

NEWHALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Final Meeting Summary

March 16, 2006

6:35 pm – 8:30 pm

Members Attending: Herman Alexander, Henry Blue, Donald Eaton, Sheila Epps, Dr. Abdul Hamid, Rhonda Hayward, Elizabeth Hayes, Scott Jackson, Leonardo Melendez, Pamala Moore, Henry Platt, Rep. Peter Villano, LaNorma Webb, Roosevelt Young

Alternates Attending: Carolyn Smith, Willa Taylor

Absent: Pastor George Bulgin (resigned), Mike Colaiacovo, Luther Cooper, Rev. Keith King (alternate for Herman Alexander), Deloris McNair, Loydon Henry-Phillip,

Ex-Officio Members Attending: Commissioner Gina McCarthy, Eileen Barnes, Michael Harder, Elsie Patton, Edith Pestana, Dennis Schain, Tom RisCassi, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP); Meg Harvey, DPH; Bill Kay, Chris Harriman (Haley & Aldrich), Jimmy Young (Olin); Tom Chaplik, Regional Water Authority (RWA); Ann Catino (Town Attorney), Arthur Bogan, Town of Hamden.

Others Attending: Kevin Hood, ERI; Willie Mewborne, Council Member; Shirley J Bosc, 461 Shelton Ave., Mattie B.Harrison, 462 Shelton Ave., Francine Smith , 38 No. Sheffield St.; Lita Wright, 36 Morse St; Keith; Marck Roberts, 53 State, Boston;, Doris Wynn, 1028 Winchester Ave., Raymond Simm, 478 Newhall Street; Gabrielle Molién, 17-19 St. Mary Street., Ulia Pitts, 626 Newhall Street; Kelly McCarthy, 83 Treadwell Street; Lagalyn Wilson, 132 Shepard St. and 222 Morse St; Robert Barrett Jr., 59 Edwards St; Sonra Pwell , 137 Shepard St; Charlene Webb, 102 Winchester St; Guarllain Bhales, 117 Bryden Terrace; Janice Clemons, 909 Bryden Terrace; Darden, Prospect Hill.

Public Participation Assistance: Jill Barrett, Marianne Latimer (FHI);

Facilitator: Kathleen Conway

Meeting. The facilitator opened the meeting for updates prior to the arrival of the Commissioner of Environmental Protection.

Town Updates. Hamden Middle School: Two members of the NAC are on the Hamden Middle School Reuse Committee. The Committee will hold its first meeting, Monday, March 20, 2006 to discuss selection of a consultant.

DPH Update. DPH provided a summary and copies of 6 health studies in response to a NAC member's request for examples of health studies finding a positive association between exposure to environmental contaminants and disease. The studies are available in the Newhall Project Office at the Keefe Center.

Agenda

Welcome, Introduction, Groundrules. The NAC welcomed the Commissioner. The facilitator dispensed with the business meeting of the NAC. Members introduced

themselves. Groundrules for the meeting were reviewed. Members would speak in order around the table; time would be provided for additional comments or questions for the Commissioner; the meeting would then be opened for public comments and questions; and the NAC members would have an opportunity to at the end to address any additional questions. The forum was informal with the Commissioner and members interacting throughout the meeting.

Commissioner Gina McCarthy. The Commissioner thanked the NAC for inviting her and stressed that she would stay as long as it took to hear all concerns. She understood that it had been a long time for them and they were anxious to get to resolution. She said she understood the residents' anxiety over the uncertainty surrounding the site and that it was time to move forward in the process. She was here to listen to what was of utmost importance to the residents

The NAC members addressed the Commissioner:

- The NAC Town member stated that the Newhall project was the biggest issue for the Town and that it wanted a resolution that would leave no concerns unaddressed. The Town did not want any residential waste disposed of at the HMS. All waste should be disposed off-site. The NAC state representative agreed that any disposal at the HMS was unacceptable to the community.
- A NAC member spoke about the stress and strain of the past 5 years and how the residents' quality of life was impacted. He said that: a community of over 700 people has suffered as a result of the fill; life savings were tied up in their homes; structural damage has resulted; and health issues, including cancer, are of concern. He reviewed the five point recommendations made in a letter by the NAC to the Commissioner. While he said that there was a minority (10%) in the community that disagreed for various reasons, the majority of the NAC and the community (90%) agreed with the recommendations:
 - 1) 100% cleanup;
 - 2) no dumping at the HMS;
 - 3) a plan for each property owner;
 - 4) community monitoring of the cleanup; and
 - 5) compensation for suffering.

Redevelopment is key to bringing the community back to life and removing the stigma. The HMS should be revived into something similar to its former use as a neighborhood center.

DEP did not get it right the first time. The community was left out of the negotiations on the Consent Order. DEP has a second chance to get it right. The court stated that it would not interfere with the DEP's decision on remediation. You can do the right thing. We know the issue is money and that the taxpayers, including us, will have to pay.

- I am concerned about the delay in reaching a decision or starting cleanup. There is so much uncertainty. Another NAC member recalled a newspaper article from years ago that said that the neighborhood would be cleaned up by 2006.
- People want to know when. I do not live within the Consent Order but adjacent to those properties. Some of the properties outside the Consent Order have been tested and have fill. There are historical houses there – what will happen to them? Also,

there is a Jewish Cemetery that is still being used – graves are still being dug and - people plant flowers. That property should be tested and people warned.
During the cleanup, what happens to the people?

- I have been trying to sell my house. But if I disclose that there is contamination, no one will buy it. They want to know how deep and how much cleanup. There is so much uncertainty. And stigma. Why isn't there anyone to help us now? I can't move; I can't make a decision about my life. It's been a long time. If I sell now, the house will be depreciated. When there is compensation, who will it go to? Will the buyer benefit? Who pays the seller for all the improvements that have been made to the house and property – new kitchen, windows, stairs. I need help now.
- Several members emphasized that a redevelopment plan must be provided along with the cleanup plan. They expressed concerns that the neighborhood will not go back to where it was. The School should be revived into something similar to its former use as a neighborhood center.
- The community's recommendations are the same in 2006 as they were in 2000. We want nothing less than 100% cleanup; no dump; redevelopment. I understand it will cost \$200,000 million. There are options for the costs, like legislative funds. I understand that the renovation at University of Connecticut was \$2 billion. The money could be allocated in phases over 2-3 years.

Commissioner: Redevelopment is a community end product. DEP's mandate is remediation and health and safety. This is your neighborhood. You need to articulate your vision.

- I agree with everything that has been said. But how could the Town be absolved of liability and have no responsibility? Who allowed the dump and the building of homes on the dump? It should show some sympathy for us.
- I have a structural issue. I need to know that there is a comprehensive plan for the cleanup, demolition and relocation and that the plan will address short term and long term issues. A compensation plan is needed.
- I am a second generation resident. I have health questions - I cannot prove health effects but feel it is an issue. My grandmother had a house on Newhall Street. I bought a house a couple blocks away so I could take care of her. She died of cancer in 2004 and we had to sell the house because no one in the family wanted it. The waste was to have been removed in 2001. The value of the house went down by \$100,000 because of the contamination and sinking.
- My property was cleaned up several years ago. They took soil off and brought fill in. My grandchildren were playing outside and they were cut by glass in the soil. I have a nice yard but I can't use it or let my grandchildren play in it.
- I hold the minority view. I am concerned that some people with the minority view don't come to the meetings and may not be heard. People should be able to choose removal of only 4 feet if good soil is brought in and the soil is stable. Will property owners be able to approve 4 feet removal? DEP needs to ask each property owner what his/her preference is and review contamination levels with the owners. Some people do not want their home destroyed if levels are only slightly over. There should be some options of less destruction if it is safe. The homeowners should be compensated for any loss. If homes are demolished, people should be allowed to come back.
- The former mayor promised us a 50% tax abatement. Nothing has been done.

- Some residents have not been actively involved. They are in a wait and see mode. You need to talk to each individual property owner and have a plan for their properties. Some people would like the option of staying in their home as long as it is safe. An alternative would mean a higher mortgage.
- How much would it cost to rebuild?
- Is there a potential for a reverse mortgage?
- There are a lot of elderly in the neighborhood. The plan should address special issues that the elderly and handicapped will have.
Currently, there is no coordination or special care when digging in the roadways. There are health concerns for people walking by as well. People have concerns for coordinating temporary and permanent relocation. They should not have out-of-pocket expenses. We would also like information on grants.

The NAC meeting was opened to public comments.

- I live on Winchester Avenue in a brick house. There are sink holes in my yard and in my basement. The street is in very poor condition. It's like a "washboard." Trucks make the house shake. My windows are loose. I should have compensation to replace the windows.
A NAC member stated that there are subterranean watercourses flowing toward New Haven on Winchester Avenue that may be contributing to the problems and that all these issues should be addressed in any cleanup.
- Streets and sidewalks are sinking on Shelton Street.
- Some people have immediate concerns. You need to talk with individual property owners and help them now.
- To put this in a historical perspective, DEP first knew about the contamination in 1985. There has been no vision, no plan of what the cleanup and development will be. What will it look like? We want finality grounded in science.
- I just want to know when and how. We have been waiting a long time.
- The people I have talked to have raised a number of issues: Will grass, fences, trees be replaced? Will the plan consider the impact on adjacent properties from traffic, trucks, noise, dust, etc.? Will the plan include cleaning of dust from houses? The streets in South Hamden are breaking apart now. What will be the impact of heavy truck traffic during the cleanup? What will the truck routes be? Who is responsible for the streets? Who will help packing and moving contents of homes and garages? Will people be compensated for moving expenses?
- If relocated, how will children get to school and other places?
- Health concerns: ½ my family has died with cancer. I can't say if it is because of where we live and cannot prove anything but I am concerned.
- There are anecdotes of friends dying, children with rashes and pets dying of cancer.
- Will consideration be given to impacts on adjacent homes outside the Consent Order?
- Have you ruled out anything [cleanup options]?
- Will mediation delay the decision?
- There was no notice to the community of this meeting. I heard about it from word of mouth. More people would have been here if we knew about it.

NAC Members Closing Remarks

- I am a member of the HMS Reuse Committee, which is evaluating the highest and best use for the school. I have recommended that the Committee look at and merge the Newhall neighborhood into its discussion on redevelopment.
- Some issues have to be addressed now. People need to know how to make their decisions.
- A NAC member again summarized the 5 recommendations of the majority of the community listed above: 100% cleanup; no dumping behind the HMS; bring the community back to life; owner controls what is done on the property; compensation for suffering.

Your decision is critical for the mediation to go forward. You are our only hope.

- While gas lines are available throughout the neighborhood, there are no gas lines on Bryden Terrace. Can you tell us why?

Commissioner McCarthy. The Commissioner noted that she had met some of the members on her neighborhood walk in May 2005. The NAC members had shown her the inside structural damage and the sinking on their properties. She walked with several other NAC members as they pointed out other impacted properties.

The Commissioner noted that part of her job is to listen to all concerns. There are discussions on mediation but she said she can not allow side discussions or mediation to delay the Proposed Decision. The Proposed Decision will be something concrete to mediate around. The issue is how to go forward without closing the door.

The Commissioner said she knows she has to talk more about individual properties. She observed that a matter this large is usually managed by the Federal Government and that it is important for DEP to do correctly. This will take a long time. Communication must be effective. She stressed that this will not work if the community and DEP are adversarial; we need to work together; and, the community has to understand that there is only so much money for the state to allocate. We can ask but we need support.

The Commissioner said she has briefed the administration on the issue. Information will also be provided to the Legislature. She and her staff are internally weighing a number of alternatives; everything is still on the table and a decision will be made soon. Some sites will be remediated earlier. She emphasized that not everyone will be happy with the decision but the source of much of the concern now is with the uncertainty.

- Final questions for the Commissioner from Representative Villano:
 1. When will you have a response to the NAC letter with its recommendations?
Response. She said she appreciated the clear, concise description of the 5 points articulated by a NAC member on the NAC's recommendations. I am considering the recommendations. The response to the letter will not make everyone happy but I am not ready to respond yet. The Proposed Decision will be in writing. I can not give you a specific date but it will be soon.

2. When will you have the answers for each property owner, site by site?

Response. I do not have enough information to give you a timeline yet but it will be soon.

3. What will be the time frame for Public Comment following the Proposed Decision?

Response. We are thinking about 60 days. That will give the community and others time to think about and prepare a response.

4. What will be the time frame for how the cleanup will proceed – phases and final development?

Response. We are articulating the issues and talking about it internally. I understand that the next step after the Final Decision will be the logistics of how to conduct the restoration of this urban community.

The Commissioner concluded with thanking the NAC for inviting her.

8:30 pm. Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting. April 20, 2006, 6:30 – 8:30 pm. Keefe Center.

Handouts.

- Memorandum from DPH: Response to request for examples of health studies finding a positive association between exposure to environmental contaminants and disease (copies of 6 health studies in Newhall Project Office, Keefe Center)
- Cover page: Supplemental Investigation Addendum Report Non-Public Properties Study Area prepared for Olin (binder and maps in Newhall Project Office, Keefe Center)
- Cover page: Ground-Water Monitoring at HMS Site dated February 6, 2006
- Draft NAC Progress Report
- Hamden Middle School Reuse Committee Notice
- Town response to NAC FOI Request dated February 16, 2006 and NAC response, March 8, 2006
- Follow-up letter dated February 22, 2006 to the Commissioner from the NAC enclosing written comments from the community
- Letter dated February 18, 2006 from ECS to DEP on behalf of over 100 residents