

## Community Advisory Group (CAG) Minutes for May 2, 2011

**Present:** Ken Deschere, Regina Deschere, Jennifer Dotson, Peter Fortunato, Michele Palmer, Leia Raphaelidis, Eric Rosario, Kathy Woodcock

**City Staff:** Nels Bohn, Facilitator

**Guests:** Dr. Anthony Hay, CU Microbiology Professor, John Graves, President of the South Hill Civic Association, David Ritchie, South Hill resident

**Minutes** from the April 4, 2011 CAG meeting are approved with revisions to be made and will be posted on the City of Ithaca website.

### **Agenda Additions and/or Deletions**

- Kathy Woodcock walked door-to-door to homes recently tested with flyers to invite neighbors to this meeting. She also asked for e-mail addresses because DEC is reducing mailings and will create a listserv to keep the public informed. She heard only positive feedback about the DEC testing procedure and follow-up.
- The recent CU oil tank spill at Fall Creek may need to be added to our toxic list.

### **PROJECT SITE UPDATES:**

***The only update received from the DEC was from Stephanie Harrington:***

I touched base with Karen. She said it is too preliminary to make any determination on the test results we have so far, plus she is unavailable this evening. As always, if you do have Therm follow up questions from the meeting, you can reach Karen by phone or email in the morning. Karen will continue to keep you and the CAG informed whenever new information is available.

The only other update to pass along is with the Clinton West site:

New microwells installed and developed during April 2011. Microwell sampling and microbe investigation to occur during May 2011.

### **GENERAL DISCUSSION ABOUT SITES:**

**Therm (Off-Site Former Axiohm):**

Michele Palmer met with Karen Cahill, DEC Project Engineer, who said she will approach Therm about changing the site name (in order to qualify for NYS Super Funds) because toxins have been found. It is a long administrative process to make a name change.

Leia Raphaelidis suggested the CAG Committee and/or the Mayor write a letter to Therm to force this issue and to support Karen. (Ask Karen if she would like this extra help.)

Based on the irregularity of the test result numbers and the area's shale strata geology, it is difficult to determine whether there may be multiple routes of contamination involving both the sewer system and ground water flow. A ground water monitoring well will be placed either on Therm's property or near an adjacent neighbor's home to analyze whether ground water is another issue.

There is also contamination at sewer test point SV-20 which is uphill from the sewer connection but downhill from Therm.

Professor Hay's map suggestion: Dr. Hay recommended doing an overlay contour map (showing ground elevation data in the County GIS) with the DEC test data results map to better analyze where ground features might affect possible contamination flow. Jennifer Dotson will ask Librarian Gail Steinhart to create this type of map using software to which she has access.

Discussion about dangers of exposure to the chemicals of concern which are Carbon Tetrachloride, Dichloroethene, Tetrachloroethene, Trichloroethane, Trichloroethene, and Vinyl Chloride.

Dr. Hay described four things to be concerned about: air, water, solubility, and pollutant potential. The main source of human toxicity happens through inhalation.

TCE is dense and does not flow well with water. Imagine shale as being like a sponge that soaks up the chemical, but as you can run water over the sponge, the chemical stays impacted within the spongy texture (porous shale). This chemical remains stuck in the shale and over time it becomes volatile with gas vapors trying to escape to the surface to dissipate. Gas vapor plumes move around.

You can drill two wells and use a tracer to pump in and out to determine the pollutant path. Microbes can break down the chemical if no ground water is present. Dr. James Gossett (Cornell Professor of Civil and Environment Engineering) is an expert in this area and should be consulted. Poplar trees are also capable of breaking down carcinogens which reach their root systems.

Ground water is a problem because as the water tables change, so does the toxicity. The numbers won't be constant because the numbers change according to the weather and season.

Determining human toxicity numbers:

Very complicated tests administered on rats given high chemical concentrations are done and this data is extrapolated to humans -- but it is not an exact science. Actual human cancer cases are too difficult to prove cause and effect, so EPA has developed a guideline range. The numbers used vary from state to state but as time goes by, these numbers have been lowered. Currently neurological development studies on children may indicate a cause for concern.

Vapor Testing Procedure Described:

Dave Ritchie has a radon mitigation system which was smoke-tested to determine whether it was working properly and it was. Sub slab test holes were drilled and cement was used to caulk a crack in the basement. He was asked to remove some toxic materials, i.e., an old stain can one week before his re-test is done.

How can CAG help residents to avoid home toxicity?

Eric Rosario recommended that CAG develop a crib sheet listing all the old toxic substances that should be removed from living quarters. These chemicals are no longer produced but if anything is over ten years old and stored in the house, it could be leaking unhealthy vapors. Recommend

Radon Testing every five years. Jennifer agreed this was a good idea and will mention it at the next city council meeting and Eric will second it.

**Assignments:**

Ken and Regina Deschere – Draft a letter to Therm to support Karen Cahill if she wants help?

Contact Dr. Gossett about his ground water expertise?

Jennifer Dotson – Ask Gail Steinhart to produce an overlay map

Mention the CAG Crib Sheet idea to Common Council

**Next Meeting Schedule:**

*Monday, June 6, City Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, 6:00-7:30 p.m.*