

BoRit Asbestos Superfund Community Advisory Group Meeting

October 2013 Minutes

Date: **October 2, 2013**

Location: **Upper Dublin Township Building, 801 Loch Alsh Ave, Fort Washington PA1 90002**

Meeting called to order by Co-Chair Bob Adams at 6:40pm.

Item 1: RR&M Meeting Report by Gordon Chase

Gordon Chase, Chair of the RR&M committee, read the minutes of that group's last meeting as an introduction to what was to come. The minutes are also posted on the BoRit CAG website.

Item 2: USACE Report on the Wissahickon Waterfowl Preserve (WWP)

In the absence of Federal staff, due to the current government shutdown, Gordon Chase reported his understanding of the Army Corps study of the WWP. There were several interesting findings. One was that the study did not identify a source of water feeding the WWP, whether natural springs or pipes, other than precipitation and run off. Although it is known that there are pipes in the ground, the study's sensing equipment did not pick them up clearly; this led to the conclusion that the pipes are likely broken or otherwise filled with sediment and not feeding water to the WWP. Other than the seep, there were no known outlets discovered from the reservoir.

The study did testing of the berm around the WWP to find out how much ACM was present and also to tests for the strength of the berm. Three borings were taken, with boring stopping at "refusal", which was taken to be bedrock. Although the berm was considered to be basically sound under normal water levels, it was found (by computer modelling) to be deficient at one location (nearest the seep on the western corner) if the normal water level was exceeded by two feet (as it might in a major storm). Their conclusion was that it was in no imminent danger of collapse, but not up to their desired safety factor specification of 1.4 (compared to the berm's calculated safety factor of 0.9). Mr. Chase also noted that clarification of the current safety factor of 0.9 was needed as it was not clear from the report how this number was attained, there being several areas within the berm which showed much lower safety factor numbers.

USACE then went on to make recommendations for containing the ACM while strengthening the berm. USACE proposes thickening the berm from 10 to 30 feet on the inside wall (reservoir side) using bentonite, a form of clay that expands when wet as well as regular topsoil. EPA would also deepen and to some extent flatten the floor of the WWP so that a layer of rock could be laid over the ACM on the bottom, then a layer of geotextile, then two feet of soil which would form the final new bed of the WWP. One or two islands would be added for wildlife habitat. An overflow structure would be added to allow drainage from major storm events while protecting the removal work.

This will also reduce the water volume of the WWP, which will add safety by reducing how much water weight is brought to bear on the berm walls.

Funding is already set aside for this project, so it should continue in spite of the government shutdown.

(N.B.- Work has begun on the staging area on the side of the WWP near Maple Avenue.)

Andrew Salvatore asked if more investigation of possible water sources to the WWP would occur. The answer was that EPA and USACE would monitor while the WWP is being pumped out and after it is “dry”, and see if any obvious sources of inflow showed up. Mr. Salvatore requested that the CAG ask EPA for the safety plan and work plan for the reservoir work; the CAG unanimously approved that motion. Co-chair Bob Adams will make that request.

Salvatore Boccuti asked why EPA decided not to remove and replace the whole berm. Mr. Chase responded that EPA probably thought it was safer to leave ACM in place rather than truck it away.

As outlined at the beginning of the presentation, all comments by Mr. Chase and others are their own opinions and conclusions, and should not be taken as the official EPA response.

Item 3: Phase 2 Final Report

The Phase 2 report was also discussed. Gordon Chase noted that remediation options were listed in Section 6 of the report, and that it was posted on the BoRit CAG website. There was not much new data added since the Phase 2 Preliminary Report. EPA did find one industrial water user with a well permit, which CAG members identified as Gessner Products. This water, which apparently is drawn from the BoRit ground water, is used for cooling during the production of plastic products, and then returned to the Wissahickon via the Rose Valley Creek. There was some discussion of the terms of the permit and whether they are restrictive enough, since at first glance they appear to only require temperature and Ph monitoring, whereas it is known that Borit groundwater is contaminated with several chemicals well above the regional screening limits. This will be investigated further by EPA and PADEP.

There was also discussion of possible ACM in the streambed of the Wissahickon Creek. Bob Adams noted that EPA has conducted three years of walking the Creek and picking up asbestos pieces down into WWA’s Four Mills Reserve, as well as asbestos that had been washed up on land by flooding. He noted that there was much less asbestos visible, but that he did not consider the job done. It was asked why EPA was working down there, off the BoRit site, and Mr. Adams observed that EPA’s assumption was that the asbestos had originated on the BoRit site, so it was part of EPA’s responsibility in doing the BoRit work.

The Phase 2 report was noteworthy in that it established that there was no connection between the groundwater on the BoRit site and Ambler’s drinking water wells nearby.

At the RR&M meeting, EPA’s Jill Lowe asked that it be noted that all CAG questions on the initial Phase 2 Report were addressed in the final report.

There were no observer comments.

Committee Reports

The RR&M committee report was given by Gordon Chase at the beginning of the meeting.

The Rules committee met and discussed the upcoming election for the seat of Co-chair David Froehlich. Gordon Chase announced that he was running for that seat. Mr. Chase explained that this was not due to any dissatisfaction with the current incumbent’s (Mr. David Froehlich) performance as CAG Co-Chair, but due to the fact that much of the upcoming work on the BoRit would entail the remediation of the reservoir owned by the WWP and that as Mr. Froehlich is President of the WWP it would be fairer to the WWP and more appropriate for the CAG if no conflict of interest or perception of conflict of interest could be laid at the feet of Mr. Froehlich/WWP. The Rules committee said that they already had two nominations. Nominations will close on November 11.

No other committees met during this period.

Ted Emmett posted his comments on the Health Consultation as his personal comments. They are posted on the CAG website.

The meeting was then adjourned.