

**BoRit Asbestos Superfund Site Community Advisory Group Meeting**

**Ambler/Upper Dublin/Whitpain, Pennsylvania**

**(Draft Minutes)**

**Date: Wednesday, December 5, 2012**

**Location: Upper Dublin Township Building, 801 Loch Alsh Ave. Fort Washington, PA 19002**

Meeting called to order by Co-Chair David Froehlich at 6:35 p.m.

**Item #1: Welcome & Announcements**

Co-Chair David Froehlich began the meeting by asking any new CAG members or attendees to introduce themselves. There were no introductions given at this time. Mr. Gordon Chase made a motion to approve the October 3<sup>rd</sup> CAG meeting minutes. This motion was all approved by the CAG. Mr. Froehlich asked the group for any additions to the agenda. Mr. Chase noted that there wasn't an item on the agenda for Workgroup Reports. Mr. Froehlich added this item after Old Business on the agenda.

**Item #2: Ambler Asbestos Piles Superfund Site Overview by Mr. Jim Feeney of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**

Co-Chair Dave Froehlich introduced Mr. Jim Feeney, EPA's Remedial Project Manager for the Ambler Asbestos Piles Superfund Site, to the group to give a presentation on the history and current state of activities at the Ambler Asbestos Piles Superfund Site.

Questions and comments regarding Mr. Feeney's presentation are as follows:

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Mr. Sal Boccuti asked Mr. Feeney if he ever comes across downed trees while doing his inspections of the Ambler Asbestos Piles Site. Mr. Feeney responded that he does. Mr. Boccuti asked Mr. Feeney what is then done with the fallen trees. Mr. Feeney responded that the trees are left where they fall. He then explained that in the remedy for the Site, it was decided to leave trees on the side slopes as it is believed that the root systems of the trees are helping to stabilize the piles. He also noted that the slopes at the Site were quite steep but also quite stable as well. There has been no indication that the slopes are failing or changing in any way. To help support the steep sloping, EPA allows the trees to stand and to live and die naturally. Mr. Feeney noted that most trees die upstanding and crumble downwards. Mr. Boccuti inquired if Mr. Feeney had observed any uprooted trees during his inspections. Mr. Feeney responded that in the past fifteen years he had seen a couple. Mr. Boccuti then asked if there was any evidence of asbestos being released from the ground due to uprooted trees. Mr. Feeney responded that there was no evidence of asbestos release from uprooted trees.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Ms. Sharon McCormick stated that the reason the CAG is concerned about the issue of uprooted trees is because the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) for the Ambler Asbestos

Piles Site goes into some detail about the potential dangers of uprooted trees during storms or periods of high winds. Ms. McCormick stated that she disagrees that trees don't uproot on the Site and..."thinks it would be a miracle if trees did not uproot on that Site." Ms. McCormick inquired if EPA ever tested for the amount of soil and dirt on the Site. Mr. Feeney responded that EPA does visual examinations. Ms. McCormick noted that she does not have much faith in EPA due to this type of evaluation. Ms. McCormick asked how many air tests had been done during the most recent Five-Year Review of the Site and Mr. Feeney responded that no air testing had been done specifically for the Ambler Asbestos Piles Site. Ms. McCormick then asked if EPA has ever tested if riprap and the revetment prevent contamination at the molecular level. Mr. Feeney responded that they had not.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Ms. Bernadette Dougherty inquired why there had been no air monitoring during the Five Year Review. Mr. Feeney responded that no air monitoring is required by the laws that regulate asbestos waste disposal sites unless there is visible dust emanating from the site, and EPA depends on visual determination of the cover of the piles to determine if they remain intact. Mr. Feeney also noted that there has been abundant air monitoring done in the Ambler area as a whole and nothing of note in the ambient air of the community has been found. Ms. Dougherty asked if EPA would respond to resident's calls if they saw visible dust coming off of the piles. Mr. Feeney responded that he expected that they would. Ms. Dougherty asked if Mr. Feeney contacts Ambler Borough officials when he is conducting site inspections so that they may also attend. When Mr. Feeney responded that he generally does not do this, Ms. Dougherty remarked that she feels this would be a good idea, and Mr. Feeney agreed.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Mr. Gordon Chase noted that one of the problems for the CAG is that, for the BoRit Site,..."no trees would be allowed and sloping would be less steep, and then in the next breath EPA appears to say that they have another site where the opposite is okay." Mr. Chase asked Mr. Feeney to reconcile this inconsistency. Mr. Feeney responded that the purpose of the Superfund program was to mitigate existing sites. He went on to explain that, at the Ambler Asbestos Piles Site, the existing slopes were already quite steep and the piles covered the property and EPA's other option at that time would have been to re-slope the Site, removing old soil and bringing in fresh soil and that this option would have had greater impact on the community, including resident removal and road impact and possible covering of part of the Wissahickon Creek. Mr. Chase then noted that the BoRit Site did have similar slopes and tree covering to the Ambler Asbestos Piles Site and different decisions were made for that remediation. Mr. Chase inquired if the purpose of the Ambler Asbestos Piles Site current owner's most recent activities on the Site were known. Mr. Feeney responded that he believes the owner wanted to have a more flattened area for building. Mr. Chase noted that he had observed a drilling rig on the Site and asked Mr. Feeney if he knew the purpose of the rig. Mr. Feeney stated that the owner had brought fill onto the Site prior to the State's 512 Order that prohibits such activities. The owner of the Site had been informed that any fill he brings onto the Site needs to meet Pennsylvania clean fill standards. However, the owner did not conduct the proper testing on the fill prior to bringing it on the Site. The drilling rig Mr. Chase observed

on the Site was testing this fill as required by the Order. Mr. Chase asked if the Order was public record. Mr. Feeney replied that it was. Mr. Chase inquired if it would have been advantageous to do sampling at the Keasbey and Mattison properties while they were being demolished. Mr. Feeney replied that it was not his Site so he could not address this question.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Ms. Diane Morgan inquired who the owner of the Ambler Asbestos Piles Site was. Mr. Feeney replied that the owner of the Site was DC Ambler, Inc. Ms. Morgan asked why someone would be interested in purchasing and developing a known Superfund site to which Mr. Feeney replied that he did not know. Ms. Morgan inquired if the fill that the owner had brought onto the Site was for the purposes of development. Mr. Feeney replied that it was. Mr. Feeney also noted that at the time of the Site's purchase, he advised the owner of the various issues related to Superfund ownership. Ms. Morgan noted that she was having a hard time understanding why it would not be beneficial to conduct air sampling at the Ambler Asbestos Piles Site. Mr. Feeney responded that this is because the Site is currently inactive.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Mr. Otis Hightower inquired as to how much visible dust was needed to warrant air monitoring and how does one determine visible dust. Mr. Feeney replied that if dust can be seen coming off the pile, that is visible dust. Mr. Hightower asked if there had been any recent air monitoring conducted for the Ambler Asbestos Piles Site in residential neighborhoods in proximity to Maple Street and Mr. Feeney replied that there has not. Co-Chair Dave Froehlich informed Mr. Hightower that Maple Street is closer to the BoRit Site and that Ms. Matzko would be discussing air monitoring for that site next.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Ms. Sharon McCormick commented that she disagrees with Mr. Feeney's comments that extensive air monitoring has been conducted in the Ambler community. She noted that her research showed that testing had been conducted in 1972, 1986 and again in 2006 with results for all three tests showing high levels of contamination.

Co-Chair Dave Froehlich thanked Mr. Feeney for his presentation.

**Item #3: EPA Air Sampling Report – Ms. Kristine Matzko**

Co-Chair Dave Froehlich introduced Ms. Kristine Matzko, EPA's Remedial Project Manager for the BoRit Asbestos Superfund Site, to the group to give a presentation air sampling conducted over the past year.

Questions and comments regarding Ms. Matzko's presentation are as follows:

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Mr. Sal Boccuti asked if the air sampling was conducted monthly, and if there was an average number of days each month. Ms. Matzko responded that sampling was conducted one day out of each month for a 24 hour period, with two sampling days being conducted towards the end of the sampling period.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Ms. Sharon McCormick inquired if all of the data presented by Ms. Matzko would be included in the final Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study. Ms. Matzko responded that it would.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Ms. Bernadette Dougherty asked what PCME stand for. Ms. Matzko replied that this was an acronym for Phase Contrast Microscopy Equivalent, noting that this type of microscope allows for the identification of different types of fibers. The microscope has a magnification of x20 000 and can count fibers on the length of five microns. Ms. Matzko noted that initial risk studies were conducted with this standard, which is why it is still in use today.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Mr. Eric Cheung asked if issues such as hurricanes were taken into account that might facilitate EPA doing testing on a specific day. Ms. Matzko replied that testing was not conducted in wet conditions. Mr. Cheung asked if the sampling was primarily general in nature and Ms. Matzko replied that it was.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Mr. Gordon Chase asked if the air samples were taken before removal activities had been started. Ms. Matzko noted that there was some overlap with the work done at Tannery Run, the Wissahickon Creek and with work on the piles. Mr. Chase asked what might have changed in air samples at the Site, since levels in 2006 warranted a Superfund listing and recent tests show very little. Co-Chair Bob Adams added that the site is all covered now - that's why the contamination went down.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Ms. Sharon McCormick asked why EPA was still using the PCME standard as she feels better technology has developed in the time since PCME was established. Ms. Matzko responded that EPA uses the PCME standard due to the fact that EPA still evaluates health risk from inhalation of asbestos on a 1986 health study based on the PCME standard and for this reason, it is still in use. Ms. McCormick replied that her research indicated that the study in 1986 was conducted using TEM.

Ms. Lora Werner noted that the air results EPA shared at tonight's meeting - EPA's 2010-2011 offsite monitoring results for asbestos in the ambient air in Ambler - are consistent with EPA's offsite ambient air monitoring results from 2006-2007. These results continue to show levels of asbestos offsite in the ambient air of Ambler that are **not** of health concern. It is true that there were onsite air monitoring results of health concern from 2006 that supported EPA's listing of the BoRit Site on the Superfund National Priorities List. These onsite air levels were of concern for people who might visit the BoRit Site and actively disturb the surface soils. (Note, these results were from prior to EPA's removal program adding cover material at the BoRit Site.)

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Ms. Sharon McCormick asked why an additional test was conducted in the months of August and October. Ms. Matzko responded that they had initially planned for 14 to 15 sample events and that there were reserves left over to do additional sampling.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Dr. Michelle Naps asked if EPA's final report will address wind speeds as most residents are concerned with dry, windy days. Dr. Naps also asked if there would be any comparison of wind speeds during times air sampling was conducted to maximum wind speeds in the area and

whether there would be any analysis or comparison with general weather conditions in the area. Ms. Matzko responded that the goal of the air sampling was to sample throughout the year to get a general sense of the air quality in the area. Dr. Naps noted that she was concerned that only 14 samples were taken as EPA could have missed a particularly bad day.

#### **Item #4: Observer Comments**

Co-Chair Dave Froehlich asked the observers of the meeting if there were any comments at this time. No comments were made.

#### **Item #5 – West Ambler Revitalization Project**

Mr. Fred Connor, Vice-Chairman of the Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors, began by thanking the CAG for all of their efforts. Mr. Connor gave a brief overview of the community based revitalization and reinvigoration program for the West Ambler community. Mr. Connor noted that the goal of this revitalization project was to address three key issues important to residents of West Ambler: 1) storm water control, 2) Brownfield reutilization of the park if possible, and 3) West Ambler revitalization. At this time Mr. Connor introduced Mr. Peter Simone of Simone Collins Landscape Architecture to give a presentation to the group on possible revitalization options for West Ambler.

Questions and comments regarding Mr. Simone’s presentation are as follows:

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Mr. Sal Boccuti asked if Mr. Simone’s presentation was online. The presentation can be found on Whitpain Township’s website under the “News” section.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Ms. Sharon McCormick noted that after eight years of researching redevelopment efforts of various Superfund sites she has never seen one successful case of redevelopment. Ms. McCormick noted that she does not believe the BoRit Site can be redeveloped unless all contaminants are removed, stating that unless it was fully removed, she is not sure how a release of contaminants could occur in the next twenty years. Ms. McCormick asked Mr. Simone if anyone in his group had ever considered full removal. Mr. Simone responded by giving examples of successful reuse. He noted that when asbestos is moved, that is when exposure comes into play. He also noted that when a site is successfully reused, it can be monitored much more effectively by the people who frequent the area. Ms. McCormick noted that she is not sure why Whitpain Township would want to even consider this option when the area is so toxic.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Ms. Bernadette Dougherty applauded Whitpain Township for their efforts and asked whether the community was engaged in this process. She also inquired if other municipalities have been engaged for future grant requests.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Mr. Fred Connor noted that Mr. Simone’s presentation to the CAG was not a pitch by any means, but primarily a conceptual design that will evolve over time.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Dr. Michelle Naps noted that it is horrible to live in flood prone area, and that flooding should be the first priority of any revitalization efforts. Dr. Naps inquired if there was anything that could be done for the residents of the area in the interim since the plan Mr. Simone was proposing would take a long time. Mr. Simone responded by saying that at this time, a floodplain study is currently being conducted in the area. Until this study is complete, nothing can begin. Mr. Simone continued that a probable outcome of the floodplain study was that the floodplain would be extended and residents who may be within the new risk boundary could possibly have their houses bought out with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds. Mr. Simone also noted that most of the work will have to be done in municipalities in the northern section of the watershed.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Mr. Gordon Chase asked if the issue of eminent domain comes into play regarding utilizing FEMA monies to buy home's that may be in harm's way. Mr. Simone said he was unsure but he has to believe that if a resident is in a home that is in an area prone to flooding, then they would want to leave. Co-Chair Dave Froehlich noted that townships do have eminent domain.

<sup>35</sup><sub>17</sub> Ms. Ruth Weeks noted that the idea of a buyout is something the West Ambler community has feared for a long time. She stated that it seems as if the goal of this revitalization project was to shift the community from what is there to something new. Ms. Weeks asked if FEMA had the funds to buy a resident's house, why they can't fund to rebuild the properties that are already there. She also noted that any residents whose homes are purchased would not be able to afford the new housing shown in Mr. Simone's presentation. She feels it is ..."insensitive and callous." She asked that the CAG keep this issue in mind. Mr. Simone responded by noting that if the FEMA study were to necessitate the purchasing of homes in flood prone areas, it would only be approximately five or six homes. The purpose of the purchase would be to remove those residents from harm's way. He noted that the only other possible solution to removing those homes would to possibly raise them on stilts.

## **Item #6 – Committee Reports**

### **HERS Workgroup**

Dr. Ted Emmett noted that Fran Berg from the University of Pennsylvania would like to speak to the group but due to time constraints, this was placed on the next CAG meeting's agenda.

### **RR&M**

Mr. Gordon Chase noted that there had been a recent "housekeeping meeting" to keep up with various action items. He stated that EPA had conducted Activity Based Sampling air monitoring at residences on Maple Street this past summer and the results had been promised to the group before the final report was complete. Mr. Chase stated that he would like to hold EPA to their original promise. Ms. Kristine Matzko of EPA recommended that she could give a presentation to the group similar to the ambient air monitoring presentation given at today's meeting. Ms. Ruth Wuenschel of EPA also added that she is currently working on an informational fact sheet to address these very issues. Mr. Chase

stated the other issue discussed by RR&M was whether Ambler Borough wells were drawing water from contaminated wells. Ms. Matzko replied that EPA had reached out to Ambler Borough. A primarily informational meeting followed in which the parties agreed to discuss the issue further. Ms. Matzko noted that EPA is also going to conduct further groundwater testing to address this issue. Mr. Chase noted that Mr. Stuart Wiswall had recommended and was quite clear about the need for additional pump testing. Co-Chair Dave Froehlich noted that he had reached out to EPA regarding the CAG's desire for additional pump testing. Ms. Matzko responded that EPA was not at the point where additional pump testing is needed. Mr. Chase responded that this was unacceptable, noting that the recommendation came from an industry specialist, and was from a report paid for by EPA. He went on to say that the fact that the results were received four months ago and at this time, all that is being discussed is conversations with Ambler Borough is unacceptable. Co-Chair Dave Froehlich requested a formal response from EPA on this issue. Ms. Matzko stated that EPA did reply in writing earlier this year regarding these issues and that that information is still relevant. Due to time constraints, Co-Chair Dave Froehlich stopped the discussion at this time.

### **Community Awareness Group**

Ms. Diane Morgan noted that she had attended a recent community meeting regarding the floodplain study. She spoke with a Dr. Featherstone and many of the residents who attended the meeting. She noted that many residents were concerned that this study may result in the need for flood insurance. She also stated that she passed out approximately 25 CAG flyers to meeting attendees.

### **Item #7: Old Business/New Business/Next Steps**

Ms. Lora Werner of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) stated that her headquarters has requested to speak with individuals who have read ATSDR's documents and the BoRit CAG has been identified as an ideal group to interview. Ms. Werner noted that members of ATSDR may be coming to the next CAG meeting to speak with anyone who is interested in providing feedback to ATSDR about the agency's public health documents. Alternatively, individual phone interviews may be conducted or a focus group meeting may be scheduled at a different time from a CAG meeting. Several members volunteered to participate in this effort. Co-Chair Dave Froehlich noted that Ms. Susan Curry has resigned her position from the CAG but will remain an alternate. Her replacement will be Mr. Andrew Salvador. Ms. Lynn Hoffman has also resigned her position and a replacement will need to be found. Mr. Froehlich also noted that CAG website dues are due at the next meeting. He requested that each CAG member contribute \$4.25.

Meeting adjourned at 9:06 p.m. by Co-Chair Dave Froehlich.

The next CAG meeting is scheduled for February 6, 2012.