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RECOMMENDATION: The construction of a multi-purpose facility for DOE and community needs

BACKGROUND: The three main gaseous diffusion process buildings (X-326, X-330 and X-333), plus about 50 small associated structures at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant, are scheduled for decontamination and decommissioning (D&D). All of these buildings plus many other site facilities have a rich history of the atomic age. It is important that this history be preserved and be used for education of future generations.

Residents of the four-county region (Pike, Jackson, Ross and Scioto) are often invited to attend forums of various sorts related to Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant (PORTS) activities. The lack of availability of existing space for these forums dictates that the venues are inconsistent and range from the plant site to The Ohio State University Endeavor Center to local high schools, regional hotels, and other facilities. Availability and schedule conflicts with the existing facilities and DOE public outreach needs create a level of frustration for community members wishing to participate in the DOE decision-making process.

It is certain the range of site-related decisions DOE will make in close partnership with the community will often be difficult and require open dialogue. Adequate meeting space is essential, but unfortunately lacking in southern Ohio, especially in Pike County where the DOE site is located. For example, meeting space available at the OSU Endeavor Center – one of the most utilized facilities – is limited to approximately 100.

Additionally, the community needs access to a range of public documents available through the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Environmental Information Center (EIC). Most citizens utilize the services of the EIC on a limited basis and accessibility of the documents is critical as DOE builds partnerships with the community on the complicated decisions associated with D&D. The EIC has been relocated four times in its 15-year history. A permanent location for review of public documents is provided to other DOE host communities, and taking DOE's necessary long-term presence at the site into consideration, the same should hold true for the citizens in southern Ohio.

With the arrival of Fluor-B&W Portsmouth, LLC (FBP) as the D&D contractor, the need for DOE and contractor work space is moving from an urgency to a crisis. In fact, this logistical difficulty has the potential to actually affect D&D sequencing and the schedule. The need for DOE to provide adequate work space for PORTS workers is an immediate one.

The SSAB would also like to point out that a recent DOE educational outreach activity at the site, a science fair that brought more than 800 students from 19 schools districts, had a portion of the event canceled because of inclement weather. The cancellation would have been avoided if DOE had a facility that could have accommodated the participants.

RECOMMENDATION: The DOE EM Portsmouth SSAB recommends that DOE create a dedicated location to fit the needs of DOE and the community that will foster the partnership necessary to make the critical D&D decisions and serve as a central location for information dissemination. The potential exists for DOE to coordinate with the Community Reuse Organization (CRO), the Southern Ohio Diversification Initiative, or other private entities for such a multi-purpose facility – either on-site or off-site - that will simultaneously resolve logistical issues for DOE and the community. The construction of such a facility would provide much-needed work space, a central location for public meetings related to plant developments, a permanent home for the EIC, and a location for the preservation and display of plant artifacts and other historical elements.

We further recommend that construction of a multi-purpose facility be considered part of a broad mitigation strategy pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA).

The SSAB is attempting to be mindful of DOE needs and community needs. SSAB members believe this recommendation would be a wise use of taxpayer dollars that would serve multiple interests and rectify adverse conditions that currently exist.