The Ashford Town Board welcomed representatives from CH2M Hill and the West Valley Demonstration Project, to give an update about decommissioning work done on that site.

On Feb. 13, 01-14 Building Demolition Project Manager Kirk Winterholler, along with several other representatives, briefed the Ashford Town Board on demolition done to the site’s building 01-14.

This multi-story metal, block and concrete structure was originally built to house a nuclear fuel reprocessing activities. Four foaming and grouting pumps and hazardous material equipment is locked down, that acid recovery equipment was never used and has since been removed.

This building also contained a vitrification off-gas treatment system. “Several complex radioactive systems ran through this building,” Winterholler said. “It wasn’t just like tearing down your house.”

The facility was comprised of three process cells and included various support areas. Winterholler said that the individuals’ working on the building had to be “very careful” when handling the equipment that needed to be removed, prior to demolition. That included reheaters; catalytic reactors, heating, ventilation and air conditioning blowers; filter housing; a waste dispensing vessel and systems.

The actual demolition began, just before the Christmas holiday, on the building and its support facilities. “We started from the outside in and then from the top down,” Winterholler said. Step one, which included the complete demolition of the control room, truck bay, conference room, motor control center rooms, clean drum room, ammonia pipe gallery and utility pipe bridge, is completed. Step two, which includes the removal of interior concrete block walls, is in progress.

“All contaminated material will be dealt with separately,” Winterholler said, adding that he hopes this building will be down on the ground by May 9.

To prepare building 01-14 for demolition, workers removed highly-contaminated piping, pumps and hazardous materials. Foaming and grouting was done on the waste dispensing vessel, reheaters and offgas piping, for removal. Fixture was applied to cells, sumps and contaminated piping internals.

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The WVDP representatives said that air monitoring, contamination surveys and radiological and environmental mitigation have been done, every step of the way, which is “important to people living around the site,” according to Winterholler. Air monitoring is done on an hourly basis, during the building’s demolition.

Additional steps, including the removal of ventilation system filters, the isolation of air systems, the removal of hazardous materials throughout the building, the plugging and isolation of fire lines, the removal of asbestos-containing materials, the removal of concrete pipe chase sections and other site preparations, were completed. “This was a pilot project to show that this type of demolition can be done,” Winterholler said. “This is the first step of our demo.”

Frequent surveys of the process head and bucket of debris are taken, throughout each day. Dust suppression is completed, while demolition is ongoing. All debris and equipment is locked down, at the end of the day.

Step three of this building’s decommissioning will include the demolition of the remainder of the facility. Waste will be shipped to Energy Solutions, via Alaron, Pa. According to Winterholler, a majority of its special equipment will be contained at the Nevada National Security Site. Waste water will be kept in an on-site interceptor, via holding tanks in the utility room.

The end state for this portion of the WVDP will be an earthen cover that slopes, north to south.

“It’s nice to see progress,” said Ashford Board Member John Pfeffer, thanking the WVDP representatives for their presentation.

“This is the most exciting thing at the plant right now,” Winterholler said. “It’s great to be a part of.”

CH2M HILL B&amp;W West Valley Manager Dan Coyne said that the team went through extensive training, to prepare for the demolition of building 01-14. “We treat everything like it’s contaminated, so we can train the workers,” he said.

In response to a question posed by Ashford Board Member Charlie Davis, Coyne said that progress has been steady. “There were some changes. Where I want to be is to have this building on the ground. But we are making strides. We have the right leadership team and now it’s a matter of keeping people busy and hoping the money is coming in.”

Pfeffer pointed out that the labor being done on building 01-14 was the “most activity” people living close to the site have seen, “in a long time.”

Coyne said that the “next big visual” community members can expect to see is the moving of soil and the creation of a large, concrete pad. Pfeffer was in attendance at a recent meeting in Washington, D.C., in which government representatives and air conditioners discussed items like the West Valley Demonstration Project. “We talked to congressmen and senators about the government’s concept of just paying the minimum, like on a credit card,” he said. “We need to emphasize, to elected officials, how important it is to clean this up.”

The final monetary number the WVDP will receive for the upcoming fiscal year has not yet been announced.

In other news:

The board authorized advertising for bids for the upcoming trash pickup, which will be opened at the March 13 meeting.

Board Member Beverly Hess reported that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation recently banded 19 turkey hens on her property, as part of its turkey hen study. This is part of a four-year statewide study that will determine hen survival and harvest rates.

The board discussed proposed NYS legislation that could require gun owners to take out a $1 million liability insurance policy on each firearm. “I am not a gun fanatic, but the town should do something about this,” Hess said.

Pfeffer said that the board’s only option would be to make a resolution disagreeing with this proposed legislation. “It’s the concept of backyard legislation to discourage people from owning guns,” Board Member William Heim said. “They are looking at frivolous lawsuits.”

Dashnaw was approved to attend an annual town clerk conference.

The next Ashford Town Board meeting will be held March 13 at 7:30 p.m.

The Ashford Town Board heard an update on demolition at the West Valley Demonstration Project.