

Detrick lauded for soil cleanup

by Ike Wilson, News-Post Staff

Fort Detrick has been “upfront, communicative and has been involved the local community” in its cleanup of contaminated soil, Michael Kurtianyk said Thursday.

Mr. Kurtianyk, chairman of the Frederick County Chamber of Commerce Small Business Council, made the comment following a Fort Detrick presentation at the council’s monthly meeting. He is also a member of the fort’s restoration advisory board, organized to keep citizens involved in the project.

Mr. Kurtianyk invited Fort Detrick personnel to update the business community on the progress of the environmental restoration, which seeks to remove the pollutants causing groundwater contamination, permanently eliminate risk to public health and eliminate further risk of pollution.

Lt. Col. Jeffery C. Springer said Fort Detrick’s Area B has entered a new phase of excavation. Old landfills and contaminated soil are about to be removed at one section of Area B known as B-11, near Kemp Lane and Shookstown Road.

Col. Springer said Detrick officials have received a number of calls from the public with inquiries about the project. “The public is justifiably concerned. There’s some nasty stuff there.”

More wastes have been found than originally thought, requiring an additional 18 months to complete the job, and at a cost of an additional \$14 million. The revised completion date is September 2003.

Due to the project’s large scale, the work will be done incrementally, Col. Springer said. A containment structure, about the size of a football field, has been constructed for the project, and more than 50 trenches have been dug.

“Fort Detrick takes a lot of pride in its environmental stewardship,” Col. Springer said. That’s why the project has not had many complaints from external oversight agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency. The project’s community advisory board includes people with doctorate degrees in the environmental field, he said. And thanks to the advisory board, the work has been expedited, Col. Springer said.

Col. Springer said the work is being done by an experienced company. “They know their job and do it right,” he said. Contaminants found will be taken to a licensed environmental disposal company in Ohio.

“We’re not going to play a shell game with this stuff,” Col. Springer said. “Almost all of it is burnable. Anything that can’t be incinerated will be added to concrete and buried. “Concrete lasts for many years, Col. Springer added.

The removal plan includes digging trenches to determine the exact location of burial pits; freezing the soil beneath the pits to ensure they are contained; unearth the buried chemicals and contaminated soil, and refill with clean soil and reseed the land.

In other matters, the Small Business Council was receptive to a plan to recognize local businesses at an annual awards event.