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LOOW CAC hears more on IWCS

by Terry Duffy

Members of the newly formed Lake Ontario Ordnance Works Community Action Council met Thursday, Oct. 20, for a lengthy information and organizing session at the Lewiston-Porter Community Resource Center.

The meeting, the second for the fledgling group, featured a new, in-depth look into the Interim Waste Containment Structure at the Niagara Falls Storage Site. With members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Buffalo District in attendance, it was intended to shed further insight into the oft-mysterious IWCS radioactive cell, its contents and construction.

Member Dr. William Boeck, a retired professor of physics at Niagara University, detailed IWCS construction in a 22-page PDF presentation. Learned was actual placement of wastes within the structure's cells, the locations of earlier buildings within it, their past uses, and the extent of radioactive waste, both liquid and solid, contained inside.

Boeck for example, provided pre-construction photos of IWCS and photos of earlier LOOW activity, followed by first-seen images of it being built. Included were revealing "floor to ceiling" containment of radioactive K-65 wastes and L-30 and F-32 residues in the early construction phase of the IWCS during the mid-1980s "These bays appear filled to the brim," Boeck said. He remarked that the construction of the cell actually occurred in the basement of Buildings 410 and 411, the latter used formerly as a water treatment facility at LOOW, and how their construction enabled the IWCS builders in the 1980s to essentially place consolidated wastes within their basements.

CAC attendees appeared fascinated with many of the details of the construction, and many had questions on the IWCS plant and any possible future for its contents, namely the K-65s. Boeck stated that K-65s in the IWCS were considered "too hot" with radium contaminants and could not adequately be used to process uranium.

Attendees also learned the IWCS future also remains far from settled, as the Army Corps has only embarked on a lengthy feasibility study of the IWCS plant remediation, with its initial workshop on "Waste Disposal Options and Fernald Lessons Learned" having just occurred in September. Details of that session are contained in an Oct. 1 Sentinel report that can be found online at www.wnypapers.com.

The Corps expects to develop a feasibility study on IWCS in summer 2012, with a forecasted completion of that report by summer 2013.

The balance of CAC session dealt with a number organizational issues, with a new push by CAC membership for greater participation and input from the community. "This session is the first example of the process of collecting community input," stated Dr. Joe Gardella, UB Larkin professor of chemistry and CAC chairman.

CAC members, who are working with the Army Corps, via Corps-retained technical facilitator Doug Sarno to help the government agency determine the IWCS future, invite the community to join them in discussion on this important project during the Corps' lengthy and involved feasibility process effort. CAC has scheduled future workshops, with tentative dates being on the first Wednesday of each month – Dec. 7; Jan. 11, 2012; Feb. 1, 2012; March 7, 2012; April 4, 2012; May 2, 2012, and June 6, 2012. The CAC meetings are held separate from the Corps scheduled meetings that are planned for the coming year on IWCS. They are intended as planning and discussion forums of topics in future Corps sessions.

All CAC meetings are held in the Alumni Room of the Lew-Port Community Resource Center on the Creek Road campus and are open to the public.

For further information on the LOOW CAC, visit its website www.loowcac.org.

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