

OLEAN TIMES HERALD

West Valley Demonstration Project may be up for reclassification



The Main Process Building is pictured at the West Valley Demonstration Project. U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz on Thursday agreed to study reclassification of the WVDP site as defense-related instead of strictly commercial.

By RICK MILLER, Olean Times Herald

January 20, 2017 - The U.S. Department of Energy on Thursday said it would reexamine the West Valley Demonstration Project site for possible reclassification as a defense site.

New York Sen. Charles Schumer, who was notified of the decision by Ernest Moniz, the outgoing secretary of Energy, said it was great news.

The Energy Department, which until now had classified the West Valley Demonstration Project as a commercial site, and New York state have spent more than \$2.9 billion on the site cleanup since 1980. New York pays 10 percent of the costs.

The U.S. Energy Department has received around \$60 million a year for the cleanup from Congress, and asked for \$63.6 million in 2017.

“The Department of Energy’s decision to reexamine the West Valley site kicks the door wide open to achieve reclassification, from commercial to defense site, which can deliver more federal resources that the community and state desperately needs to clean up this toxic site,” Schumer said in a statement to the Times Herald.

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“I will continue to work with my colleagues to push the DOE to make this reclassification a reality,” said Schumer, who is now Senate minority leader. He has visited the West Valley site several times.

The nation’s first commercial spent nuclear fuel reprocessing plant opened in 1966 and over the next six years reprocessed more than 700 tons of spent fuel to reclaim uranium and plutonium for reuse.

Nuclear Fuel Services shut the plant in 1972 for renovations to meet new environmental laws, after which it never reopened. The property went back to the state, which had promoted it.

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed the West Valley Demonstration Project Act, which the late Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Rep. Stan Lundine of Jamestown shepherded through Congress

A majority of the wastes came from federal facilities.

The West Valley Demonstration Project recently celebrated the removal of the last high-level vitrified waste from the main process building, which is slated for demolition. The last of 275 canisters containing glassified radioactive waste was recently moved to a concrete pad at the site.

Studies are underway on whether to remove state and federal low-level radioactive waste burial grounds adjacent to the WVDP site, as well as two underground steel tanks that once held radioactive liquid waste.

(Contact reporter Rick Miller at rmiller@oleantimesherald.com. Follow him on Twitter, @RMillerOTH)

West Valley Cleanup Contractor Receives 80 Percent of Possible Award Fee



CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley workers place a vertical storage cask liner on a construction pad.

WEST VALLEY, N.Y. – CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley (CHBWV), the cleanup contractor for the [West Valley Demonstration Project](#) (WVDP), earned \$360,000 of a possible \$450,694 award fee for the March to August 2016 performance period, according to a [recently released scorecard](#).

CHBWV received a “very good” rating for safety, health, and quality management; business and project management; and environmental and regulatory strategy.

“The team made remarkable progress in accomplishing the cleanup mission in 2016,” [EM Federal Project Director Bryan Bower](#) said.

Contractor award fee evaluations determine what will be paid based on performance against stated objectives in accordance with annual award fee plans. EM releases information relating to contractor fee payments to further transparency.

According to EM’s final performance evaluation for CHBWV:

With more than 2.1 million safe work hours, the contractor continued its commitment to safety excellence. CHBWV received [DOE’s Voluntary Protection Program Star of Excellence](#) for a second consecutive year, conducted excellent coordination with off-site emergency responders, implemented a first-rate radiological controls program and continued efforts to enhance the emergency management program.

CHBWV submitted quality and timely contract deliverables, and continued its commitment to improve cybersecurity. The contractor exceeded the DOE strategic sourcing goals for fiscal year 2016, saving money in procurements through e-sourcing, a procurement tool.

The contractor’s partnering efforts were “excellent,” its problem solving and work planning and control were “very good” and its risk management was “good.”

EM attributed the “very good” environmental and regulatory strategy rating to CHBWV’s regulatory work activities relative to project implementation, “good” coordination with DOE staff, and “very strong” liaison work with regulators and stakeholders.



EM noted that CHBWV met a majority of performance goals and objectives for the evaluation period.

Bower cited several CHBWV accomplishments over the past year, including:

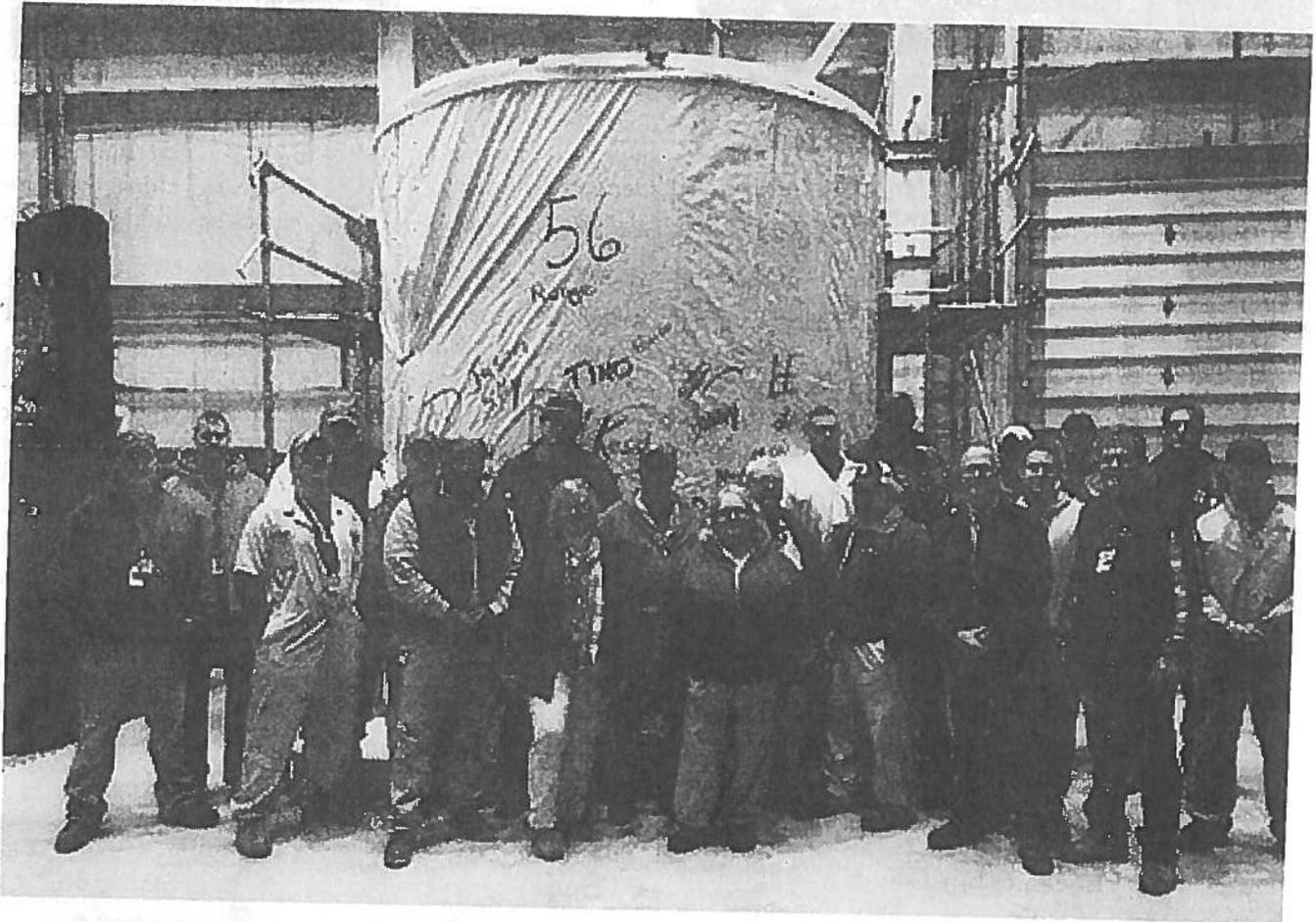
- Completing a high-level waste relocation project, including construction of the storage pad and haul road;
- Constructing 56 vertical concrete storage casks lined with carbon-steel containers, each for holding five canisters of vitrified high-level waste, welded closed and transported to an onsite interim storage pad;
- Loading and transport of three large, low-level waste packages mostly by rail to a permanent disposal site in Andrews, Texas;
- Deactivating 97 percent of the Vitrification Facility to prepare for demolition in 2017; and
- Deactivating 58 percent of the Main Plant Process Building to prepare for eventual demolition.

“I am very proud of their accomplishments and look forward to working together in 2017 to safely begin demolition of the Vitrification Facility,” Bower said.

Once the site of the first and only commercial nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in the U.S., WVDP is now an environmental cleanup and waste management project located about 35 miles south of Buffalo. The cleanup is conducted by EM in cooperation with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority.

View CHBWV’s scorecard [here](#).

West Valley Demonstration Project completes relocation



Photos

Workers at the West Valley Demonstration Project relocated 278 high level canisters.

The West Valley Demonstration Project has a history of firsts – the first and only commercial nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in the United States to suc-

cessfully vitrify high-level waste, liquid waste converted into a glass substance.

Two hundred and seventy-eight HLW vitrified canisters were produced and

placed into storage in the Main Plant Process Building.

Nov. 17 marked another first at West Valley, the completion of the HLW

Relocation and Storage Project, one year ahead of schedule.

The HLW canisters have been relocated from the main plant process building



The relocated canisters sit at the interim storage pad at the project site.

to an interim storage pad located at the project site.

Extensive planning, design, construction, building modifications and the purchase of special transport equipment required to transfer a Vertical Storage Cask – each holding five HLW canisters and weighing 87.5 tons – from inside the plant to the on-site storage pad has taken place since CH2M Hill BWXT West Valley, LLC was awarded the Phase I Decommissioning Contract in August 2011.

VSCs were fabricated on-site, including a 4-inch thick steel liner and 20 inches of steel-reinforced concrete, with a minimum design life of 50 years. The five-pack storage system design is based on spent nuclear fuel dry cask storage systems in use throughout the U.S. and around the world.

The interim storage configuration of the HLW canisters meets or exceeds all state and federal regulations, and supports future off-site shipment of the HLW canisters.

“The workforce remained focused on completing this important work one year

ahead of schedule. This major accomplishment was made possible because of the hard work and dedication of this crew,” said David Brown, project manager for CHBWV.

“We set a goal, worked together to solve problems as they arose, and remained focused. Only through their dedication to perform all work safely has this been possible.”

“I am honored to have been a part of this team, and part of another West Valley Demonstration Project ‘first,’” Brown said.

Bryan Bower, Department of Energy director at the West Valley Demonstration Project said he was amazed by the continued accomplishments at the site, and the dedicated employees.

“They have safely achieved another first for the DOE Complex. This is a huge step in moving forward with the deactivation activities of the Main Process Plant Building and Vitrification Facility as we prepare for demolition activities to begin in 2017.” Bower said.

Ashford board discusses broadband

Max Borsuk
Staff Reporter

The Ashford Town Board discussed the options and possibilities of broadband internet service in the town, during a meeting Dec. 14.

Councilman John Pfeffer presented information to the board about the current state of internet speeds in the area and some options the town has to try and fix the problem. Governor Andrew Cuomo

has recently started a state program to expand broadband into more areas, and is currently in round two of grant funding. While the town cannot apply for the grant, telecommunication companies are able to apply and the town is working with companies to see about expanding into the Ashford area.

Currently, part of the town is in the 942 telephone exchange, which has internet access, and part of the town is in a 592 Verizon area, which Verizon has a lock on. Pfeffer said the 592

Verizon area is underserved with many businesses having no internet access.

“Verizon has not applied for any of this money and it doesn’t sound like they are ever going to,” Pfeffer said. “The reason is because there is no money to get back ... so I have little faith Verizon is going to do anything about this.”

The town is working with Frontier Communications to see if they will apply for the broadband program grant. Supervisor Charles Davis said they are also working with Spectrum to

see if they can get a franchise in the area and bring service to those in the town, including the underserved Verizon areas. Pfeffer also added that they will be sending information and working with Senator Catharine Young and are looking into working with other municipalities who are in similar situations with their broadband services.

The board opened sealed bids for siding and window

replacement at the Ashford Town Highway Barn. Companies interested were to submit bids on two different options. Option one was the labor and materials to replace seven fixed-insulated casement vinyl windows and to remove three existing steel windows that cover new windows in the food pantry. Option two was for the labor and materials to reside the east end wall, west end wall and one south sidewall of the highway barn, along with other work.

One bid was received from Ray Hour Construction for \$6,700 on option one and \$9,975 on option two. After discussion, the board approved both of

the bids.

In other board news:

– New York State Energy Research and Development Agency West Valley Program Director Paul Bembia reported there are plans to replace three culvert pipes under Rock Springs Road in 2017.

– Davis thanked Jean Bond for spearheading the inaugural Ashford tree lighting event.

The town of Ashford board will close their books for 2016 on Dec. 27 at 7:30 p.m. The 2017 organizational meeting will be held on Jan. 11 at 7:30 p.m., followed by the regular board meeting, at the Ashford Community Center, located at 9377 Route 240.

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December 17, 2016

Moving of last cask marks milestone for West Valley Demonstration Project

By RICK MILLER, Olean Times Herald Dec 17, 2016



WEST VALLEY — The West Valley Demonstration Project marked another milestone last month with the moving of the last of 56 vertical storage casks — each carrying five 10-foot, steel canisters of radioactive glass — to an interim storage pad on the site. The project was completed Nov. 17, a year ahead of schedule.

“The workforce remained focused on completing this important work one year ahead of schedule,” said David Brown, project manager for CH2M Hill BWXT West Valley. This major accomplishment was made possible because of the hard work and dedication of this crew.”

The removing of canisters from storage in the main process building was started in November 2015 by contractor CH2M Hill BWXT West Valley for the U.S. Department of Energy. Twenty years ago the first canister was filled with a mixture of high-level radioactive liquid mixed with glass. Heated in a giant melter, the mixture turned to molten glass, which was then poured into the stainless steel canisters, where it solidified. The vitrification program ended in 2002 with 278 canisters containing most of the radioactive liquid from a 600,000-gallon

underground steel tank. They have been stored in the main process building awaiting eventual shipment to a national nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nev. After that project was canceled due to environmental concerns, there was no place to dispose of the canisters. Five of the canisters are contained in an overpack container that fits inside the steel-reinforced vertical storage casks weighing 87.5 tons. They have a 50-year design life and are currently sitting on a specially designed concrete pad on-site.

The interim storage configuration of the HLW canisters meets or exceeds all state and federal regulations and supports future off-site shipment, according to Department of Energy officials. Since the next step in the decontamination and decommissioning of the nation's only commercial spent nuclear fuel reprocessing plant is the demolition of the main process building, an alternate long-term storage plan was designed — open storage of concrete casks with five canisters each — on a pad nearby on the project site.

Decontamination continues inside the main process building — including high-level cells used during production when spent nuclear rods were chopped up and bathed in acid to recover plutonium. The room where the 278 radioactive canisters were stored must also be decontaminated. Miles of pipe are being removed from the building, as is asbestos, prior to demolition.

The demolition debris will be disposed of at a licensed off-site facility. Once it's removed, including the foundation, the next step is finding and removing the source of a radioactive strontium leak that dates back to the early 1970s or before. The strontium leak has been contained and treated behind a specially designed permeable treatment barrier dug deep into the ground.

"I continue to be amazed by the accomplishments of our team of dedicated employees," said Bryan Bower, project director. "They have safely achieved another first for the ... complex. This is a huge step in moving forward with the deactivation activities of the main process plant building and vitrification facility as we prepare for demolition activities to begin in 2017." Another milestone at the project was the shipment last month of the radioactive melter and vitrification tanks used to make the glass-filled canisters to a Department of Energy-licensed facility in Texas. Several project officials were on hand to witness the final disposal of the equipment, which weighed more than 500 tons, at Waste Control Specialists in Andrews, Texas.

The project began in 1980 after passage of the West Valley Demonstration Project Act of 1980 to clean up the site where Nuclear Fuel Services had operated a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant from 1966 to 1972 and continued to accept spent nuclear fuel rod assemblies from utilities until 1975.

The plant closed in 1976 due to the cost of meeting new environmental regulations. In addition to the demolition of the main process building and adjacent vitrification facility, other buildings are being demolished at the site as they are no longer needed. Studies will help determine the extent of the next phase of cleanup. The question is whether the two large underground tanks that once held high-level liquid radioactive waste will be removed, and whether the state and federal low-level radioactive dumps will be excavated and removed.

Moving of last cask marks milestone for West Valley Demonstration Project

By Rick Miller, County Reporter

Dec 16, 2016

WEST VALLEY —The West Valley Demonstration Project marked another milestone last month with the moving of the last of 56 vertical storage casks — each carrying five 10-foot, steel canisters of radioactive glass — to an interim storage pad on the site.

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They have been stored in the main process building awaiting eventual shipment to a national nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nev. After that project was canceled due to environmental concerns, there was no place to dispose of the canisters.

Five of the canisters are contained in an overpack container that fits inside the steel-reinforced vertical storage casks weighing 87.5 tons. They have a 50-year design life and are currently sitting on a specially designed concrete pad on-site.



Photo submitted

Steel-reinforced concrete casks — each carrying five 10-foot steel canisters filled with radioactive glass — sit on a concrete pad at the West Valley Demonstration Project. The last of 56 casks was moved to the pad last month to allow the demolition of the main process building where they were stored.



Photo Submitted – This U.S. Department of Energy photo shows the last vertical storage cask containing an overpack with five canisters of highly radioactive glass being hauled last month to temporary storage on a special concrete pad at the West Valley Demonstration Project in the town of Ashford. It was the last of 56 special steel-reinforced concrete casks to be moved from storage in the main process building, which is scheduled to be demolished.

The interim storage configuration of the HLW canisters meets or exceeds all state and federal regulations and supports future off-site shipment, according to Department of Energy officials.

Since the next step in the decontamination and decommissioning of the nation’s only commercial spent nuclear fuel reprocessing plant is the demolition of the main process building, an alternate long-term storage plan was designed — open storage of concrete casks with five canisters each — on a pad nearby on the project site.

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The demolition debris will be disposed of at a licensed off-site facility. Once it’s removed, including the foundation, the next step is finding and removing the source of a radioactive strontium leak that dates back to the early 1970s or before. The strontium leak has been contained and treated behind a specially designed permeable treatment barrier dug deep into the ground.

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Studies will help determine the extent of the next phase of cleanup. The question is whether the two large underground tanks that once held high-level liquid radioactive waste will be removed, and whether the state and federal low-level radioactive dumps will be excavated and removed.



West Valley Workforce Celebrates 2016 Cleanup Accomplishments



WVDP received DOE's Volunteer Protection Program Star Award for the second consecutive year. Left to right, Bryan Bower, WVDP Director; Stacy Charboneau, EM Associate Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Field Operations; Andy Rupp, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, Lodge 2401; Jeff Bradford, CH2M Hill BWXT West Valley, LLC President; Monica Regalbuto, EM Assistant Secretary; and Kash Grimes, EM Consolidated Business Center Deputy Director.

WEST VALLEY, N.Y. – EM Assistant Secretary [Monica Regalbuto](#) congratulated the [West Valley Demonstration Project](#) (WVDP) workforce for an extraordinarily successful 2016 at an employee celebration Dec. 12.

Regalbuto commended the employees for completing the site's high-level waste (HLW) relocation project, for successfully managing the [transport offsite of oversized containers](#) that once held equipment used to solidify radioactive waste, and for continued deactivation and decommissioning and waste management progress. Watch a video about WVDP's 2016 accomplishments [here](#).

"Your ability to achieve real results demonstrates that the federal investment in cleanup is money well-spent," Regalbuto told the workers at the site celebration, adding "It's an honor to join you in marking these major cleanup achievements."



EM Assistant Secretary Monica Regalbuto congratulates WVDP Federal Project Director Dan Sullivan for the successful completion of the site's high-level waste relocation project, and the waste shipment project that transported three oversized vitrification components to a disposal facility in Andrews, Texas.

Regalbuto further emphasized the work was performed safely. For the second consecutive year, West Valley received the DOE Voluntary Protection Program Star of Excellence Award in recognition of more than 2.3 million safe work hours.

WVDP Director Bryan Bower, New York State Energy and Research Development Authority West Valley Program Director Paul Bembia and CH2M Hill West Valley, LLC President and General Manager Jeff Bradford recognized the workforce on its accomplishments and encouraged all employees to remain focused on other cleanup milestones: legacy waste disposition, and the demolition of the Vitrification Facility, Main Process Plant Building and other ancillary facilities.

WVDP is the nation's first and only commercial nuclear fuel reprocessing plant to successfully vitrify HLW — convert liquid waste into a glass substance. The site added to its history of firsts in November when employees safely completed the task of transferring vitrified HLW canisters into storage casks and relocating them from the Main Plant Process Building to an interim storage pad. What's more, the job was completed a year ahead of schedule.

Just weeks later, workers transported a melter used in the vitrification process and two tank components — oversized packages weighing more than 500 tons combined — to Waste Control Specialists in Andrews, Texas for permanent disposal. Watch a video about the melter shipment [here](#).



OLEAN TIMES HERALD

County lawmakers to eye county-wide trail system plan

By RICK MILLER, Olean Times Herald

Nov 13, LITTLE VALLEY — Looking to capitalize on the success of existing trails, Cattaraugus County lawmakers are seeking a county-wide trail system plan.

Development and Agriculture Committee Chairman Howard VanRensselaer, R-Randolph, and Vice Chairman John Padlo, D-Olean, are sponsors of a resolution to hire a Rochester firm for \$50,000 to develop a county-wide trail system plan.

The resolution, which will be discussed by legislative committees on Wednesday, calls for Batton & Loguidice D.P.C., Rochester, to develop the study meant to integrate the preservation of the county's natural landscape, open opportunities for recreation seekers and capitalize on any outdoor-oriented tourism activity.

A \$28,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission and \$22,000 in budgeted county funds will pay for the study proposed by the Department of Economic Development, Planning and Tourism.

The contract with Barton & Loguidice begins Tuesday and expires Aug. 31.

The goal is to try to expand existing trails such as the Allegheny River Valley Trail in Olean and Allegany and the Pat McGee Trail running from Salamanca to Cattaraugus, help trails just starting up such as the Ellicottville and Great Valley Trail System and promote new trails.

Another resolution sponsored by VanRensselaer and Padlo authorized County Legislature Chairman Paula Stockman, R-South Dayton, to apply for funding from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation for the Cattaraugus County Land Bank Corporation.

The state Land Bank Community Revitalization Initiative Grant Program will provide seed money for the county's new land bank, which the state Empire Development Corp. approved the formation of in March.

The purpose of the new Cattaraugus County Land Bank is "to fight blight in our communities by repurposing distressed and vacant properties, restoring them to the tax rolls, and provide quality housing opportunities," according to the resolution.

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The county may have more opportunities in the near future to pull blighted or distressed properties from the county auction of properties seized for nonpayment of back taxes.

Properties with two years of unpaid taxes will be seized next year. The current period before a property is seized for nonpayment of property taxes is three years.

Backers of the two-year window to pay back taxes said the three-year period didn't end up helping those who fell behind in their taxes, and properties often ended up with another year of deferred maintenance.

Earlier this year, instead of auctioning off several blighted properties it seized in Olean, county lawmakers deeded the properties to the city. The Common Council will decide whether to demolish the properties or renovate and sell them so they can be placed back on the tax rolls, or properties sold to neighbors.

VanRensselaer and Padlo are sponsors of another resolution to apply for federal funding to develop inventories of brownfields in the county, prioritize the sites, conducting community involvement activities, site assessments and cleanup planning.

The program is federally funded. The county Department of Economic Development, Planning and Tourism is eligible to apply for up to 10 percent of the grant funding for related program development and implementation activities.

OTHER RESOLUTIONS on the agenda for committee review Wednesday would:

Extend contracts until Dec. 31, 2017, to design an expansion of camping facilities near the county-operated Onoville Marina, and for Phase III engineering services for Haskell Road, Portville, by Hunt Engineers, Architects & Land Surveyors, Horseheads;

Authorize \$54,950 for two Sheriff's Department vehicles at state bid from a health insurance account; and Extend a contract with Motorola Solutions Inc. for labor and materials for installing emergency radio communications equipment at the new tower on Indiana Avenue in Olean; and Authorize a contract with CH2M Hill BWXT West Valley, for up to \$175,865 for on site security law enforcement services at the **West Valley Demonstration Project**.

(Contact reporter Rick Miller at rmiller@oleantimesherald.com. Follow him on Twitter, @RMillerOTH)