

Community Advisory Group (CAG) Minutes for Oct. 4, 2010

Present: Nels Bohn, Maria Coles, Ken Deschere, Regina Deschere, Jennifer Dotson, Peter Fortunato, Michele Palmer, Valerie Pavan, Leia Raphaelidis, Eric Rosario, Kathy Woodcock

Nels Bohn's Report:

He is researching the EPA Brownfields Program as a grant resource (to be corrected in 9/20 minutes). In his conversation with Gary Priscott at DEC, Gary said he was informed about the group but would like to know more. The committee realized that each cleanup site is assigned to a different project manager. That is why it is important to resend the mayor's resolution about the establishment of the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) to the correct DEC contacts. (There are fewer DEC employees due to recent cut backs.)

CAG Statement to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC):

According to the mayor's resolution, this newly formed CAG group should be based on DEC's appointment of the Ithaca Gun Citizens Advisory Group. But will DEC accept this new CAG group?

Ken Deschere will compose a statement to better explain CAG – our purpose and guidelines/rules for expressing concerns. CAG Committee members agreed that it is important that DEC understand how CAG will make their jobs easier and less time consuming. CAG can explain the why, when and how about issues that should help improve communication and outreach with our local community. It will conserve DEC energy to answer questions once. Sell the benefits of CAG to DEC.

What Does CAG Expect from DEC?:

- Transparency -- Access to DEC information
- Understanding about standards (There are both NYS Standards and Federal Standards.)
- Response about how quickly things will happen
- Attendance at CAG meetings in person or by phone (Currently there is only one annual meeting per year.)

Request Current Status Summary Report from DEC:

Maria Coles recommended that CAG request a comprehensive monthly report about Ithaca pollution and what we can expect next. Jennifer Dotson suggested that CAG determine questions we need to ask DEC.

Questions/Concerns CAG to Discuss with DEC:

- When will Therm get a site number?
- Is economic pressure more effective in quicker cleanup?
- Voicing remediation goals
- What to do if certain standards (how close tests adhere to recognized standards) are not met?
- Relaying community concerns
- Reviewing remedial plans with an expert for easier response to DEC in the allowed 30 days time period
- Access to documents for better understanding of the process

Other Items to Resolve:

- Michele Palmer noted that she lives in the Town of Ithaca and THERM is located in the town. She offered to contact the Town of Ithaca Planning Board about this matter.
- Figure out who the experts are at Cornell University and Ithaca College who could participate at CAG meetings and become advisors

SITES:

Clinton West Plaza Remediation:

Eric Rosario's Update – (See his documentation about Clinton West Plaza DEC correspondence.)
DEC has taken over the polluted Clinton West Laundry property because the property owner is no longer cooperating. DEC has contacted involved neighbors but only this property will be remediated. Eric hopes to find an expert to review the remediation plan.

Emerson Site for Sale:

Four developers are interested in the property that cannot be parceled. Which party in the future will take responsibility for ongoing cleanup?

Therm - What's happening?:

This new area (not named as a site) needs to be top priority, especially because tests are being performed on approximately 7 homes that CAG knows about.

Val Pavan pointed out that these tests are being conducted in October when heating systems are not operating at full capacity. Wouldn't it be better to insist that DEC conduct these tests in the winter to gather more accurate data?

Is Therm considered part of the Axiohm Off-Site Study? Or will it get its own site number?

Next Meeting Topic:

- Ask DEC to participate or via a conference call so CAG can gain a better understanding about DEC's internal workings
- Be more flexible and schedule CAG meetings at the convenience of DEC

Assignments:

Nels Bohn – Discuss with Ken Lynch, Regional Director for Region 7 (Tompkins) and Gary Priscott, Project Manager for Clinton West Plaza, about topic speaker availability, schedule, and invitation to next meeting; Request a comprehensive DEC report about the different sites; set up conference call if needed. Ensure DEC obtains appropriate documents to prepare for this meeting.

Ken Deschere – Coordinate with Nels; talk with Karen Cahill, Project Manager for Emerson and Rich Powell about DEC staff availability, comprehensive report and invite them to participate at next meeting;
Send test Google e-mail to ensure everyone receives it OK; Circulate CAG Statement to members and send approved description with mayor's resolution to the appropriate parties.

Regina Deschere – Provide Maria Coles with contact names

Maria Coles – Contact Barbara Lifton's Office about Cornell Experts/Follow-up with City Attorney about sewer contamination.

Michele Palmer – Contact the Town of Ithaca Planning Board concerning Therm industrial pollution

City Legislators to Request Budget Item:

Maria Coles/Jennifer Dotson/Eric Rosario - Request money be put in the budget for an Environmental Consultant; Request CAG presence at budget hearings

Next Meeting Schedule:

Tentative schedule depending on DEC availability but scheduled for November 1, 2010.

Monday, Nov. 1, 2010 at City Hall, 2nd floor, (Rm206), 6-7:30 p.m. (Topic: DEC Comprehensive Report and conversation with DEC)