

Open-air demolition of WVDP Main Plant discussed at Town Hall meeting

By RICK MILLER
Olean Times Herald

WEST VALLEY — Thirty-five West Valley area residents and others attended a town hall meeting Wednesday on the proposed open-air demolition of the Main Plant Process Building at the [West Valley Demonstration Project](#).

Two meetings for up to 25 residents each were scheduled by the U.S. Department of Energy, the contractor, CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley, LLC and the [New York State Energy Research and Development Authority](#). Attendance at the West Valley Hose Co. Firemen's Hall was limited due to federal COVID-19 protocols.

Ashford Supervisor John Pfeffer, a member of the West Valley Citizens Task Force, said he understands the science behind the planned demolition and supports it. "I'm quite pleased they (town hall) did it," Pfeffer said on Friday. "The intent was to have residents to have an opportunity to hear the details of the plan."

Pfeffer said he's asked DOE officials for a similar meeting in the future for anyone who was unable to attend the first two meetings.

"They'd like to start demolition in December, but we don't know what the impact of the Delta variant of COVID-19 will have on the project," Pfeffer said. "I've pretty much had my questions answered. I'm pretty confident their plan is well thought out. I really wanted people to be able to ask their own questions."

The Department of Energy, Pfeffer said, has learned lessons from clean-up projects at other nuclear facilities including the Hanford, Washington nuclear complex.

"One of the lessons they learned from Hanford was to demolish and pack immediately and not let the debris lie out in a pile," Pfeffer said. "It's like taking apart a large building made out of Lego blocks — brick by brick. You cut out a piece, pack it up and repeat. There will be no piles of radioactive debris laying around."

Pfeffer encouraged West Valley residents to continue to ask questions.

Joseph Pillittere, a spokesman for CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley, LLC, said another face-to-face town hall meeting would be held on Sept. 29. Details on attendance will be issued soon.

What about the December target date to begin demolition?

Pillittere said no hard date has been set and the beginning of demolition could be any time from December to early next year.

"We've done demolition in winter weather before," Pillittere said. The winter weather is not seen as an insurmountable problem.

There was a question about spraying the area being demolished with water to keep down dust in freezing winter weather. The water will be collected, tested, treated and stored or transferred to an approved disposal site.

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John Rendall, president and general manager of CH2M HILL, made a presentation to residents attending the two town hall sessions on Wednesday. There were also 14 subject matter experts at seven stations. A video on the site's environmental monitoring was also shown.

Rendall said, "Worker and community safety is our top priority" and that "demolition of the MPPB is an important step in reducing overall environmental risks from historic site activities and the footprint of **WVDP**."

He said, "Workers have have been working for 20 years to remove materials and contamination from the MPPB. More than 7 miles of contaminated piping and 50 tons of contaminated equipment and debris have been removed from the building, reducing its radiological contamination by 98%."

Deactivation and decontamination efforts are expected to be completed in the next few months.

Rendall said continuous air monitors are placed close to demolition site, fixed air samplers are placed near demolition area and ambient air samplers surround the site, about one mile from demolition area.

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