

TONAWANDA NEWS

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TT vows lawsuit over nuclear site

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Tonawanda leaders are threatening to launch a court fight if the federal government proceeds with plans to locate a permanent nuclear waste storage depository in the town.

Critics of the proposal are also calling on officials in Washington to fire the project manager who has been trying to persuade Town residents to recognize the merits of the on-site storage plan. Supervisor Carl Calabrese said that Ron Kirk is refusing to seriously consider alternatives which would involve shipping the radioactive waste to an out-of-state facility.

"Mr. Kirk has ceased to be an objective analyst. Instead, he has become a salesman for the federal government's cheapest option, and it's at our expense," Calabrese told reporters Friday during a news conference in the Tonawanda Municipal building on Delaware Avenue.

The U.S. Department of Energy wants to take 8,000 tons of nuclear waste currently at four Tonawanda sites and consolidate it in a permanent depository to be located somewhere in the town. The waste is stored at two sites located on the former Ashland Refinery property at the Seaway Industrial Landfill and at the old Linde Corporation.

County Legislator Charles Swanick (D-Kenmore) joined Calabrese at Friday's briefing. Both elected leaders are members of the Coalition Against Nuclear Materials in Tonawanda (CANiT). Swanick reiterated his belief that the best alternative would be to ship the waste to a depository in Utah. He noted that the county has already has spent millions of dollars

to enhance public recreation along the shoreline, including improvements at Isle View Park and expansion of the Riverwalk.

"How many people really want to have a picnic next to a permanent nuclear depository?" Swanick asked.

The leaders pointed out that the state department of Environment Conservation recently came out against the proposed facility in Tonawanda. The local officials warned that if the Federal government proceeds with the plan, they will launch a court challenge. Calabrese suggested that such a facility would have a disastrous economic impact on the town.

"The depository would effectively stop waterfront development in its tracks. It would mean that major projects that could generate jobs and taxes will never materialize. That's totally unacceptable and we'll be ready to file a lawsuit in federal court on the same day," Calabrese said.

Meanwhile, Swanick said he would encourage Eric County government to become a party to any legal challenge.

"I will be more than willing to put my name on any lawsuit that is filed. This project would hurt the town, the county and especially the 150,000 who live around here," he said.

Swanick was also critical of the Western New York Congressional delegation for remaining silent during the controversy over the proposed nuclear waste depository. He said local congressmen could have significant influence over the U.S. Department of Energy. A final decision could be made within three months.