.

The corps provided details about its plan to group 550 parcels into 33 subsections based on type of activity that occurred on them. The entire site, which consisted of both the “developed” and “undeveloped” areas, comprised about 7,500 acres.

There was also discussion about plans to demolish a structure known as Building 401, which sits on the Niagara Falls Storage Site.

The agency wants to knock the building down in order to access contaminated pipelines beneath it, said Michelle Rhodes, acting project manager for the corps.

The Corps of Engineers has received federal stimulus dollars for the project, and may award a contract as early as January, said Kent Johnson, of the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

Former Lewiston Town Councilman D. James Langlois expressed his support for having the building destroyed.

[abesecker@buffnews.com](mailto:abesecker@buffnews.com)

## Reader comments

There on this article.

Rate This  
Article

Log into MyBuffalo to post a comment ☐

MyBuffalo user:

Password:

Log In

[Forgot your password?](#)

### What is MyBuffalo?

MyBuffalo is the new social network from Buffalo.com. Your MyBuffalo account lets you comment on and rate stories at [buffalonews.com](http://buffalonews.com). You can also head over to [mybuffalo.com](http://mybuffalo.com) to share your blog posts, stories, photos, and videos with the community. [Join now](#) or [learn more](#).

### sort comments:

Showing comments to of ( pages total).

### Find this article at:

<http://www.buffalonews.com/cityregion/niagaracounty/story/798302.html>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.