

Debate on nuclear waste disposal in Town continues:

DOE's new citizens' group: Is it meant to can CANIT?

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Conflict between the Coalition Against Nuclear Materials in the Town of Tonawanda and the US Department of Energy continues to grow.

The latest controversy surrounds a DOE plan to develop a citizen group to represent the community on the cleanup of nuclear waste.

The coalition, (CANIT), wonders if this new citizens' group is just a DOE attempt to circumvent their group, which is composed of local citizens and officials.

The Ashland 1 and 2, River Road and Linde Praxair radioactive sites at issue are tainted with radioactive waste from the Manhattan Project of World War II.

Substances disposed of on the sites include radioactive and chemical wastes. The chemical wastes are

residual compounds from metal processing activities and include arsenic, copper, lead and nickel as well as toluene, an organic solvent.

The Department of Energy is planning remediation under its formerly utilized sites program. That remedy is disputed by local activists and politicians who want all of the waste removed and disposed of elsewhere.

The DOE's preferred remedy is partial excavation of tainted soils with disposal and encapsulation in a special containment structure on one of the Ashland Seaway sites at a cost of about \$59 million.

CANIT favors a complete excavation with off-site disposal, with a cost between \$100 and \$302 million, and has been at odds with the DOE.

DOE officials would look for the new group it has proposed to be

formed from a core of people who attend public information meetings. It hopes the new group would be more sympathetic to its point of view.

Meanwhile, CANIT officials think the DOE proposal is an attempt to reduce their involvement in the process.

Other options for the estimated 8,000 tons of low-level waste include containment with institutional controls on site, with a cost of \$17 million; complete excavation with on-site disposal, with a cost of about \$77 million and partial excavation with off-site disposal, with a cost between \$79 and \$262 million.

The DOE's next meeting on the clean-up will be 7-9 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 31 at Holmes School, 365 Dupont Ave. The meeting will include a discussion of the criteria used by the government to evaluate clean-up options.

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