

## **BoRit Asbestos Superfund Community Advisory Group Meeting Minutes** **December 3rd 2014**

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

Meeting called to order by Co-Chair Bob Adams at 6.30pm.

### **Item 1) Dr. Ted Emmett reported on a Upenn meeting with EPA on the Superfund Research Program Center grant.**

The research group had met with EPA Region 3 office that morning and had presented a summary of early progress on the 6 study projects defined under this grant program. Dr. Emmett summarized progress for the CAG and answered several questions from attendees.

- Ability of Plants and fungi ability to destroy the toxicity of asbestos. The study is underway, various plants have been collected and there is a plan to study plants from areas where asbestos occurs naturally in rock.
- Mobility of asbestos in water and soil. Previous studies of movement of particles from hazardous waste sites have generally assumed particles are spherical, however asbestos fibers are long and thin. The movement of asbestos is first being studied at the test-tube level and will then be studied in soil and eventually in hazardous waste sites. A number of factors have already been identified that effect the movement of asbestos.
- Epidemiology of mesothelioma and other asbestos diseases in Ambler. Among the tasks has been identifying people who lived in Ambler and vicinity in the past. Work with data from the 1930 Census is enabling reconstruction of the population for the 1920-1940 period, including workers at the asbestos plants and their families. Several local residents are assisting in this work which aims to reconstruct what happened to the people especially those who moved from Ambler.
- Vulnerable genes susceptible to mesothelioma. Several genes are being identified that seem to confer vulnerability to mesothelioma and some other conditions. Part of this project has involved development of a model whereby mesothelioma can be produced in mice by various asbestos fibers. This allows the way asbestos causes cancers to be studied, with the hope that cancers and other effects can be prevented.
- Chemo-prevention. This project investigates the potential of dietary supplements to prevent cancer from asbestos. The first experiments are taking place in animals.
- Bio-markers. Various changes in blood are being studied to identify markers (biomarkers) that could indicate early changes from asbestos. It is hoped that these might eventually identify people at risk before there are ill-effects.

At that meeting with EPA the SRP & EPA agreed to have follow-up meetings to collaborate further. They will share soil and water samples, and there will be discussions around ways to engage the community.

## **Item 2) Presentation by Jack Kelly (EPA) on Bast/Frumin tracts as they pertain to EPA**

The full power-point presentation (37.6 MB) by Mr Kelly can be found on the BoRit web site under the title "[Bast/Frumin parcel presentation by Jack Kelly \(EPA\) 12/3/14](#)" in the "About our CAG/presentations to CAG" section.

A lengthy discussion ensued primarily centered around the question as to why the Bast/Frumin tracts, which in some areas have been shown to contain a greater concentration of asbestos fibers than the BoRit superfund site (up to 90% asbestos), should not be re-mediated by EPA under the same protocols that exist for BoRit, particularly since Mr Kelly's earlier report on Bast /Frumin had advised that a superfund listing was not required providing (amongst other conditions) that the soils not be disturbed. This condition has not been met as the soils have been significantly disturbed throughout much of the site since the earlier report's publication.

Mr Kelly advised that whilst acknowledging that the site soils had been disturbed since his earlier report, the site was now under a PA DEP clean up program (Act 2, Land recycling) based upon a housing development project approved by the local Ambler Borough council (and now part funded by a PA state grant from the Governor's office). As such, EPA did not feel it necessary to consider a superfund listing, which if implemented would likely delay the redevelopment of the site for several years.

CAG and Ambler Borough Council member Sharon McCormick did not think that the proposed housing development should relieve EPA from their responsibility to clean up the site to the same standards as BoRit and furthermore does not believe a housing development to be an appropriate use for a re-mediated asbestos waste site. Ms McCormick also advised that Ambler Borough Council were unaware of the contamination of the site when the development approval was given.

CAG member Peter Lowry expressed concern that as the site has subsequently undergone much change since Mr Kelly's earlier report, that there exists, at this moment in time, no current detailed knowledge as to the site's contamination characteristics.

CAG member Gordon Chase, expressed an opinion that the much referred to degree of contamination at Bast/Frumin was somewhat of a 'red herring' since the degree of contamination be it 22% or 92% requires the same clean up protocols. Furthermore he noted that part of the Bast tract had already been redeveloped as a parking lot for the neighboring Boiler House office building and questioned how this could have happened. Mr McDowell (EPA) advised that part of the Bast tract had been sold to the Boiler House project.<sup>1</sup>

Due to time constraints the CAG Co-Chair Bob Adams brought the discussion to a close without conclusion.

## **Item 3). Presentation by Eduardo Rovira (EPA) on current BoRit site developments.**

The latest aerial photographs (November 30<sup>th</sup> courtesy of Salvatore A. Boccuti) revealed the progress being made at the reservoir. Eduardo advised as follows:

- Half the berm from Maple street to the Wissahickon (along Rose Valley creek side) was now completed. The remainder of that side is under construction together with the Wissahickon creek side berm. After these two berms are completed the remaining Pile side berm works will be undertaken.
- The floor of the reservoir is being covered completely with Geo-textile fabric and clean soil to

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<sup>1</sup> Mr McDowell later advised by email on 12/8/14 that: "The Boiler House property has a lease with Mr. Bast regarding the portion of the site being used as a parking lot, and did not purchase this small area as I mistakenly conveyed to the Group. "

varying depths of at least 12 inches, dependent on the solidity of the ground. Some areas are wetter and remain wetter than other areas, possibly due to small spring flows.

- The new pipe and manhole structure are directing storm water flows into a pit within the reservoir, though this pit, while almost full at the time, is not showing a propensity to overflow.
- The completion of the reservoir works is scheduled for late spring/early summer 2015, but is of course weather dependent. Any snow fall this winter will not be plowed from the reservoir. Work will be halted pending snow melt.
- The remainder of the park parcel works are expected to be finished after the reservoir and by later summer/early fall it is hoped that the 'removal' stage of the BoRit operation will be completed.

#### **Item 4) CAG Co-Chair elections.**

The seat of CAG Co-Chair Mr Bob Adams (now alternate member for the Wissahickon Waterfowl Preserve) was due for election. With no other candidates standing, Mr Adams was unanimously re-elected on a voice vote.

#### **Item 5) Other business.**

Susan Curry asked EPA if they would give a prediction of a likely time line for the Record of Decision. Jill replied the ROD would come out about 6 months after the Proposed Remedial Action Plan (PRAP) the latter of which might be completed in Fall 2015.

**Meeting adjourned 8.35pm**