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Officials Announce Completion of Spaulding Fibre Demolition and Remediation

Local officials gathered at the Spaulding Fibre site in the City of Tonawanda today to formally announce the completion of environmental remediation and demolition activities. Their combined message was that the monumental task of rehabilitating the county's second largest industrial site was accomplished through intergovernmental cooperation, a private partnership, and solid planning and implementation practices.

"The old, abandoned buildings have been demolished and environmental remediation substantially completed clearing the way for this 47-acre parcel to return to productive use," said Assemblyman Robin Schimminger, who presented the opening remarks and noted today was a historic moment. "With this work now complete, we can move forward and offer a designing site that will attract the kind of businesses that will provide jobs and add to the city's tax base."

At the invitation of Assemblyman Robin Schimminger, Pete Grannis, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, attended the announcement.

"When Spaulding Fibre ceased operations, Tonawanda was left not only with a sprawling, vacant brownfield but also a heavily contaminated one," Commissioner Grannis said. "But over the years, DEC has worked vigorously to clean up and transform this site. And we have worked collaboratively with our local partners. As a result, this abandoned and environmentally unsound property will soon become a useful and productive community asset. That's good news for the environment, public health and the local economy."

Clearing the Spaulding site was a long term project. The plant's manufacturing operations ceased in 1992. Spaulding Fibre's financial difficulties led to bankruptcy. The sprawling complex was abandoned and over time the buildings fell into a state of serious disrepair. Spaulding's parent company also walked away from its responsibility to remediate the property that had areas of PCB, asbestos and other contaminants.

The "Spaulding Fibre Team" was formed to develop and implement a game plan to remediate the property for redevelopment. Since this land is the only large developable parcel in the City of Tonawanda, redevelopment is crucial to the city's economic future. Working hand-in-hand to accomplish a common goal, the Spaulding

Team met bi-weekly to identify and secure financing, stage demolition and remediation in tandem, review reports and work in progress.

“The successful Spaulding Fibre Brownfield remediation and demolition project, one of the largest and most significant of its kind in New York State over the past 25 years, shows great things get done when all levels of government work together,” noted Tonawanda Mayor Ron Pilozzi.

Demolition and remediation costs totaled more than \$18.9 million with substantial state funding from the N.Y.S. Department of Environmental Conservation’s Superfund (\$3 million) and Environmental Restoration Program (\$3.6 million), and Empire State Development’s Restore New York Program (\$5.6 million). In addition, special legislative grants were obtained by Assemblyman Schimminger (\$90,000).

“The Restore New York program was created in order to provide municipalities with the financial assistance to eliminate and redevelop blighted structures by encouraging neighborhood growth and community development,” said Empire State Development Chairman & CEO Dennis M. Mullen. “ESD was pleased to have granted the City of Tonawanda over \$3 million in Restore funds. The removal of the former Spaulding Fibre facility was critical to making room for future development of mixed-use private and public space, as well as cleaning up a blighted, unsafe section of the City. With the remediation and demolition behind us, we can now lay down the infrastructure that will attract residents and business, increase the local tax base and help secure this community’s future prosperity.”

Funding was also provided by Erie County (\$2.1 million). County Executive Chris Collins noted that, “Clearing and remediating this former brownfield site will provide 47 acres for new investment, new jobs and new economic activity in the City of Tonawanda. “This is one more step forward in Erie County’s Road to a Bright Future. One of our goals has been to advance high and low tech manufacturing by preparing shovel ready sites for firms needing new locations for expanding operations. This will help make Erie County a place where people want to live and work, businesses want to invest and locate, and tourists want to visit.”

In addition, the project received a federal grant through the assistance of Senator Chuck Schumer and Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (\$1.1 million), an economic development grant from National Grid (\$300,000) and a budget item from the City of Tonawanda (\$80,000).

“Since being abandoned nearly 20 years ago this 47-acre site has posed numerous safety and environmental challenges,” said Congresswoman Slaughter. “For too long the defunct Spaulding Fibre site cast a long shadow over nearby residential neighborhoods and hampered new development in the City of Tonawanda. Fortunately as a great example of intergovernmental cooperation we were able to bring federal, state, and local resources together to clean up this site and prepare it to return to the tax rolls. Today we celebrate this important achievement.”

“This project has addressed two critical needs in the City of Tonawanda,” said Legislator Hardwick. “It has simultaneously cleaned up blighted brownfields and created conditions that will bring new, good paying jobs to our community.”

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