

# Dozens attend meeting on impact of Vermont Yankee closing

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Rutland Herald

**PUTNEY** — About 60 people from Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts gathered at Landmark College Wednesday to discuss the human ramifications of the closure of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant, which is expected to cost hundreds of people their well-paying jobs and have significant ripple effects in the regional economy when Yankee closes in December.

One suggestion made during the conference — which focused on how to cope with the socioeconomic fallout from the upcoming closure — was that the plant's owner, Entergy Corp., should have put money into a separate

economic development decommissioning fund, as well as its \$622 million plant deconstruction fund.

Exactly how many people will still work at Yankee after December, when the plant stops generating power, no one seemed to know. But there was broad agreement at the meeting that the earlier the eventual decommissioning begins, the better for the economy in southern Vermont and its neighboring states.

The conference — sponsored by the University of Massachusetts and the University of Vermont, the Brattleboro Development Credit Corp. and the Association for Environmental Health and Sciences Foundation — drew many top-level officials, as well as local, regional and federal

planners from the tri-state region. Lawrence Miller, secretary of the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Affairs, announced that the first \$2 million check from Entergy Corp. — part of the settlement agreement and memorandum of agreement just approved by the Public Service Board last Friday — had arrived Tuesday night.

Miller's agency will oversee the distribution of the Entergy funds for economic development, which is all earmarked for Windham County and is expected to be guided by a strategic plan already written by the Brattleboro Development Credit Corp. and its offshoot, SeVEDS. The recent agreement with the state requires Entergy to pay a total of \$10

million for economic development in Windham County.

Miller said groups and organizations will have to apply for the funds, and an emphasis will be given toward job creation.

The \$10 million, which local development officials hope to use to "leverage" millions more of federal and state funding, and private investment, is either an enormous sum or a "drop in the bucket." But none of the money is going to help New Hampshire or Massachusetts, where Yankee employees also live in about equal numbers.

The Canadian government is putting \$200 million into economic development in a region hit hard by a nuke plant closing.

In sharp contrast, a Wisconsin community considered itself lucky getting \$1 million in economic development help until it learned about the deal hammered out between Vermont and Entergy, said Jeffrey Lewis, one of the conference organizers and the retired head of the Brattleboro Development Credit Corp.

The conference, which was headed up by Lewis and UMass Professor John Mullin, who is the author of a well known study about the socioeconomic impacts on the town of Rowe, Mass., after Yankee Rowe closed in 1992.

Yankee Rowe's decommissioning, which started as soon as its fuel cooled, took 15 years and cost \$608 million.