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CITY OF TONAWANDA

# Panel seeks Council's backing of letter questioning landfill cleanup

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An environmental advisory board in the City of Tonawanda has asked the Tonawanda Common Council to endorse a letter questioning the scientific basis for cleanup efforts by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at a Town of Tonawanda site used to help develop the nation's first atomic weapons during World War II.

The General Environmental Control Board is concerned that the radioactive material in the Niagara Landfill, 4825

River Road, will not be removed and that the standard for determining what level of radioactive waste must be removed is not as stringent as standards set by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

In 1996, local officials were stunned when federal officials reversed course and proposed a \$38 million plan to remove radioactive materials from the former Manhattan Project site, known as Ashland 1 and 2 properties. Local officials had for years lobbied to get the waste removed, while the government had offered a cleanup plan that would have contained the radioactive

materials on site.

However, the city advisory board noted in its letter that the guideline for removal of contaminated materials is 40 picocuries per gram for the Thorium-230 isotope while the Nuclear Regulatory Commission standard is 5 picocuries per gram. They also say the cleanup of Ashland properties will leave radioactive materials at the Seaway property.

"The City of Tonawanda General Environmental Board is opposed to segmentation of the review process and the proposed cleanup of radioactive material at only two of the three con-

tiguous contaminated properties," the letter states.

The letter also renews complaints about radon gas coming from the landfill due to a controversial plan to turn methane gas from the landfill into electricity. The state Department of Environmental Conservation has run tests and has concluded there is no radon hazard.

"The board has determined that the only way to prevent the radon emission is to remove the radium that is producing radon gas," the letter stated.

Cleanup at the Ashland sites has already begun.