



Same site, same sides, same message

Residents want waste out, DOE continues to drag out process

by ELLEN M. GALLAGHER

The community gave the Department of Energy the same message regarding Manhattan Project waste removal at last Tuesday's meeting.

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"Get it out!" Supervisor Carl Calabrese said, receiving applause from the more than 70 community members in attendance at the meeting at Holmes Elementary School.

Calabrese said the federal government is the only party not taking responsibility for removal of waste in Tonawanda.

The DOE called the meeting to discuss "community values" with any interested community members, with the main value being removal of nuclear waste.

The DOE had previously proposed storing the waste in a cell on River Road, costing approximately \$58 million. This solution is unacceptable to the community.

The Coalition Against Nuclear Waste In Tonawanda (CANIT) has recommended removal of waste to a private licensed company which stores waste in Utah, 150 miles from any populated area.

Several residents called on Ron Kirk, DOE's Tonawanda Site manager, to explain the status of the DOE's new workplan, already behind schedule.

Studies are being done to find if costs would be reduced by using new technologies to decrease the amount of waste. The pre-treatment studies due to conclude in December have now been extended and are set for completion in April.

"In six years I've been to two public hearings," Legislator Chuck Swanick said. "The community spoke loud and clear that they wanted this material removed from the community."

"When will DOE accept the reality of the decision?" Swanick questioned. "It appears to me that DOE will continue to have these meetings in the hope that the community will lose interest."

"The issue is that that material will be removed and there will not be a nuclear depository along our waterfront on River Road," Swanick said.

Residents questioned why Congressman John LaFalce was not in attendance. Mary Brennan-Taylor, representing LaFalce, said he was unable to attend as

he was in Washington, D.C., but stated that he backs the community on the waste issue.

In a letter to LaFalce written following the meeting, Calabrese states, "The DOE has consistently found ways to ignore our commu-

nity's nearly unanimous desire to remove this waste from our town."

"The DOE has become mired in a seemingly endless process of studies, assessments, value statements, timetables, ad nauseam,"

the supervisor continued. "The town, county, state and Horizons Waterfront Commission have all spoken with one voice — that this material must be removed. But it is obvious that the DOE has not

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heard, or has chosen not to hear, this very clear message. I have come to the conclusion that future meetings with DOE are pointless."

Calabrese concluded his letter by imploring the Congressman to take action on this issue.

Thomas D. Blanchard, Jr., president of the Horizons Waterfront Commission, said that the town's waterfront development plans would be ruined if a nuclear waste depository was built on River Road.

"DOE's willing to pick up the cost for a protective solution," Kirk said.

"The DOE won't make a \$200 million decision," he said. "If we have multiple protective remedies, we want to go with the most cost-effective solution."

"This is an issue purely of dollars," Swanick said. Both Swanick and Calabrese believe the DOE has overestimated the cost of complete waste removal, and underestimated the cost of creating a local waste depository.

Jim Rauch, an Amherst pharmacist who has spent more than 300 hours examining the DOE's plans and studies, said the solutions are not equally protective.

Rauch explained that the DOE risk analysis bases exposure time

on 25 hours of exposure per year. Rauch explained that this is not protective of public health.

"Conceivably, we could have houses built on this site in the future, and we'd have 365 times DOE's dose exposure estimate," Rauch said.

"These kinds of long-term hazards have to be more effectively dealt with," he said.

In addition, exceptions are made to the radioactive level in areas concentrated in less than 25 square feet. These "hot spots" are permitted, Rauch said.

The DOE study lacks an isotope concentration map, which would show where higher concentrations of radiation, or "hot spots" were found, Rauch explained.

"The public feels intuitively that this is not the answer we need," Rauch said, explaining that Western New York has a history of failed landfills.

One man asked if considerations were given to the communities downstream of Tonawanda, as well as Canada, a nation sharing the river border.

Kirk said he has been in discussions with Canada, and has been asked to provide any information regarding the waste.

The DOE plans to set up another meeting to further discuss these issues.