



Gordon J. Wozniak
Councilmember District 8

CONSENT CALENDAR
October 18, 2005

To: Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council

From: Councilmembers Gordon Wozniak, Darryl Moore, and Linda Maio

Subject: Demolition of B51 and the Bevatron at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL)

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend 1) that the City Council reaffirm its support for the full decommissioning, deconstruction and removal of the Bevatron. 2) Refer to the City Manager for review the Peace & Justice Commission resolution on the proposed demolition of B51 and the Bevatron and the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), when it is released later in the Fall of 2005. For this review, staff would have the benefit of the comprehensive analysis of the associated environmental and historical impacts in the DEIR.

RATIONALE FOR PROPOSED ACTION:

The proposed demolition of Building 51 and the Bevatron is now in the process of its environmental review, with a Draft CEQA Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and a Draft NEPA Environmental Assessment expected to be released in the very near future.

On March 11, 2003 the Berkeley City Council adopted a resolution that, among other things, resolved that the LBNL site be restored to “the highest standard.” On May 24, 2005, the Berkeley City Council again requested the City Manager to write letters to Senators Boxer and Feinstein and Representative Lee requesting that they take immediate action to expedite DOE funds to enable LBNL to complete the full decommissioning, deconstruction and removal of the Bevatron in a manner acceptable to the public; and resolved that the LBNL site be restored to “the highest standards.”

The proposed demolition is in accordance with these resolutions, as well as with the City Council's desire that environmental reviews be conducted prior to the start of demolition.

This proposed demolition is the right thing to do for several reasons, which address environmental, health & safety, land use and stewardship, facility and project goals and concerns of the City of Berkeley, its residents, and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Bevatron, a large synchrotron accelerator, 180-feet in diameter, began operation in 1954, and ceased operating in 1993. It is now abandoned in place within Building 51. Building 51 is an approximately 126,500 gross square foot steel-frame structure. The site is located in the west-central part of Berkeley Lab and occupies approximately 2.25 acres.

FACILITY

Building 51 and the Bevatron within the building are no longer needed by LBNL. The Bevatron is non-functional, and there is no demand for its services. The Building 51 structure housing the Bevatron is deteriorating and consumes disproportionate maintenance resources. It does not meet current building codes, the roof leaks in several locations, and portions of the structure do not comply with current seismic design standards. It is very unlikely that the building could be used in the future for more than limited office or research use, because most of the structure is taken up with the unusable Bevatron apparatus, and because of the extremely high repair costs that would be required to bring the building up to code.

ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH, AND SAFETY:

- It is the practice of the City of Berkeley to support the clean up hazardous wastes. This proposed project would remove radioactive and hazardous materials, as well as large quantities of non-hazardous waste, from the Building 51 site at the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, and dispose of these items at licensed facilities in accordance with federal and state laws. This would improve environmental conditions at LBNL.
- The structure is seismically unsafe. Its demolition would provide a future safe working environment for an as-yet unidentified activity at Berkeley Lab.

RECYCLE & RE-USE

- In demolition, LBNL would seek the recycling or re-use of non-hazardous materials.
- The proposed demolition reflects facilities stewardship at its most thorough, with the appropriate dismantling of old, unused facilities at the end of their appropriate life cycle.

HISTORICAL ISSUES

When the Bevatron began operating in 1954, it was the world's largest and highest energy accelerator, and events of historic significance have involved the Bevatron, including the award of a number of Nobel Prizes. The Bevatron accelerator made major contributions in four research areas: high-energy particle physics, nuclear heavy-ion physics, medical research and therapy, and space-related studies of radiation damage and heavy particles in space. Because of the significant scientific contributions that were made there, Building 51 is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. A Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) report for the facility has been accepted by the National Park Service (NPS), and a Historic American Building Survey (HABS) report is being reviewed by NPS.

The Peace & Justice Commission resolution appears to judge the proposed demolition before the full environmental review of the project, the Draft Environmental Impact Report, is issued, in which the cultural resource issues of historical significance will be analyzed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

None.

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