

West Valley Officials hope Studies Dovetail into Phase 2 Decisions

By RICK MILLER, Olean Times Herald
January 30, 2017

ASHFORD HOLLOW — The West Valley Demonstration Project reached two important milestones in 2016 - the removal of 275 high-level radioactive waste canisters from the main process building, and the off-site shipment of legacy waste.

What's next?

Bryan Bower, U.S. Department of Energy director of the West Valley cleanup discussed last week the path to a Phase 2 decommissioning decision for the project and the Western New York Nuclear Service Center that surrounds it

He warned members of the West Valley Citizens Task Force that the plan was complicated. The key, he said, is a timeline that will dovetail current and future studies on the scope of work. Bower is confident it will work because both the federal and state governments are committed.

The West Valley Citizens Task Force, which includes some members of the longtime watchdog the Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Wastes, has regular meetings at which it questions site officials and the contractor, CH2M Hill BWXT West Valley LLC.

As more of the Phase 1 work is accomplished, preliminary work is already underway on the scope of the phase 2 cleanup, including long-term computer modeling of erosion at the site in the town of Ashford. It's part of a phased decision making process where more complicated future issues are studied while initial cleanup activities proceed.

It was the site of the nation's first commercial spent nuclear fuel reprocessing plant. It took depleted nuclear reactor rods from commercial and military sources to recover usable uranium and plutonium.

When Nuclear Fuel Services abandoned the site in 1976, it left a host of nuclear contamination that the state and federal governments have spent more than \$2 billion to clean up. A total cleanup could cost that again, and more.

The U.S. Department of Energy and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority assumed authority over the site under the West Valley Demonstration Project Act of 1980.

The goal in 2017 is to continue with the deactivation of the main process building — where the 275 high level radioactive waste canisters were stored before being moved to an outdoor concrete pad. Once the building is cleaned of radioactive material as well as asbestos and other hazardous material, it will be demolished — probably in 2019.

In the meantime the adjacent vitrification facility, minus the melter that turned a stew of radioactive material into glass contained in 10-foot-tall stainless steel containers, will be ready for removal later this year, according to Bower. The three main parts of the huge melter were removed from the building and taken to a licensed Texas facility for disposal.

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After the main process building is demolished, the below ground foundation will be removed along with the source of a strontium 90 leak dating to the early days of the plant. That leak has made its way into a nearby stream, but has since been intercepted by an underground permeable treatment barrier.

As this and other cleanup work to the tune of about \$60 million a year continues, the DOE and NYSERDA are funding studies about what to do with what's left at the site:

- The waste tank farm that held the liquid radioactive waste that was turned into glass - two 750,000 carbon steel underground tanks and two smaller tanks.
- A Nuclear Regulatory Commission-licensed low-level radioactive waste disposal area.
- A state-licensed low-level radioactive waste disposal area.
- A construction demolition debris landfill.

Under terms of the 2010 Final Environmental Impact Statement, decisions on these aspects of the Phase 2 decommissioning will be made by DOE and NYSERDA by 2020.

In response to a question from a member of the Citizens Task Force last week Bower said the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's License Termination Rule is the criteria which cleanup must achieve.

Another Phase 2 objective is removal from the site of the 56 concrete casks containing the 275 stainless steel canisters filled with radioactive glass. The shutdown eight years ago of the Yucca Mountain Project in Nevada left the waste without any repository.

The recent Department of Energy agreement to consider the reclassification of the high-level waste as defense-related could open the door for its removal to a Defense Department storage/disposal site. That is expected to occur sooner than the availability of a site licensed to store/dispose of commercial nuclear waste.

That reclassification, if it is approved by the DOE, will save New York State taxpayers millions in long-term storage fees, said Paul Bembia, NYSERDA site director at West Valley.

What's next at West Valley?

By Rick Miller – February 1, 2017



The Main Process Building is pictured at the West Valley Demonstration Project

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Ashford looking at possible WVDP waste reclassification

Max Borsuk
Staff Reporter

02-16-2017

The Ashford Town Board held their annual audit of the books for 20 16 during their Feb. 8 meeting. Susan Feldman made a presentation to board members about this year's audit and answered questions from the board.

From the general account, the revenues are \$25,000 less than 2015. Feldman said a big reason for this was a \$29,000 decrease in the amount taken in through the justice fines and funds. But other funds including building permits and dog control money increased steadily. Expenditures were approximately \$9,000 more than 2015, which Feldman said are usual increases in areas such as payroll, supplies and membership dues.

She reported that revenues from the highway account were much less than last year because in 2015, the town received about \$259,000 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Expenses were up \$40,000 because the town maxed out the equipment account, which they did not do in 2015. But because of the FEMA money, Feldman said the town finished 20 16 with a larger fund balance and are in good shape going into 2017.

New York State Energy Research and Development Agency West Valley Program Director Paul Bembia reported the possibility of West Valley radioactive waste being reclassified as defense waste. NYSERDA recently briefed members of the New York State Congressional Delegation about the issue and 14 members wrote a letter to the Secretary of Energy supporting NYSERDA's view. The NYS Congressional Delegation received a response letter last month that stated the Department of Energy recognized the merit of the issue and looks forward to opening up discussions on the matter with the state.

Bembia said that if these wastes as reclassified as defense wastes, it could open the path of early removal of high level waste from the site, create a disposal pathway for the West Valley transuranic waste – which currently has no disposal path and remove the need for taxpayers to bear the burden of paying the large high level waste disposal fee.

In other board news:

Board member Jean Bond asked those in attendance to take a survey hosted by Cattaraugus County seeking input on recreational trails in the country. The survey can be found at www.cattco.org and possibly help the county get grant money.

The board approved the specs for a backhoe to put them out for bid. The bids will be opened at the March 9 meeting at 8 p.m.

The next Ashford Town Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 8, at 7:30 p.m. at the Ashford Community Center, 9377 Route 240 in West Valley.

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Another Voice: Nuclear power is not the answer to our energy needs

- ***By Another Voice***

- *Published Thu, Mar 2, 2017*

By Lynda Schneekloth

There are some of us still alive today who were here when the first atomic bomb was exploded on July 16, 1945, near Socorro, N.M.

That test was code-named Trinity. Within one month, on Aug., 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Another was dropped Aug. 9 on Nagasaki. At least 200,000 people were killed instantly. After the war, we developed procedures to harness the power of nuclear material to make steam and electricity.

In 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower proposed “Atoms for Peace.” Those of us in our 70s, 80s and 90s well remember “duck and cover,” the drill to hide under our school desks to protect us if an atomic bomb exploded nearby.

We also remember “The Atom is your Friend,” with lovely animated characters assuring us that nuclear power was an enormous contribution to civilization. Or was it?

I won't go into the dangers of nuclear war right now, except to say that the Doomsday Clock, which gives a scientific approximation of the probability of global catastrophe from nuclear war, is at 2.5 minutes to midnight, not this close since the 1950s.

But let's look at nuclear power, since it is being promoted as the solution to climate change. Those of us who live in Western New York have intimate relationships with nuclear material because the Manhattan Project, which conducted research on the atomic bomb, had facilities here.

Many here died from unprotected exposure while working on that project and, in fact, some land in our region remains contaminated with nuclear material. Since the 1970s,

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nuclear waste from energy and military production has been stored at the **West Valley Demonstration Project**, a nuclear waste facility 30 miles south of Buffalo.

This site is still being “studied” to figure out what to do, and in the meantime, it is leaking.

After more than 70 years of exploding bombs and splitting atoms, we do not know what to do with the deadly waste, much of which will persist on the Earth for 10,000 years.

Here in Western New York we have more nuclear problems than **West Valley** and illegally disposed of waste. We are a route for shipping liquid, highly radioactive waste from Canada to South Carolina. Further, we live in a state where the governor proposes to offer a \$7.6 billion subsidy to a private company – Exelon – so it can continue running aging nuclear power plants in our state, generating more dangerous waste. This in spite of excellent science that argues that nuclear power worsens climate change. Remember, there is no safe level of exposure to nuclear radiation.

No one asked us if we wanted to split the atom; no one has said he was sorry. In my lifetime, we have spread lethal material across the globe. Perhaps in the lifetime of my grandchildren we should find, contain and secure the deadly nuclear waste and pledge to not make anymore.

Lynda Schneekloth is a member of the Nuclear Committee of the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter.

Ashford Starts Process to Become Clean. Energy Community

Max Borsuk
Staff Reporter

March 16, 2017 edition

The Ashford Town Board completed some of the preliminary steps in the process of getting grant money from the **New York State Energy Research and Development Authority** at their meeting March 8.

NYSERDA Clean Energy Community Coordinator John Mayr made a presentation to the board about what the town would need to do in order to be certified as a New York State Clean Energy Community and receive a match-free \$50,000 grant to be used toward any energy efficiency project. To be certified, the town would have to complete four out of 10 high impact action items that the state is hoping all towns and villages will work toward. "

This is something that is easy to do, easily assessable and something I can help the town get through in a rapid fashion," Mayr said.

Mayr, Councilman Richard Bernstein and Code Enforcement Officer Larry Feldman discussed which action item would be the quickest and best route for the town to become certified.

The first was to benchmark municipally owned buildings over 1,000 square feet. The town would create a report through NYSERDA about energy usage within those buildings and post a link to the report on the town web site. The second item that town was going to pursue is the adoption of the New York State Unified Solar Permit. The action is meant to streamline solar permitting in the town, while also providing protection to first responders. The permit requires an external kill and drain for the solar panel to be put on a specific corner of the house to save the time of searching and provide protection against electrocution.

"One of the problems is that when first responders get to a house fire, the first thing they want to do is vent the ceiling and they are getting electrocuted by solar panels," Mayr said. "When a response unit comes up to a house fire and see solar on your roof, they know there is a kill switch right here and it has to be right here...if you have no regulations, there is nothing to say you have to have any of this."

The final action items the board is looking to start are energy code enforcement training and the installation of electric vehicle charging stations in town. Following Mayr's presentation, the board adopted the needed resolutions and approved the purchase of the two charging stations to start the process of making Ashford a clean energy community.

In other board news: Supervisor Charles Davis announced that the town received a grant that will be used to restore the West Valley Hotel. - The board approved a bid of \$10,794 from MRC Disposal for the annual trash and refuse removal. Residents are to have trash out by April 30 and pickup will start on May 1. Tire pickup will be on May 6.

Karl Kalbacher of the Ferguson Group was asked to make a presentation to the board about their ideas and plans to help put the town in better position to get funding. The Ferguson Group made a proposal to the town for their services and the board will make a decision on the proposal at the next meeting.

The next Ashford Town Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 19 at 7:30 p.m. at the Ashford Community Center, located at 9377 Route 240, in West Valley.