

► Cattaraugus County

Legislators ask about West Valley Project

By Rick Miller
Olean Times Herald

LITTLE VALLEY — Cattaraugus County lawmakers got a chance Wednesday to question the president of the company involved in the Phase 1 clean up at the West Valley Demonstration Project site.

Ryan Todd, president of CHBWV, said his company was contracted by DOE to demolish about 60 buildings at the town of Ashford site where the nation's first and last commercial nuclear reprocessing facility operated from 1966 to 1972.

Mr. Todd said the \$330 million contract runs through 2017. The last building to come down will be the Main Process Building, where the 275 stainless steel canisters containing highly radioactive glass have been stored for the past five years.

► **Related story**

There might be a place for West Valley Demonstration Project's highly radioactive waste in New Mexico ... page A-7



Rick Miller/Clean Times Herald
Ryan Todd, president of CHBWV, the company charged with the continuing cleanup at the West Valley Demonstration Project, speaks to Cattaraugus County lawmakers in Little Valley Wednesday. His company has a \$330 million contract with the U.S. Department of Energy to demolish as many as 60 buildings at the site in the town of Ashford.

Please see **Legislators**, page A-5

► **LEGISLATORS**

Continued from page A-1

Those canisters, he said, will be moved to a concrete pad to be built on the site and will be stored in commercial concrete containers until they can be moved off-site to either a national repository or an interim site.

County Legislator Linda Edstrom, R-Olean, asked where nuclear waste will be shipped. Mr. Todd replied waste will be shipped by rail and truck to licensed sites in Tennessee and Nevada.

Legislator James Ellis, R-East Otto, asked about the reports of radioactive trucks and other large debris buried in the low-level state and NRC landfills at the West Valley site.

Mr. Todd replied that Phase 1 work will not involve the state and federal burial sites, now covered in heavy plastic to keep water from infiltrating the waste that was buried there as far back as the 1960s.

The Department of Energy decided to put off any decision on whether to remove the landfills and high level underground waste tanks for up to 10 years. They could be part of the Phase 2 cleanup which will include contaminated soil.

Legislator John Padlo, D-Olean, asked what the cleanup timeline was.

Mr. Todd said they plan to ship low-level radioactive waste "as expeditiously as possible — as soon as it is packaged." He said the waste shipments will run through 2017. "Some waste is ready to ship today," he added. "We expect to do so soon."

Asked by Legislator Charles Hebbon, D-West Valley, the reason for the large number of layoffs after the new company

took over in August, Mr. Todd replied that "the DOE funding level did not support the current workforce."

If there is another federal stimulus program, which the West Valley cleanup project took advantage of two years ago, would mean more work for local residents Mr. Hebbon asked?

"We would be (shovel) ready to do more work," Mr. Todd

said. Until then, he added, "we are limited to funding of about \$60 million a year."

(Contact reporter Rick Miller at rmiller@oleantimesherald.com)

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The Cattaraugus County Department of Social Services today announced that the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) will begin accepting applications for regular benefits on Wednesday, November 16, for the 2011-12 heating season. Applications for emergency benefits will begin being accepted January 3, 2012.

The maximum regular benefit an eligible household can receive is \$500 for homes that heat with oil, kerosene or propane, and \$300 for all others. A family of four can have a household income of up to \$49,519 annually and still qualify for a HEAP benefit.

Last winter, more than 1.4 million households in New York State, including 9,000 households in Cattaraugus County, received HEAP benefits.

To apply for HEAP, contact your local department of social services or office for the aging. For more information on HEAP, visit otda.ny.gov/programs/heap. Anyone can check if they may be eligible for HEAP, and an array of other programs, by answering a few, simple questions online at myBenefits.ny.gov.

NEWS RELEASE

Treatment Wall at Western New York Nuclear Site Receives 2011 Ground Water Remediation Award

Wall designed by AMEC Geomatrix and UB uses volcanic mineral to filter radioactive strontium from groundwater

Release Date: November 1, 2011

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- AMEC Geomatrix of Amherst, N.Y., has received the National Ground Water Association's 2011 Ground Water Remediation Award for an innovative nuclear waste cleanup project that the company completed with University at Buffalo researchers.

The collaboration involved the construction of a massive, permeable treatment wall (PTW) made from a volcanic mineral (a natural zeolite) that removes radioactive strontium-90 from groundwater at the West Valley Demonstration Project 30 miles south of Buffalo. The wall is expected to be sustainable for at least 20 years, and the treatment method could be utilized at other radioactive sites.

The team that designed the wall was led by UB geology alumnus Rick Frappa, principal hydrogeologist and vice president with AMEC Geomatrix, an engineering and consulting firm with offices nationwide. Scott Warner in AMEC's Oakland, Calif., office supported the evaluation of alternatives and PTW design.

Frappa's partners on the project included West Valley technical staff, along with Alan Rabideau, UB professor of civil, structural and environmental engineering, and Shannon Seneca, UB engineering PhD candidate.

Seneca is a student in Rabideau's ERIE (Ecosystem Restoration through Interdisciplinary Exchange) program, a collection of academic programs and research projects that advance the science, engineering and policy of ecosystem restoration in the Great Lakes region. Funding and support for ERIE comes, in part, from the National Science Foundation, corporate sponsors and local donors.

The Ground Water Remediation Award recognizes outstanding science, engineering and/or innovation in the area of remediating groundwater.

"The PTW at West Valley is the first-in-the-world reactive barrier installed using a continuous trenching machine to treat in-situ strontium-90," Frappa said. "The PTW represents the culmination of years of study and planning by the project team which



UB professor Alan Rabideau worked on the West Valley groundwater remediation project with UB alumnus Rick Frappa of AMEX Geomatrix and UB PhD candidate Shannon Seneca.

[Download JPEG](#)

includes geologists and engineers at AMEC and West Valley and researchers at the University at Buffalo."

The 3-foot-wide treatment wall at West Valley stretches for 860 feet and extends as much as 30 feet below the ground. The installation contains over 2,000 metric tons of zeolite that captures strontium-90 through a process known as "sorption."

Through his research, UB's Rabideau first demonstrated in 1999 that zeolite, composed primarily of the volcanic mineral clinoptilolite, would be suitable for groundwater remediation at West Valley. Later, he worked with Seneca to test the zeolite sorbent and to use supercomputers to predict how long a zeolite treatment wall would remain effective.

"From an environmental standpoint, the zeolite barrier should effectively protect the Great Lakes watershed from West Valley groundwater, without consuming substantial energy for operation and maintenance," Rabideau said.

The 2011 Ground Water Remediation Award will be presented at the 2011 National Ground Water Association Ground Water Expo and Annual Meeting on Nov. 30 in Las Vegas.

The University at Buffalo is a premier research-intensive public university, a flagship institution in the State University of New York system and its largest and most comprehensive campus. UB's more than 28,000 students pursue their academic interests through more than 300 undergraduate, graduate and professional degree programs. Founded in 1846, the University at Buffalo is a member of the Association of American Universities.



Aerial view of the permeable treatment wall (PTW).

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Guest column:

No need for discussion on Yucca Mountain



[Sam Morris](#)

Atop Yucca Mountain, 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas, signs warn of possible radiation near a test well.

Judy Treichel

Sunday, Nov. 20, 2011 | 2 a.m.

Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Nev., says that he would be willing to discuss bringing high-level nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain to establish a reprocessing facility. Rep. Joe Heck, R-Nev., says that [he too is open to exploring](#) a reprocessing facility but not the importation of waste. How does that work? Recently Amodei said, [“If I’m wrong, somebody can shout me down.”](#)

Congressman, you are wrong. Do you really think that when reprocessing was completed at a facility at Yucca Mountain, disposal of the waste would occur somewhere else?

For nearly 30 years Nevada’s congressional delegation and residents have been solidly opposed to bringing high-level nuclear waste to our state. Polls have consistently shown an overwhelming majority of us are unwilling to accept a national nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain.

A national group that keeps track of environmental issues lists more than a thousand groups, representing every state in the U.S., that have expressed opposition to Yucca Mountain. When the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects released a report and maps showing likely rail and highway transport routes for waste coming to Yucca Mountain from the commercial nuclear power plants in the U.S., a press conference was held here to explain the report. Nationwide, 125 organizations also held press events in cities across the country on the same day showing how waste would travel through their cities and rural areas. Many places where barge transport was planned were also very upset about the waste threatening those waterways.

As the studies continued for years at Yucca Mountain it became clear that the site was not as safe as had been predicted by the Department of Energy (DOE). Early on the effort shifted from one of objective investigation to see if the site had the attributes needed to geologically isolate the waste to one of compensation for discovered deficiencies. When site characterization began, the belief was that the container for the waste was merely a vessel that made handling of the fuel rods as easy as possible. When it was acknowledged that water traveled through the mountain and would contact the waste packages, more engineering fixes were dreamed up and modified repeatedly in an attempt to show compliance with radiation release standards. Ultimately it was necessary to have an 11-mile buffer zone in the direction that the groundwater moved so enough dilution could be assumed to occur to meet the radiation safety standard. Try selling that idea to any other community selected for a dump.

With the commercial nuclear industry nipping at their heels demanding results, the DOE declared the site “suitable” in 2002 and the activity moved from studying Yucca Mountain to an attempt to get it licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). A license application was submitted in 2008, but the Nevada and others submitted nearly 300 contentions (arguments challenging the license application) which would need to be adjudicated. That number is unprecedented and the time to resolve that many issues would have been extensive.

Nevada’s well-known opposition continued and finally in 2010, with Nevada Sen. Harry Reid holding the top position in the U.S. Senate, and the election of President Barack Obama, the Yucca Mountain project was stopped and a blue ribbon commission was named to consider alternative policy approaches for managing or disposing of the nation’s nuclear waste. They will not consider any specific sites for waste storage or disposal, and Yucca Mountain is not on the table.

Over the years there have been individuals or small groups in Nevada who supported the building of a repository at Yucca Mountain or advocated the development of nuclear power here. They were not effective in gaining public support or establishing a foothold in the State Legislature or Congressional delegation offices. The defeat of a Yucca Mountain dump has been the clear priority of all attorneys general, governors and congressional delegation members, regardless of party. It has been recognized that any movement away from this publicly endorsed position, such as the consideration of pipe dream “benefits” or agreement to any part of the national nuclear waste program would very likely be seen as implied consent to a Yucca Mountain dump — until now.

Amodei and Heck, reprocessing requires a lot of water. The spent nuclear fuel is dissolved in an acid solution. So any water allocated for a facility at Yucca Mountain would decrease the amount flowing to the farms and dairy in Amargosa Valley, and the separation process would turn the fresh water into highly radioactive acid. Plutonium and uranium are then extracted and what is left over is a very difficult to contain, liquid high-level radioactive waste that must be solidified for disposal. Reprocessing does not eliminate the need for a repository/disposal.

As reported by the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research: “Reprocessing is probably the dirtiest operation in the nuclear fuel cycle. In South Carolina alone, reprocessing is responsible for creating the most radioactive waste in the country — over 30 million gallons of high-level liquid waste containing chemicals used

in the separation process combined with a long list of radioactive elements created inside the reactors.” Again, Nevadans concerned with contamination of groundwater would have far more reason to fear.

In its draft report, the Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future stated it saw no advantage to reprocessing anytime soon. A recently released Government Accountability Office report states that technologies for nuclear fuel recycling are not feasible. And Rep. Ed Markey, D-Mass., states: “These technologies are unwanted by industry, expensive and prone to proliferation risks.” Additionally a report from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology said it could not advocate reprocessing in the U.S. at this time. Considering all of these opinions, from a wide range of experts, why Nevada have any interest in a facility for this expensive and dirty operation?

The most costly and difficult cleanup operations now being undertaken in our country are those at Hanford in Washington, the Savannah River Plant in South Carolina and the former reprocessing plant at West Valley, NY. Each of those facilities reprocessed spent nuclear fuel and produced the liquid high-level nuclear waste that soon became, and remains a threat to nearby ground and surface water. According to IEER, “It will cost U.S. taxpayers tens of billions of dollars to contain the waste from past reprocessing. There are no plans to ever completely clean it up. No one yet knows how to do so safely, even if there was money to try.” Why would we ever consider adding Nevada to that list?

The people and elected officials of Nevada have worked long and hard to defeat the government’s efforts to force a nuclear waste repository on us at Yucca Mountain. It has been a David-and-Goliath battle but we are now very close to a win. The DOE has told the NRC that they want to withdraw their license application with prejudice — meaning that it would never be reconsidered in the future. Both the DOE and NRC have closed out activities as funding ceased. The entrance tunnel at Yucca Mountain is fenced off and all operations have stopped. The money to carry on has not been appropriated by Congress thanks to the efforts of our senators, and finally the commercial nuclear industry is becoming less enthused about a Nevada repository.

Nevada now is working to end our dreadful recession. We are seeing ways to attract new industries with good jobs that do not sacrifice our environment. New innovation and developing business opportunities surely do not need to come with radiation danger. Yucca Mountain never promised many jobs beyond the large number of miners who would have been hired for tunnel boring and then moved on, in the typical boom-and-bust cycle. Ironically, right now the tunnel at Yucca Mountain is ruled by a large barn owl — the messenger of death, according to Western Shoshone spiritual teachings. I say we let Mother Nature have the last word.

Judy Treichel is the executive director of the Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force.



Guest essay: Tom Reed's busy first year was a good start

By Rep. Tom Reed

Messenger Post

Posted Dec 04, 2011 @ 05:30 AM

Canandaigua, N.Y. —

It is hard to believe that a year has passed since I was sworn in to represent New York's 29th Congressional District. It is a true honor and privilege to represent our great area and I will do my best to make you proud.

After taking the oath in November 2010, I learned very quickly that Washington does not operate in a functional manner. Nothing moves except in the eleventh hour of a crisis and difficult decisions are delayed until the last possible minute.

Constant operation in crisis mode is a bad way to make policy. Unfortunately, that has continued into this year. That frustration aside, there have been many highlights in our first year.

Our team has completed more than 1,600 constituent cases. While the publicity is about legislation, the larger portion of the job is going to bat for constituents.

We also try to represent you with accessibility. We have conducted 42 town hall meetings, as well as dozens of teletown halls and public events throughout the district. Having these conversations and truly listening to you is critical to doing the job in Washington.

We have introduced seven bills in the House. Three dealt with improving job opportunities for all and others dealt with making the necessary infrastructure investments. These include the Roofing Efficiency Jobs Act, Grape Region Accelerated Production and Efficiency Act, and the BUILD Bridges Act. Other bills I introduced include the Low Income Heating Improvement (LIHEAP) Act and the Help Hospice Act.

I have sponsored multiple successful amendments in the appropriations process that stopped more than \$173 million in wasteful spending, including defunding of the Tijuana, Mexico, sewer project. I worked across the aisle to successfully sponsor amendments dealing with the West Valley nuclear site and the threat to our lumber industry from the Emerald Ash Borer.

One of our greatest accomplishments is intangible. I ran for Congress to put an end to out-of-control borrowing and spending. (Our national debt recently rose above \$15 trillion!). Since January, when so many other new members came to Washington, the conversation has changed from increasing spending to freezing spending to now cutting spending. This is a tremendous step forward.

Our freshman class has also begun to change the culture of Washington. We now require a time period to actually read a bill before we vote on it and any member, Democrat or Republican, can submit amendments for a vote in the House. Most importantly, we require new legislation to be paid for. This is a good start, but it is not enough.

I have a long list for 2012 topped by a continued focus on job creation. During our first year, we visited dozens of businesses of all sizes and conducted two job creation forums to learn what the obstacles were to hiring more workers here in the 29th District.

Improving the climate for job creation is a core goal. Removing excessive regulation, completing comprehensive tax reform and implementing an all-inclusive domestic energy plan to bring energy costs down are the primary areas we focus on.

An additional priority is making progress on our nation's debt. I'd like to see at least \$4 trillion in deficit reduction next year.

The time to lead is now. Rather than engage in the politics of division, we must unite our country and find solutions to our problems through an open and honest dialogue. Hardworking taxpayers deserve a solution.

Rep. Tom Reed's 29th Congressional District includes all of Ontario County except Geneva and portions of southern Monroe County.

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Buffalo News, Friday, December 16, 2011

West Valley Project gets budget increase

CONGRESS

Updated: December 16, 2011, 6:34 AM

WASHINGTON—The West Valley Demonstration Project has won a budget increase in the tightest of times, thanks to the work of Reps. Tom Reed and Brian Higgins.

The nuclear cleanup site would receive \$235.7 million in fiscal 2012 under a pending appropriations bill, the two lawmakers announced Thursday. That's up from \$223.5 million in 2011 and from \$213.1 million in the original draft of the 2012 spending bill.

West Valley got more money because Reed and Higgins won passage of an amendment calling for the funding to be increased as a public safety precaution.

“Cleanup and proper maintenance of spent fuel rods is a public safety obligation of the government,” said Reed, R-Corning. “I am glad to see some success in this vital effort.”

Higgins, D-Buffalo, agreed, saying: “Continuing the aggressive cleanup of West Valley is the right thing to do environmentally and economically.”

The increased funding for West Valley comes from spending reductions elsewhere in the Department of Energy budget for 2012.

Clarification from DOE and NYSERDA 12/19/2011:

The \$235.7 million mentioned in the article is the FFY 2012 appropriation for the entire Non-Defense Environmental Management cleanup account. The West Valley Demonstration Project is funded from this account, but does not receive the entire amount. This \$235.7 million appropriation is \$16.579 million higher than what was requested in the President's budget. It is not yet clear how much of this additional money will come to West Valley.

Buffalo News, December 17, 2011

\$1 trillion spending bill passes in House

Agreement prevents government shutdown

Updated: December 17, 2011, 11:07 AM

WASHINGTON -- The House on Friday passed a \$1 trillion spending bill that will mean much less money for home heating assistance in Western New York, but left some locally important programs surprisingly unscathed.

The last chapter in a legislative battle started when President Obama announced his fiscal 2012 budget proposal in February, the deal -- which is also expected to pass the Senate -- funds 10 major government agencies through the end of next September.

Agreement on the measure prevents a partial government shutdown that would have started at midnight today if Congress hadn't acted.

And it leaves Congress with just a few major pieces of work -- most notably an extension of a payroll tax cut. Lawmakers reached a deal on that measure late Friday that will extend the tax cut for two months and the Senate is expected to vote on it today.

Republican senators leaving a closed-door meeting put the price tag of the two-month package at between \$30 billion and \$40 billion and said the cost would be covered by raising fees on new mortgages backed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

While many domestic spending programs suffered only minor cuts in the spending deal, lawmakers took an ax to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which provided payments of up to \$700 to 100,000 Erie County families last winter.

New York State will receive \$375.7 million in funding for the program this winter, which is about 24 percent less than last year's allocation, according to the office of Sen. Kirsten E. Gillibrand, D-N.Y.

State officials saw the cutback coming and have restructured the program to account for it, said Anthony Farmer of the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

This year's maximum benefit under the program will be \$500, down from \$700 last year.

In addition, the state delayed opening the application period for the main part of the heating assistance program and is also delaying, until Jan. 3, acceptance of applications for the part of the program for people needing emergency aid.

Buffalo News, 12-17-2011 (Page 2)

The state also plans to stop taking applications for the heating aid program in mid-March rather than the spring.

Given the large number of Erie County residents who receive the heating aid, the budget cuts left local officials worried.

"We've very concerned that the program is being funded this year at a lesser level," said Carol Dankert, Erie County commissioner of social services. "A lot of people rely on it."

The cuts in the LIHEAP program could have been worse, however, if not for the actions of Reps. Brian Higgins, D-Buffalo, and Tom Reed, R-Corning. Teaming up with their Western New York colleagues, they successfully fought off a proposed formula change that would have left New York with only \$343.4 million in funding -- a 31 percent cut.

Still, Higgins blamed tea party Republicans for forcing deep cuts in the program.

"I think there's a mentality here that doesn't really take into account the consequences of actions," Higgins said.

The bill cuts discretionary spending for the second year in a row, but does so in a way that leaves some programs surprisingly intact.

For example, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will receive \$300 million for its efforts in 2012, the same as in 2011.

Rep. Louise M. Slaughter, D-Fairport, led an effort to maintain the funding in wake of a record-setting algae bloom in Lake Erie and increasing concern that the Asian carp could enter the Great Lakes.

"While I have serious reservations about how this bill came to the House floor, I'm pleased that today's funding bill will include investments I requested to adequately fund the cleanup and protection of the Great Lakes," said Slaughter, who voted for the spending bill.

The bill also increased funding for domestic nuclear cleanup programs by \$12.2 million. "This is good news for facilities such as the West Valley Demonstration Project," Reed said.

The overall spending measure passed by a bipartisan vote of 296 to 121.

Higgins and Rep. Kathleen C. Hochul, D-Amherst, said they reluctantly voted for the bill even though it included cuts they oppose because the alternative -- a government shutdown -- was a worse option.

"I supported it because we have to continue to fund our government," Hochul said.

Republican leaders defended the spending bill, saying its cuts fit into parameters set in the summertime deal to extend the federal debt ceiling.

"This year House Republicans ensured that Washington finally started cutting spending," said Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va.

But Reed opposed the measure, saying it "simply didn't cut enough spending."

After the House action, the measure moved onto the Senate, where it was likely to be approved in a vote today.

Still, the Obama administration said it would not shut down government agencies at midnight even if the Senate failed to act. And the House gave the Senate two other options: one-day and one-week spending measures designed to give the Senate more time to work on the full-year spending bill.

The bill funds the Department of Defense, cutting money for ongoing military operations by \$2.8 billion in wake of the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

It also includes cuts for many environmental programs and for President Obama's signature "Race to the Top" education initiative. And the bill leaves one last ongoing drama playing out in the back rooms of Capitol Hill: negotiations over extending a Social Security payroll tax cut Congress approved last year.

Most significantly on Friday, the White House backed away from Obama's threat to veto the payroll tax measure if it includes a provision accelerating construction of the controversial XL oil pipeline linking Canada and Texas.

Obama has delayed his decision on the pipeline until after the 2012 presidential election. But under the Republican version of the payroll tax bill passed by the House, the pipeline would go forward in 60 days unless Obama decided it was in the national interest to stop it.

"Here's an opportunity for the president to say he's not going to let a few radical environmentalists stand in the way of a project that would create thousands of jobs and make America more secure at the same time," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

Congress last year cut the payroll tax from 6.2 percent to 4.2 percent in hopes of stimulating the economy by increasing everyone's paycheck.

Many lawmakers in both parties want to extend that tax cut, saying the fragile economy could not handle the cut in take-home income workers would see if the tax is allowed to rise. Lawmakers reached a deal late Friday to extend that tax cut for two months. The extended payroll tax cut is expected to be included in legislation that would extend unemployment

benefits. Obama wants unemployment benefits to last 99 weeks, while the House passed a bill capping them at 79. The two sides were expected to compromise between those two figures.

jzremski@buffnews.com

Springville Journal, Thursday, December 22, 2011

WVDP scheduled to receive additional federal funding

Thursday December 22, 2011 | By: Press Release

New York state congressmen Tom Reed and Brian Higgins have obtained a budget increase for the West Valley Demonstration Project.

During the fiscal 2012 year, the project is scheduled to receive \$235.7 million under a pending appropriations bill. The nuclear cleanup site received \$223.5 million in 2011 and was originally scheduled to receive \$213.1 million next year. The New York representatives worked to get that number increased by \$22.6 million, even in the country's current economic downturn. The monies were obtained from reducing spending in other parts of the United States Department of Energy's 2012 budget.

Reed and Higgins got an amendment passed which called for this funding to be increased in what they called a public safety precaution. Reed, a Republican, said, "Cleanup and proper maintenance of spent fuel rods is a public safety obligation of the government. I am glad to see some success in this vital effort."

Democrat Higgins said that the continued cleanup of the West Valley Demonstration Project is "the right thing to do environmentally and economically."

Clarification from DOE and NYSERDA 12/19/2011:

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Springville Journal, Thursday, December 29, 2011

Fox Valley Bridge project bid on its way in Ashford

Thursday December 29, 2011 | By: Lizz Schumer

Ashford Town Supervisor Chris Gerwitz said he wants to get the Fox Valley bridge project finished “as soon as possible, whatever it takes,” following the Ashford Town Board meeting on Dec. 14.

Two separate project designs will be sent out to bid in January, including a new design devised after Roy Pedersen from E & M Engineers and Surveyors, PC presented the specifications to the Ashford Board that the project must meet in order to comply with Federal Emergency Management Agency regulations.

The board will submit that design, which Gerwitz called “just about finished,” along with the original design that it submitted to FEMA last year, which would have to be re-approved if that project came in lower after the bids are received.

“Roy Pedersen met with Tim Engels at the Fox Valley bridge project and is going to propose to replace the pipe with pretty much the same thing, but a little bit wider,” Gerwitz explained, of the new design. “We want to get comments from Mark Burr from the county and then we’re going to send the bid out in January.”

Gerwitz confirmed that the bids will be received in January and opened at the Feb. 8 meeting so the project can begin “as soon as the weather breaks. Time will tell, but we really want to get it done by next year,” he added.

Gerwitz, along with Board Member Charlie Davis, met with Cynthia Anderson, chair of the Asset Revitalization Committee, regarding the needs of the town of Ashford and the **West Valley Demonstration Project** clean-up efforts.

“We’re still looking at details of that project; there are still some gray areas,” said Gerwitz. “She’s very interested in helping us out if funding becomes available.”

He added that the board wants to create committees to brainstorm ideas of how the site can be used in the future, including green energy initiatives.

“I haven’t got too many big ideas right at the moment, but once we get the money available, we’d like to maybe work with UB to do some site development and develop some green energy. We want to get a good rapport going with Cynthia, and she’s very receptive,” he said.

A concerned citizen sent a letter to the board requesting information on a grain dryer that has been constructed on Route 219. According to the letter, the citizen was concerned about the permanence of the dryer, and that its owners might “leave a real mess behind when they vacate.”

Board Member Beverley Hess, whose son Dwight owns the dryer, asked that the Right to Farm

Law be adopted by the town of Ashford. Dwight Hess also attended the meeting to answer questions about his dryer and assured the board that he intends to hire locally for the project, boosting the area's economy.

"The dryer will run for about three weeks after harvest to dry corn," said Gerwitz. "There is going to be some noise, but it's not a forever thing, or a 24-hour thing. In this case, the law didn't really apply, and we think this operation is going to be a good thing in the long run."

The board tabled the proposal to install solar panels on the roof of the community center. Incentives may become available from the New York State Department of Energy for municipalities to implement green energy initiatives, so the board decided to hold off on installing the panels until that time.

"I'm trying to save money for you guys here," said Gerwitz. "I think it's in our best interest to wait."

In other board news:

- Engels contacted the Cattaraugus County Department of Public Works to express his concern over the safety of motorists traveling Peters and Edies roads. He suggested additional signage, which the board agreed to pursue, adding that more drastic measures may be undertaken if necessary.
- Board Member John Pfeffer inquired as to the status of the E911 emergency response house numbers that need to be installed. There are approximately 120 numbers left to distribute. The board members have emphasized the need to move forward on the project in order to ensure proper response for emergency personnel.

The year-end meeting, at which the books will be closed for the year, will take place on Dec. 28. An organizational meeting was set for Jan. 4 and the regular meeting will take place on Jan. 11. The state-mandated meeting to audit the books is set for Jan. 18. All of the above will take place at the community center at 7:30 p.m.

Letters to the Editor:

In early November, the employees of CH2M Hill - B&W West Valley, LLC and partners, coordinated with Lettie Chilson, were able to provide our local food pantries with 92,218 pounds of food. That's an unbelievable, staggering, 46-plus tons!

Food and contributions collected at the West Valley site were delivered by CHBWV volunteers. Bill Schaab, president of American DND, a disabled veteran-owned business, donated trucks and trailers to collect and deliver the food. Food pantries in towns of Springville, Delevan, Cattaraugus, Franklinville, Little Valley and West Valley received over 700 cases of food and 310 turkeys.

This year's food drive exceeded last year's by 15 percent, with far less employees and, in these tough economic times, a remarkable achievement.

Thank you to all participants for your generous donations, plus special recognition to the Springville Cub Scouts, who worked tirelessly on behalf of the food drive.



With economic shortfalls that face many folks in our regions, the local food pantries have become lifesavers for those families in need. As the list grows, additional volunteers are needed to also assist in the local pantries.

Many thanks to Ryan Dodd, CHBWV president and general manager, and Lynette Bennett, director of public affairs, for their dedication to the success of this

drive and distributing the food locally where it is needed.

Grover Riefler
Springville

Updated: December 24, 2011, 8:37 PM

WASHINGTON -- A year and seven weeks after winning election to the House and a year and five weeks after nearly dying from a blood clot, Rep. Tom Reed of Corning found himself standing Thursday in a place where few freshman lawmakers ever stand: just behind the House speaker's right shoulder.



Reed earns his moment in spotlight
From key role in payroll tax cut to a seat on Ways and Means panel, Republican lawmaker from Corning finds himself in the limelight

The speaker, Ohio Republican John S. Boehner, had chosen Reed as one of eight House negotiators on the then-stalemated bill to extend a payroll tax cut. And suddenly Reed, not long removed from being a small-town mayor, found himself defending the House GOP's opposition to a two-month tax cut extension before a national audience on C-SPAN.

Only time will tell whether that's a good or a bad thing.

Just hours after the press conference where Reed dismissed the Senate's two-month bill as a "politically convenient" way of getting Congress and the president home for the holidays, Boehner agreed to that very same bill.

And Tom Reed's moment in the spotlight became something to explain.

"My initial reaction is that the speaker did what had to be done, even though it was a demonstration of politics winning out over policy," Reed said on Friday.

Astonishing as the House Republican flip-flop was, Reed's presence in Boehner's office through much of that fateful day might be even more astonishing.

Freshman lawmakers usually are relegated to the back bench, and low-rung committees like Small Business.

Not Reed. Like his neighbor to the north, Rep. Kathleen C. Hochul, D-Amherst, he's become something of a star in the House freshman class.

He spent a year now wandering the halls of Congress wearing a broad-faced grin and dishing out jokes and kind words to those he meets. Meanwhile, he's always perfectly ready to rail at length on the House floor or to reporters about the dangers of the debt and business as usual and just about everything else that worries the tea party.

The barrel-shaped, jowl-jawed lawmaker is, by all accounts, among the nicest, hardest working tea partiers you'll ever meet.

And that may just be the reason why he's gone places where few first-year lawmakers ever go.

Most notably, Reed now serves on the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee, which, in his words, "touches everything."

It was a long-term goal that Reed achieved quickly for many reasons, including the Craigslist catastrophe that drove Rep. Chris Lee, R-Amherst, out of the House and off the committee, leaving the panel without a Republican from New York. Reed lost out on filling Lee's committee seat, but when another seat opened in June, Reed got it.

If you ask Reed how he ended up on the panel, he'll tell you: "I walked the speaker's dog four times a week."

But if you ask Rep. Dave Camp, the Michigan Republican who heads Ways and Means, you'll hear something entirely different.

Buffalo News, Saturday, December 24, 2011

"As you talk to Tom, you realize he is very policy-oriented, that there's a lot of substance there," Camp said. "He really stood out from the start. He has impressed a lot of people already. He has a good work ethic, and he's always well-informed."

Reed's rise to prominence in the freshman class happened very differently than that of Hochul, who found herself in the national spotlight by winning an upset special election to replace Lee in a strongly Republican district.

In contrast, Reed's rise started behind the scenes, where only his colleagues could see.

In March, Reed started collecting signatures among his freshman colleagues on a letter expressing support for free trade deals with Colombia, Panama and South Korea.

Strong candidate

A lawyer by training and real estate developer on the side, Reed is a business-first conservative with a deeply held belief in free trade -- but at the time, Camp noted, it wasn't clear how many of Reed's freshman peers felt the same way.

"He signed up 60-plus members on that letter," Camp said. "That really broke the logjam," and showed the Republican leadership that it had the support it needed to get those trade deals passed.

That episode so impressed the House leadership that he quickly became a strong candidate for Ways and Means, Camp said.

Reed had taken the initiative unexpectedly -- just as he had two years earlier, when he decided to run for Congress.

After President Obama took office in January 2009, he pushed a \$787 billion economic stimulus bill through Congress and started talking about a massive overhaul of the health care system.

And Reed, conservative to the core, was appalled.

"I'm sitting there and I'm saying: this is not the America I want my family raised in," Reed recalled. "There was this tremendous expansion of the role of government, and no one was talking about how you were going to pay for it. So I got concerned."

This concern led him to a tea party rally in Corning in early spring 2009, where he found a huge crowd of like-minded souls -- and the inspiration to run for Congress.

"Seeing that kind of engagement, I saw that I wasn't alone," Reed said. "And I said: if they're willing to stand, I'm willing to stand."

Reed was also willing to drive, day after day and night after night, to the far corners of New York's sprawling 29th district, which stretches from Cattaraugus County eastward to Elmira and then north to the Rochester suburbs.

And that's what Reed did, early and often starting in the summer of 2009, for what he thought would be a November 2010 showdown against then-Rep. Eric Massa, D-Corning.

Of course, that notion quickly evaporated when Massa resigned amid a staffer-groping scandal.

Suddenly Reed was the favorite in the fall election in the GOP-leaning 29th. Better-known Republicans such as Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks and former Rep. Randy Kuhl of Hammondsport looked at the race but took a pass. They all cited their own reasons, but Reed's friends and colleagues noted that he already had the support of the district's county GOP chairmen.

"Basically, everybody liked Tom," said Bill Hatch, the former Steuben County GOP chairman.

Buffalo News, Saturday, December 24, 2011

Reed easily dispatched the Democratic candidate, Afghanistan War veteran Matthew Zeller, and traveled to Washington to take Massa's long-vacant seat in mid-November 2010.

And then the unimaginable happened.

A day before he was set to be sworn in to Congress, Reed woke up in a Washington hotel, unable to breathe. The mysterious lump on his leg, which he had ignored, turned out to be a blood clot. And that night it broke free and settled in both his lungs.

Thanks to blood thinners and the work of doctors, Reed survived.

He did so with lessons learned. He's down about 20 pounds, and while he admits he "still has a long way to go," he's walking the 12 blocks to and from work and trying to eat better.

What's more, he said the health scare "reminded me how precious living is. It can be taken away in a heartbeat. Having had that experience, it makes all the work we do here more important, because we don't have an unlimited time."

Arriving in Congress, Reed seemed a man on a mission.

He announced plans to form a Marcellus Shale Coalition of like-minded lawmakers who favor gas drilling in New York and Pennsylvania.

He talked tea-party tough, introducing -- and getting passed -- amendments that defunded projects he didn't like, such as one that would have helped Tijuana, Mexico, improve its sewer system.

He held dozens of town hall meetings across his district at a time when many of his New York colleagues held none.

And unlike many of his GOP freshman classmates, Reed also started reaching across the aisle.

He stood with his Democratic colleagues as they fought for aviation safety improvements in the wake of the crash of Continental Connection Flight 3407. And with Rep. Brian Higgins, D-[Buffalo](#), he won changes to spending bills that will mean more money for the [West Valley Demonstration Project](#) and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

"He's very affable, very approachable," said Higgins. "As a colleague, that's the best you can hope for."

But on matters touching the debt, taxes and business, Reed tends to be unbending. And that's what he was this week, after Boehner appointed him to the conference committee that will eventually negotiate a year-long payroll tax cut.

Reed objected to the Senate's two-month stopgap because, to business people who plan and budget by the quarter, it made no sense. So he wasn't going to stand for it.

"I don't care about the political implications," he told National Journal in the middle of the week. "I don't care about my re-election effort. I came here to do what's right for America."

Standing so strong with his House GOP colleagues left Reed in an awkward position when Boehner agreed to the two-month extension, but Reed said he understood why that happened.

Not long after the news conference where Republicans decried the two-month extension, Boehner saw a statement from Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader in the Senate, saying the House should pass the two-month bill. Then Boehner told a small group of Republicans -- Reed included -- that the president had delivered the same message in a phone call.

House Republicans at that point had no choice but to agree to the two-month plan, or bear the blame for a 2 percent payroll tax increase for 160 million Americans on Jan. 1.

Buffalo News, Saturday, December 24, 2011

"You had to do what you had to do because of politics," Reed conceded.

Offending both sides

Not surprisingly, though, Reed's shift on the payroll tax issue meant that he alienated one group of voters early in the week and another at the end.

"Let's get off square one and get the bill passed today," a woman from Corning said on Reed's Facebook page on Monday. "Extend the tax credit and the unemployment insurance and get back to running the country. We elected you to do a job. Please do it."

But by Friday it was the tea partiers who were incensed.

"You were on the negotiation committee. What the hell happened?" a Reed constituent wrote on Friday. "Why did you guys cave in and back down like cowards yet AGAIN to the Democrats? ... We elected you to stop them from doing these things!!"

Reed conceded that "in the short term, I'm going to take a hit" because of how the payroll tax debate played out. "But I may gain a lot of respect over the long term."

That could very well be true, said James Twombly, an associate professor of political science at Elmira College.

"However it comes out, if he's a Republican player and a bridge from the leadership to the other 80 [tea party freshmen], then he's influential, and that doesn't hurt a bit," he said. Twombly, a Democrat, said the conventional wisdom in the 29th district is that Reed has exceeded expectations in his first year in Congress.

And Reed, too, said he's pleased with how it's gone. He's particularly proud of his constituent services, which, he said, have helped 1,600 people in the district deal with problems with the federal government and other concerns.

But Reed is the first to concede that the payroll-tax saga ended in a hard lesson.

"It is true that as a freshman, I'm still learning the politics of the town," he said.

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Buffalo News, January 19, 2012

Speaker recalls social justice work

By Dale Anderson
News Staff Reporter

Agnes Williams' work on Native American issues and social justice as a member of the Seneca Nation goes back to the early 1970s, around the time she earned degrees in social work and Native American studies from Syracuse University and the University at Buffalo.

So before she talked about that to a small group Wednesday in the social hall at Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo, she began in the traditional Seneca way.

It was a series of greetings and thanksgivings — “It’s a way we learn how to be grateful,” she said — and she led off by apologizing for not doing it in the traditional manner, which would be in the Seneca language and by a man.

“I was raised Episcopalian,” she explained. “My parents didn’t speak the language.”

First she asked the group to “acknowledge all the people here and all the people that got you here,” adding that “we ask that all of the people continue on as originally instructed so that life continues . . .”

The greetings went on to include the Earth, the plants and animals, the four winds, “our grandmother Moon,” “our grandfather, the Sun,” and finally “greetings and thanksgiving to the Great Spirit, the Great Mystery, our Creator, the high power.”

Williams then talked of her involvement with the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the 1970s, which ultimately led to the United Nations, where she and others lobbied on behalf of the U. N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Introduced in 2007 after a 30- year campaign, the declaration was approved by 143 countries. The U. S. was the last nation to drop its opposition, in 2010.

Williams said she is looking for religious groups to adopt the declaration. Church members recommended she talk with their Social Justice Committee.

Williams noted that her work on women’s issues began with AIM when she and other women sought greater leadership roles and ran into resistance from men. She spoke of various women’s initiatives, including her work with the Indigenous Women’s Network. She told of a conference in Texas where indigenous Mexican women broke out weeping during a traditional ceremony, explaining that it was because they didn’t even know which tribe they belonged to.

Women’s issues and indigenous people’s issues, Williams said, have led to her latest concern, the environment.

Noting that she is a resident of the Cattaraugus Reservation near Irving, Williams devoted the last part of her talk to her concerns about the nuclear wastes at West Valley.

“If they started today, it would take them 60 years to clean up the place,” she said. “We’re trying to get people to look at West Valley. This is something we could do something about.”

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