

LOOW CAC focused on transparency, information sharing

by Terry Duffy

Organizers of the Lake Ontario Ordinance Works Community Action Council held a session focused on transparency and information sharing Wednesday at the Lewiston-Porter School District Community Resource Center boardroom.

"The members of the CAC are concerned on fissures in the community," opened Doug Sarno, a technical facilitator who was appointed earlier by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to work with the community on issues related to its remediation objectives for the Interim Waste Containment Structure at the Niagara Falls Storage Site. "It's a pretty critical time; there's a lot going on. Our aim is to be as constructive as possible."

CAC Chair Dr. Joe Gardella, John and Frances Larkin professor of chemistry at the University at Buffalo, echoed Sarno on the focus element, telling attendees, "We thought it was good to prepare for this."

And prepare they did. A number of visitors were on hand, including Assemblyman John Ceretto, Lewiston-Porter Superintendent Chris Roser, Lewiston-Porter School Board and Parent-Teacher Association members, representatives from U.S. Rep. Louise Slaughter's and State Sen. George Mazarz' offices, plus three members from the Army Corps Buffalo District and area residents.

Almost immediately Sarno and Gardella aimed to get a handle on what both viewed as growing confusion and disconnects developing in the community with regards to the Corps' IWCS project. "The Feasibility Study (lead-off discussion, which debuted at the Corps' Sept. 28 workshop, see Sentinel, Oct. 1) does not select a remedy," said Sarno. "It identifies objectives, potential technologies, a set of alternatives, as part of the decision-making." He informed that the Corps is looking at a series of technical memorandums and key features of the feasibility process over the next year. "I'm here to connect the dots, get the

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communication moving," said Sarno.

He stressed to visitors that the CAC is not a formal advisory board. "There is no formal advisory board for the NFSS site," said Sarno.

"We are working with the Corps to discuss items (in the technical memorandums)," said Gardella. "As we go through the process, we'll have a record on our website."

Now live, the CAC website can be accessed at www.loowcac.org. Information building on the site is ongoing.

Gardella told attendees that, with the website, CAC hopes to create a process to keep all communication open and transparent.

"There is a need to make people understand the Corps' technical memorandums," added Sarno.

Discussion turned briefly to the K-65 concentrations stored inside the IWCS. There the Corps attempted to dispel a growing confusion in the community that decisions are already being made regarding the IWCS future.

Corps rep John Busey said the Corps is very much at the onset when it comes to determining what to do with the site and that no decisions whatsoever have been made.

Of the K-65s, he said the Corps in its limited evaluations thus far has been considering radon releases and how to counter them. "We're looking at hypothetical releases of the K-65s (which would) be used as a determination for our engineers to design controlled systems" at the site, said Busey.

Sarno commented that probably the biggest concern facing the community once the IWCS project gets under way would be the opening of the cap. He said the community needs to fully understand and be able to assess the situation. "Our goal (with the CAC) is that once the full (feasibility) report is out is that the community will have a full awareness of the situation."

"Our goal is to get the CAC website useful to the community," he added.

Gardella said CAC intends for the website to serve as a full information source on the NFSS, its history, its background. "Our job is to expand on what the community seeks. Our goal is to work with the Corps to get this out and as complete as possible," said Gardella.

"I appreciate your openness, transparency on working to get this information out," Ceretto said in response.

"We want to make sure everything

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Garrow sees new opportunity for dialogue with Corps

is out there," said Sarno, noting that CAC has faced questions from the community over a lack of transparency and that it is simply not so. "This group is open to suggestions," said Sarno, and he encouraged the community to participate.

CAC member Walt Garrow of Wheatfield, who serves as safety director with Quality Inspection Services Inc., spoke of the new CAC's value on it being able to participate in actual communication with the Corps – something that during his involvement with the area's Restoration Advisory Board in years past it wasn't able to do. "In the past we didn't have the opportunity for discourse with the Corps," said Garrow, a certified hazardous materials manager who specializes in occupational safety and occupational health. "With this group I see a great opportunity for dialogue. I'm looking for an opportunity to seeing some real progress."

Soon after came a question from Youngstown resident Ed McGreevy as to the LOOW CAC's actual status with the Corps. "What of it?" he asked.

Sarno, who served as a Corps appointed technical facilitator on its Fernald, Ohio, \$4 billion cleanup project, informed the resident that the Fernald Citizens Advisory Com-

mittee was an official board, whereas the LOOW Citizens Action Committee is not. He said that the Corps, due to its having to abide by government provisions contained in the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program, which covers IWCS cleanup activity, is not allowed to utilize a RAB or similar advisory board component like it did in Fernald.

"There is no technical RAB with the Corps," said Garrow. "With this group there is opportunity (for us) to enlist elected officials to work with us and the Corps." He and Gardella said that the moves of enlisting a facilitator and a separate independent citizens group such as the CAC came from the earlier forums the community and area elected officials engaged in with the Corps in Youngstown that were organized by the late Youngstown Mayor Neil Riordan.

"With its new name, our group was seeking a new path to work with the Corps," said Gardella.

"We don't seek to limit those of other groups," he stressed. "People who participate under the LOOW RAB banner are welcome to participate at our meetings."

Gardella added, "I'm distressed on the splits in the community. I have a lot of interests in civic engagement. I hope we can garner the community

to create the information processes, to set the goal of getting as much of the information to the community as is possible."

Sarno and Gardella stressed to attendees that the Corps IWCS feasibility process is only under way, that there is still very much for the community to review and discuss, and that a final Feasibility Study Report and any decisions are not expected from the Corps until summer and fall of 2013.

In the meantime, they greatly encourage the community to become more active in the fledgling CAC.

Ceretto summed up the sentiments of all when he commented, "What we do have in common is that we are all concerned. I think we've set the groundwork of what we can do here."

For further information visit www.loowcac.org or contact via email Gardella at gardella@acsu.buffalo.edu and Sarno at doug@forumfg.com

Next week, look for a report on the K-65 concentrations at the IWCS by CAC member and retired Niagara University physics professor Dr. William Boeck, as well as discussion on the many options the Corps could consider for the IWCS and cost considerations.