



DEPARTMENT: CITY MANAGER
DIRECTOR: ELIZABETH N. FRETWELL

☐ Consent ☒ Discussion

SUBJECT:
ADMINISTRATIVE:

Report on the proposed repository for high-level nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain from Bob Halstead, Executive Director for the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects, and Phil Klevorick, Senior Management Analyst for Clark County's Nuclear Waste Division - All Wards

Fiscal Impact

☐

No Impact

☐ Augmentation Required

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Budget Funds Available

Amount:

Funding Source:

Dept./Division:

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND:

On June 3, 2008, the Department of Energy (DOE) filed a license application with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to construct a repository for high-level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel at Yucca Mountain in Nye County, Nevada. Subsequently, the DOE filed a Motion with the NRC's construction authorization board to withdraw the application on March 3, 2010. Bob Halstead and Phil Klevorick address potential impacts on the Las Vegas Valley of current and proposed DOE waste management activities at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS), including the recent DOE Environmental Impact Statement for NNSS, and the possible transportation of waste shipments from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory to NNSS.

RECOMMENDATION:

Report only, no action

BACKUP DOCUMENTATION:

Submitted at Meeting - PowerPoint Presentation by Bob Halstead

Minutes:

ROBERT J. HALSTEAD, Executive Director of the State of Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects, PHIL KLEVORICK, Senior Management Analyst for Clark County's Nuclear Waste Division, were present.

MR. HALSTEAD thanked the Mayor and City Council for their strong and unwavering support the City of Las Vegas has given to the State of Nevada against the Yucca Mountain Repository. He gave special thanks to COUNCILWOMAN TARKANIAN for her long service on the State Commission on Nuclear projects.

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Through a PowerPoint Presentation, MR. HALSTEAD provided an update on the Yucca Mountain status. A motion was filed with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) asking to have the hearings in Las Vegas so that they are accessible to all parties and ask for a restart to the computerized library so that all parties and the public has access to all the information. It is important to remember that the petitioners did not get all the things they asked for. They wanted a restart in 30 days, wanted a decision in 14 months, and wanted the court to retain jurisdiction. It is a very modest win that the Yucca Mountain proponents wanted. Nonetheless, they have forced the proceedings to restart. The U. S. Senate is considering legislation to restructure the program. He emphasized that if a nuclear waste repository was a safe and profitable enterprise, someone would have taken it away from the State of Nevada. The spent nuclear fuel is extremely dangerous especially for the first 50 years and very dangerous for another 50 years after it comes out of a reactor. Yucca Mountain is not safe because it can get into water, which travels very fast. The transportation aspect also poses a problem because it would be transported through urban areas.

What is at Yucca Mountain, even though \$15 billion has been spent, does not amount to anything useful. It is not a good interim storage facility because of its poor transportation access, its limited water supply and the earthquake hazard is very serious for its service facilities. New evidence from the Department of Energy (DOE) is that they actually save billions of dollars if the repository were built in a deep salt bed or a deep shell formation.

MAYOR GOODMAN thanked MR. HALSTEAD for the presentation and noted that at the U.S. Conference of Mayors, which was hosted in Las Vegas, representatives from different states stated very firmly to re-open discussion regarding Yucca Mountain. MAYOR GOODMAN referred to the recent spill in Canada, although a different material, could have easily been nuclear waste.

COUNCILMAN ANTHONY asked if other locations are being considered as a central repository or is the focus still on Yucca Mountain. MR. HALSTEAD stated that now the law requires the focus be solely on Yucca Mountain. There are a number of communities that have expressed interest in volunteering both for interim storage and geological repositories. The new U.S. Senate Legislation is important. Until the program is taken out of the DOE and restructured the way the Blue Ribbon Commission demanded, he does not believe anyone will come forward.

MR. KLEVORICK added that a final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) came out in February, in which a 30-day period was given to review and respond to the comments. Nonetheless, comments were provided based on the 30-day comment period and the primary focus were the transportation issues. A Record of Decision (ROD) was due in 45 days and still has not received a ROD. The process has been halted and DOE has the right to do this, but the DOE has been held somewhat accountable that they will transport the material safely, with secure transport. DOE's classification of the waste is low-level.

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MAYOR GOODMAN ascertained that low-level waste is already being transported. MR. KLEVORICK stated that there are varieties of low-level waste, but this is significantly different with radiological risks, therefore, it needs to be treated differently. With secured transport, DOE can use any route desired, which raises a significant amount of concern with the emergency management group, not to mention residents and visitors to the region. He has been working with the emergency management group, public works and with the delegation. Some positive measures have been taken to make it as safe as possible.

COUNCILMAN ROSS remarked that at the National League of Cities level he successfully passed a resolution requiring DOE and the federal government to train and fund first responders and he asked about the status of progress. MR. KLEVORICK replied that funding that comes to the emergency management group for seven counties in Nevada is based on the amount of waste that is actually accepted or received at the Nevada Test Site and is composed of an Area 5; it is 50 cents per cubic meter and it is a standard amount given with the previous two years, Clark County has waived that money in order for it to go to more rural counties, but the anemic economy changed that. MR. HALSTEAD added that they are in the seventh year of discussing how that funding should be divided and any Senate legislation would direct that.

COUNCILMAN ROSS stated that it is imperative that DOE prepare first responders for any kind of incident. MR. HALSTEAD replied that it requires constant vigilance to get these needs addressed. MR. KLEVORICK added that budgetary decisions are not made locally.

Therefore, they do not understand the unique local conditions. They would take their model for transportation risk assessment on radiological exposure for residents. Seventy-three percent of all shipments that goes to the Nevada Test Site goes through the Las Vegas Valley.

COUNCILMAN ROSS expressed concern that the shipments go directly through North Las Vegas, into Ward 6, Centennial Hills and U.S. 95 on its way to the Nevada Test Site. MR. HALSTEAD pointed out that an informal agreement was made that shipments of low level waste to the Nevada Test Site will not go through the Spaghetti Bowl or the beltway or the Hoover Dam bypass.

COUNCILMAN ANTHONY asked what studies have been done as to what would happen to Las Vegas and the environment in the event of a spill. MR. HALSTEAD replied that DOE acknowledges that the cleanup cost in a generic urban area could be \$10 billion and a year and a half to complete the clean-up. Similarly with truck shipments, the impacts are less severe because of the smaller amount of waste. If the licensing procedures resume, these are among the major issues they will raise with the NRC and ask them to deny the license because they have not dealt with the transportation and safety issues, and specifically not dealt with the potential impacts on Las Vegas and Clark County.

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MAYOR GOODMAN asked if the State of Nevada has any control over access to Area 5. MR. HALSTEAD replied that there is no formal yes or no regulatory authority over what happens in Area 5. They do have an advisory role on low level waste and they do have a regulatory role on the small portion of the waste called mixed low level waste. On June 20th GOVERNOR SANDOVAL wrote a strong letter saying that the State objected to the shipment of those canisters and the disposal of low level waste. Right now the Governor has had phone calls and meetings with the Secretary of Energy and discussions are ongoing with DOE. MR. HALSTEAD is hopeful that there will be an equal playing field in the decisions made on what happens at Area 5.

MAYOR GOODMAN directed the City Manager that a review and update be provided to the City Council in December.

COUNCILMAN COFFIN stated that newcomers to Las Vegas have not been part of this fight and do not understand all the opposition. It all started when nuclear testing. Residents were promised they would never be exposed to nuclear radiation but those clouds came over Southern Nevada and killed thousands of people and increased the risk of cancer. SENATOR HARRY REID is the sole reason why the government is backing away and being very tender and paying respect because they know they can't test SENATOR REID. The profitable nuclear power generators have been paying billions into the fund, but their solution is to push all into Nevada. People who live here need to understand the history. There is plutonium on the surface of the test site. Nevada residents would be more receptive if repositories were scattered throughout the country and not only in Nevada. He opined that money and jobs should not play a role, but it is not enough to sacrifice principles, heritage and the health of the childrens descendents. He and COUNCILMAN BEERS will pay more attention to this issue.

MR. KLEVORICK thanked the City Council and he looks forward bringing an update in December. MR. HALSTEAD thanked COUNCILMAN COFFIN for his comments.