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May 30, 2024

Ashford Board hears ECA Grant Public Outreach presentation

WEST VALLEY – The Ashford Town Board, at its May 8 meeting, heard an outreach presentation from Ray Vaughn of the **West Valley Citizen Task Force** outlining progress and information on the nuclear waste cleanup at the **Western New York Nuclear Service Center**.

In 2023, the town of Ashford was awarded \$50,000 through the Energy Communities Alliance Local Government Education and Outreach Funding grant. The funding would retain qualified experts who can analyze and explain the plans, proposals, models, assumptions, data and alternatives involved in the Probabilistic Performance Assessment that is being developed by the DOE as part of the Supplemental EIS for the **West Valley Demonstration Project**. This effort will be led by the **West Valley Citizens Task Force** with frequent reporting to the ECA and Town of Ashford.

Vaughn presented the draft of the outreach portion of the grant to the board. Looking at the history and progress of the decommissioning, Vaughn said they are currently at the end of phase one, where some buildings will remain, along with disposal areas and the vault drying system.

In phase two, the permanent disposal site for transuranic waste will be determined, along with high level waste canister shipment. Decisions in phase two will also determine closure decisions for the waste tank farm, NRC-licensed disposal area and state licensed disposal area, construction and demolition debris landfill, non-source area of groundwater plume and contaminated soil and sediment.

Agencies will issue a Draft Supplemental EIS for phase two, which will most likely be in late 2025 with a six-month comment period. Vaughn also said phase two could cost another \$1-10 billion and take 20-100 years.

Vaughn also talked about the possible risks to downstream communities, erosion in the streams that could carry to Cattaraugus Creek to Lake Erie and beyond. Vaughn noted the most radioactive areas at risk are the below ground contaminated tanks and the two unlined disposal areas. Current opportunities that could help with these issues include informing agencies of the concerns before a decision is made, passing a proposed resolution on community character based on New York Home Rule powers and advocating with Congress for HLW and TRU waste disposal sites.

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If people wanted to get involved, Vaughn said the best ways to do that are to attend quarterly public meetings, attend **West Valley Citizen Task Force** meetings as an observer, subscribe to the email list to receive summaries and presentations and check on the agency and cleanup contractor websites.

In other board news:

– The board approved the wage for summer recreation aides at \$15 per hour.

– Highway Superintendent Keith Butcher gave a report on updates within the highway department. Trash pickup seems to be going well so far, ditching on Fox Valley Road has been completed, with the next road to work on being Connoisarauley Road, and he is working on getting approval to put two double lines on the roads for safety.

The next town of Ashford board meeting will be Wednesday, June 12 at 6:30 p.m.

Max Borsuk