

New Bedford Harbor & Aerovox Mill Monthly Informational Meeting October 28, 2010 7:00-8:45pm

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Informal Meeting Notes

Summary of Action Items:

- *Invite relevant parties to present on the evacuation plan and plan to outreach this evacuation plan for community at the next meeting*
- *URS to give a more detailed presentation on demolition at the Aerovox site*
- *Discuss Seafood Monitoring Plan*
- *EPA will report back on options for providing access to public about SER meetings*
- *EPA will find out the answer to question about moving sewage outflow pipe*
- *EPA will provide further information about air monitoring during mechanical dredging/SER activities*
- *EPA will present results from public comments regarding CAD Cells*
- *Discussion of Budget*

Introduction: Meeting goals, agenda overview, meeting guidelines

EPA welcomed everyone and explained that a facilitator from the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) would run the meeting so that EPA did not have to give presentations and take questions at the same time. They reviewed the agenda and reiterated the two meeting goals. The first meeting goal was to provide the community with an update on what EPA has been working on and will be doing for the next month. The second goal was address comments and questions from the community. Questions that were not answered at the meeting were recorded to ensure follow-up.

Community members asked if the facilitator would be paid for using dredging money, while others stated they were glad to see this meeting format. *EPA responded that the facilitator is not paid for using dredging money; there is a national contract that pays for the facilitation.*

Stacie Smith, of CBI, presented ground rules for the meeting:

1. Be respectful
2. Stay on topic
3. Speak one at a time
4. Share the floor

Historic Shipwreck Found in Upper Harbor

EPA presented information about a historic shipwreck found in Upper Harbor. There was some interest from community members and they were thankful to EPA for providing the

full picture of work being done in the area. A question was raised about financing the shipwreck work and whether it comes from the dredging budget. If so, how much?

EPA: The information was presented since it is relevant for dredging efforts. As to the funding question, the funds do come from the dredging budget. The project costs about \$20,000, which is inexpensive. A New Bedford-based company is doing the work.

Update on Aerovox Mill Pre-Demolition Site Work

EPA presented an update on work underway at the Aerovox Mill Site. Community members expressed concern about recent mill fires, and asked about a plan for evacuation in case of emergency, what type of environmental monitoring would be done and how the neighborhood will be informed. This was a concern for not only Aerovox but other mills in New Bedford that could easily catch fire and spark air contamination. There was a request to make public a broad evacuation plan. Suggestions were made for posting signs, maps and information (also translated) for various evacuation plans that were simple and easily accessible and that could be published in the *Standard Times*. Community members also asked if EPA could arrange for appropriate City representatives to attend a future meeting to address these concerns.

EPA: As demolition gets closer, we are working with the City to develop our neighborhood outreach plans which will include mailings, web updates, door-to-door meetings, and prescribed office hours at the site for the duration of the project. The City does have an evacuation plan that is available on the City's website. There are established emergency procedures and an emergency coordinator. We are working with the City to arrange a date for the emergency coordinator to attend a future meeting. We will look into publishing the existing plan in the newspaper, although publishing a link to the document might be more feasible. EPA will also leave a copy of the Aerovox evacuation plan with the reference desk at the New Bedford Public Library. While the demolition is taking place, there will be many people around the site who can help in case of emergency. Right now there is 24-hour security and a warning system in place. Establishing an evacuation route in advance can be difficult because fires depend on variables like wind direction. Evacuation routes can be communicated by phone depending on which way a fire is moving. EPA provides advice but does not actually draft the plan.

For the duration of the project, EPA will have a large oversight presence. EPA and the Corps of Engineers will be onsite almost all of the time. There will be an air quality monitoring system in place, and work will stop if necessary according to air quality standards to protect worker health in the immediate work zone as well as the surrounding community. EPA will conduct both air and stormwater analyses. Updates and data will be posted online as quickly as it is validated and available.

In addition to the above outreach, EPA will continue to provide monthly updates on the Aerovox project and will invite URS (the consulting firm involved in the demolition) to these meetings periodically to give a more detailed update of the work at the site.

PCB Migration Study

EPA presented an update on the PCB migration study. This raised questions about the health impacts of the remaining levels of PCB concentrations in the inner harbor, particularly around Palmer's Cove and Palmer's Island, as well as general concerns about the impact of contamination on local fishing and recreation.

EPA: Based on sediment data collected in the lower harbor, PCB concentrations range from 0 to 200 parts per million; PCB concentrations in the outer harbor sediment have been found at much lower levels, except for preliminary identified hot spot areas. EPA is conducting an area-wide study in the outer harbor. To clarify, these results refer to sediment not water, the water is safe for swimming. Health risks from the Harbor contamination are primarily associated with consumption of contaminated fish. EPA refers the community to EPA's new advisory for locally caught seafood.

Another question was raised about whether the PCB migration study was done during dredging activities, and how actively is EPA testing the areas around beaches? The concern was that dredging might affect PCB levels in the water. Was a migration study done during dredging?

EPA: This migration study, also known as the Flux Study was performed when dredging activity was not underway. Water column monitoring is conducted prior to dredging and at and around the dredge areas whenever dredging occurs. EPA has conducted beach sampling in the past and does not think that PCB levels have changed too much over time.*

** EPA offers further clarification that was not stated at the October meeting: As part of the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) for the outer harbor area (OU3), EPA did perform additional beach sampling.*

MassDEP added that a study was conducted for a consecutive 18 month period and found that there was not a significant amount of PCB migration observed throughout that time period.

5 Year Review Report, Seafood Monitoring

EPA presented information on the 5 Year Review Report and mentioned that a Seafood Monitoring plan would be discussed at the next meeting. There were no questions at this time.

State Enhanced Remedy Update

MassDEP presented an update on activities conducted under the State Enhanced Remedy (SER) program. A question was raised about the sewage outflow pipe that comes into the inner harbor from Fairhaven. Asking if the pipe could be moved, one person expressed a concern that the clean up would not be effective if the pipe remains in place. Who has responsibility for moving the pipe?

MassDEP and EPA: While it is important to look at CSO contamination, this is regulated by the Clean Water Act. Contact information for more knowledgeable staff can be provided.

Issues were also raised about public access to the monthly SER meetings that are held during the day which makes it difficult for community members who work to attend. Requests were made to take action to ensure these meetings are inclusive and held at a time when most people could attend.

MassDEP: Government officials and the closely involved private stakeholders do attend the monthly meetings, and for that reason they need to happen during the working hours. However, DEP can continue attending these evening meetings to answer community questions. Anyone who is interested in getting involved in these meetings should give their contact information to the head of the SER committee (Paul Craffey).

EPA: Future agendas at these meetings could include time to discuss SER issues; also, perhaps these meetings could be coordinated with SER meetings.

Questions were raised about how navigational dredging is funded. There were also concerns about the effect of SER mechanical dredging on suspending contaminated sediment such that it could cause air emissions. More information on air quality near this work was requested.

MassDEP: Navigational dredging funds come primarily from an earmark in the state Seaport Bond Bill. There is some cost-sharing with commercial partners. As to potential air emissions, SER work is subject to many protocols to ensure it is conducted safely for workers directly on site. They will follow up with information on this question at the next meeting

General Q/A

Questions were raised about the potential recreational projects being funded around the harbor.

EPA: These projects are funded through the Natural Resource Damages (NRD) Trustee Fund which is a separate board not involved with the CERCLA cleanup process.

A request was made to share the public comments related to the proposed CAD cell with the community. Also a request for the budget to be added as a topic for discussion at a future meeting.

EPA: We have received many comments on the proposed CAD cell which are currently under review. As to the budget, EPA is willing to speak in general terms about Harbor cleanup funding at the next meeting.

Closing Remarks

EPA said that the next meeting would be held on December 9th.