

To: West Valley Citizen Task Force
From: Tom Attridge
Subject: Summary of October 23, 200, Future Site Use Work Group Meeting
Date: October 30, 2001

Next Meeting

The next Future Site Use Work Group meeting is scheduled as follows:

Date: Thursday, November 8, 2001
Time: 7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
Location: Ashford Office Complex
9030 Route 219, West Valley, NY

If you have questions or comments regarding the upcoming meeting or about this summary, please contact Tom Attridge at (716) 942-2453.

CTF Attendees

Attending were: Bill King, Mark Mitskovski, Nevella McNeil, Paul Piciulo, Pete Scherer, Tim Siepel, Ray Vaughan, Alice Williams, and Eric Wohlers.

Meeting Summary

Tom Attridge reviewed the agenda and briefly described the contents of several written documents handed out at the meeting.

Overview of NYSERDA Programs

Hal Brodie and Bob Callender from NYSERDA-Albany presented information on the various energy-related programs that may be relevant to the Work Group. Mr. Brodie, Deputy Counsel, described NYSERDA's history, make up, and mission. Mr. Callender, Director for Economic Development, described the kinds of projects that NYSERDA gets involved with and how they do business. Bob also briefly described the genesis and current status of the Saratoga Technology & Energy Park (STEP).

Work Group members asked the two presenters a number of questions about the application of NYSERDA programs and the available resources regarding the future use of the West Valley Site. One member described his proposal to develop a volunteer organization to do research and development at the site on energy and waste management projects using space provided by the West Valley Demonstration Project. He asked whether NYSERDA would be able to support this proposal by offering space or resources. Bob Callender replied that NYSERDA's objectives are to help businesses implement energy efficiencies (to make them more competitive), to fund promising research and development projects (through partnerships with other businesses and institutions), and to promote economic development in the energy and environmental business sector. Bob Callender asked whether the CTF had collectively decided that the volunteer organization proposal was something the group wanted to pursue. It did not appear that the CTF has not made a decision. Another CTF member added that part of the Work Group's mission is to find out what resources may be available in the future.

Bob Callender asked the Work Group how far along they were in developing partnerships with other institutions, organizations and businesses regarding future use of the site. A CTF member replied that they were still at the concept level and believed it to be too early in the process to begin approaching other groups, adding that NYSERDA was already a partner in this endeavor. Hal Brodie responded by saying that, at this point, NYSERDA doesn't know what makes economic sense for the future use of the

site, but whatever is proposed will need to make economic sense. There will need to be a sound business plan. He said that it was unrealistic to expect NYSERDA to provide a lump sum of money for future use of the site given the constraints of NYSERDA's statutory authorities and limitations. Bob added that, in his experience, it was beneficial to bring in potential partners early in the process to get an idea of their thinking on the matter.

A CTF member reiterated that Erie County is willing to provide funds to conduct a study on the potential options for the site that may make economic sense, and then asked if NYSERDA was willing to provide funds. The NYSERDA and DOE representatives added that there was probably some flexibility to help fund this study as a CTF expense. Another CTF member asked if NYSERDA could help get this area designated as an "Empire Zone," which would make it more eligible to receive funds. Bob Callender said that such designation is tough, but added that the organizations that were instrumental in getting STEP off the ground are lobbying to have their area designated as such a zone. Bob then went on to explain in more detail about the genesis of STEP.

Mr. Callender said that he thought that the ultimate establishment of STEP resulted from three important conditions. First, the Saratoga Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) has been very aggressive in forging partnerships, promoting STEP, and recruiting businesses. Bob said that staff from SEDC frequently travel throughout the U.S. to meet with prospective businesses. Second, there is a shortage of land in the area for business. Third, SUNY-Albany has become a strong partner, seeing the potential for its existing business incubator tenants to eventually move to STEP.

Hal Brodie discussed NYSERDA's management of the Malta site, stating that NYSERDA had tried to develop an energy R&D park there in the 1970s, but was unsuccessful. He added that in the early 1980s, NYSERDA almost sold the property, but groundwater contamination was found and it eventually became a Superfund site. It wasn't until recently that the timing was right for making STEP a reality. A CTF member asked what direct economic support does NYSERDA provide to STEP. Bob Callender explained that NYSERDA owns the property and the existing building at the site. For the past 10 years (until August of 2000), NYSERDA had rented the building to tenants. The rent had covered the cost of maintaining the site. NYSERDA's goal is to make the park self-sufficient and not to make a profit.

A CTF member asked how the property in Saratoga is taxed. Bob Callender answered that because NYSERDA still owns the property, it is tax exempt. However, if a private company comes in and buys a piece of the property, it would be taxed. The Work Group member stated that, because of the tax exempt status, the Saratoga community has not gotten anything of benefit from the site. Hal said that the community has benefitted and will benefit from the jobs at the Malta site, and those jobs provide secondary benefits for area businesses.

A CTF member stated that NYSERDA owns the site at West Valley and must have some long-term vision for future use. Hal Brodie acknowledged that NYSERDA does have a current mission at the site (maintains land and manages radioactive waste), but doesn't have a statutory mission with respect to future uses. He added that NYSERDA is interested in the community's thoughts about future uses of the site to help inform future decisions. He said that if the State legislature mandated a particular future use for the site, then NYSERDA would have the necessary authority to carry it out. The NYSERDA representative of the CTF stated that the Work Group should be trying to identify what future use activity fits the site, considering the skilled work force and economics of the surrounding area.

A Work Group member stated that, from his experience, the model for the success of an idea is to develop a synergy, pursue a path, and follow that path with perseverance to the end. He said as an example there is a crying need for incubator space in this region. Creating an incubator can be successful if the model is followed. Another member stated that the incubator idea was very similar to the proposal he had put forth to develop a volunteer research and development center on energy and waste management issues at the site. A Work Group member asked if there were any statutory limitations on the volunteer idea. The

DOE representative said that there may be some things the site could do.

Update on Center for Waste Management

Ron Palmer briefly shared with the Work Group recent developments on his idea to establish a Center for Waste Management at the site. He said that he had an opportunity to meet with Dr. Mary Gresham, Dean of Graduate School of Education and Vice President for Public Service and Urban Affairs at the University of Buffalo, to share his idea and explore UB's interest in becoming a partner in this idea. Ron reported that Ms. Gresham seemed interested and offered to talk about the idea with the UB Provost.

Ron then asked the Work Group members to join him in attending a meeting with UB officials (Dr. Gresham, John Sheffer) to discuss the idea in more detail. Three Work Group members (Ray Vaughan, Mark Mitskovski, and Bill King) indicated that they would be interested in participating in that meeting. Ron said that he would coordinate with UB and the interested Work Group members to try to schedule the meeting soon.

Bob Callender asked Ron what type of reaction was he looking to get from UB. Ron said that he was trying to build a support base of various groups (with organizations like UB) and write a letter (signed by all) that would go to Congress recommending a future use. He said that he felt that there needs to be another West Valley Demonstration Project Act passed by Congress to more clearly define future responsibilities, including future use of the site. Several Work Group members expressed general agreement, but also felt that the Work Group and ultimately the full CTF needed to keep their options open. Ron agreed.

A CTF member noted that there is a relatively new organization in the area that is doing work that seems relevant to the Work Group's deliberations. The group, called the New Uses Group, was spun off from the Buffalo-Niagara Partnership and is led by Mr. Skip Hauth. He said that the non-profit group is focused on the Bio-Ag industry and that the Work Group may want to reach out to the organization for more information. The CTF member also noted that a recent business study showed that businesses moving into this area were concerned about three things that the Western New York region provides: power (electric), personnel, and stability.

Observer Comments

None.

Next Steps

The Work Group will hold its next meeting on November 8, 2001. Dick Church, Mayor of Miamisburg, OH, will meet with the group to discuss his city's involvement in future use development around the DOE's Mound facility located there.

Action Items:

Ron Palmer will be arranging a meeting with University of Buffalo officials and several CTF Future Site Use Work Group members to discuss future use of the West Valley site.