

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
BROOKLYN-QUEENS AQUIFER FEASIBILITY STUDY

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING: May 6, 2004

MINUTES

The 20th meeting of the Brooklyn-Queens Aquifer (BQA) Feasibility Study Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was held on Thursday, May 6, 2004 at the Hillside Manor Comprehensive Care Center. (See Attachment A for Attendance List.)

Helen Neuhaus, Helen Neuhaus & Associates (HNA), opened the meeting by asking for comments on the Minutes of the March 4th meeting. There were no comments, and the Minutes were adopted unanimously. She then facilitated a discussion of follow-up items from that meeting:

- In response to a request by the CAC, York College was contacted in order to determine if anyone from the College would be interested in serving on the Committee. Ms. Neuhaus reported that this effort was unsuccessful, as were past attempts to reach out to York. She noted that the project team had better luck with the Queens High School for the Sciences at York College; the principal of the school has invited Dr. Alan Rabideau, State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo, to speak to student members of the Science Club. Ms. Neuhaus suggested that given York College's apparent lack of interest and the Science High School's enthusiasm, the CAC focus on working with the latter.
- At the March CAC meeting, Assemblyman William Scarborough requested additional information regarding sodium levels in the wells that are part of the reactivation (drought) program. Don Cohen, Malcolm Pirnie, Inc., stated that while some data was obtained from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), it was determined that more information is needed. Nicole Brown, Malcolm Pirnie, Inc., will forward a compilation of the sodium test data to Assemblyman Scarborough as soon as the information is available.

Project Update

Mr. Cohen announced that, with one exception, all of the permitting and administrative issues related to pumping at Station 24 and remediation of the West Side Corporation (WSC) site have been resolved. These include the following:

- The project team has reached a verbal agreement with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) regarding discharge levels at Station 24. An e-mail message of confirmation will follow. Mr. Cohen stated that design work on the Granular Activated Carbon treatment system will begin soon.
- DEP has received all notarized signatures required to execute agreements with DEC.
- DEC has signed an agreement with Atlantic Bus Company regarding the relocation of its buses to a DEP site across the street.
- Bill Yulinsky, DEP, is working to ensure that funding is in place to start both projects.
- All design and bid documents for clean-up of the WSC site are ready. It is expected that the bidding process will take approximately two months. Once the contract is awarded,

the contractor will have 120 days to install the Electrical Resistance Heating (ERH) probes and perform other preparatory work at the site. Mr. Cohen indicated that the soil clean-up will be fully operational in the Fall. He added that pumping will not start at Station 24 until the ERH has removed the worst contamination from the WSC site (approximately 8 months).

Commenting on the remaining open issue, Mr. Cohen noted that DEC is still seeking a written access agreement from the owner of the WSC property. While DEC has the legal right to perform remediation work at the site, it is requesting permission in order to avoid any delays should the owner decide to challenge DEC in court. Mr. Cohen indicated that the owner had previously expressed concern regarding the fate of its tenant (Atlantic Bus Company); this issue has been resolved.

Peter Richards questioned why treatment is required for Station 24 water if it will be discharged to the sewer system. He asked if the discharge is subject to stringent regulations because it will mix with drinking water. In response, Mr. Cohen emphasized that the Station 24 water will not be mixed with potable water. He explained that the discharge will go into the storm sewer, which flows into Bergen Basin and then Jamaica Bay. However, since the water is highly contaminated with perchloroethylene (PCE), it must be treated before it enters any surface water. Mr. Cohen noted that the maximum level of PCE for drinking water is five parts per *billion*. The PCE levels for Station 24 water are 18 parts per *million*. In response to a second question from Mr. Richards, Mr. Cohen stated that DEC, through its State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) program, ensures that any discharge to the storm sewer system meets water quality standards. Deputy Commissioner Doug Greeley, DEP, added that the State is enacting regulations that will restrict even the flow of rainwater into surface waters. Dr. Paul Liroy, University of Medicine and Dentistry-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, commented that the biggest source of non-point source pollution is run-off from parking lots and streets.

In response to a question from Dr. Liroy, Mr. Cohen stated that there will be opportunities for the CAC to observe clean-up of the WSC site. Dr. Rabideau suggested that soil sampling would be a more interesting activity than ERH, which largely takes place underground.

In concluding his comments on WSC remediation, Mr. Cohen noted that a copy of DEC's Final Design Report for the project is available for review at tonight's meeting.

Mr. Cohen then reported on the status of permitting issues for the Station 6 Demonstration Plant. He explained that there are several unresolved items, including agreement with DEC regarding discharge from the reverse osmosis (RO) portion of the treatment process. He noted that while RO is a very effective method of producing high quality drinking water, its "reject stream" will contain high concentrations of nitrates. Discharge of this RO reject is an issue that must be resolved prior to the start of Station 6 design. Possible solutions include discharge to a sanitary sewer and ultimately to a wastewater treatment facility, or dilution of nitrate concentrations by blending the RO reject with other water. Mr. Cohen indicated that the State and City are currently in discussion regarding upgrading existing wastewater treatment facilities to more effectively handle denitrification. Although Mr. Cohen expressed hope for agreement on this issue with DEC within the next two months, he admitted that this timeframe might be overly optimistic. In response to a comment from Manuel Caughman regarding existing problems with sanitary sewers, Mr. Cohen indicated that DEP is examining sewer capacity in southeast Queens.

Both sewer upgrades and other solutions are being pursued. Mr. Cohen also explained that pumping will not begin at Station 6 until the contaminated plume is contained (1-2 years after pumping starts at Station 24).

Educational Outreach Activities

Dr. Rabideau stated that SUNY-Buffalo now offers a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Engineering—the only accredited program in the SUNY system—and that he has been recruiting students for the program. In response to his suggestion to the CAC that he speak with students in southeast Queens about careers in environmental engineering (and SUNY-Buffalo in particular), meetings were arranged with two groups: the Science Club at the Queens High School for the Sciences at York College and an assembly of 8th-graders at I.S. 59. Dr. Rabideau and Ms. Brown met with approximately a dozen students and two teachers from the Science Club earlier today, showing slides and the BQA Study project video and discussing water-related issues. The I.S. 59 assembly will be held tomorrow morning (May 7th); Dr. Rabideau indicated that he would focus on water issues there as well. Ms. Brown added that in response to questions raised at the Science Club about involving students in the project, she suggested that they assist in taking readings from DEP's monitoring well at York College.

In response to Ms. Neuhaus' question regarding the establishment of a science laboratory at I.S. 59, Mr. Caughman introduced Rodney Pride, who is working with the school and Assemblyman Scarborough on an Adopt-A-School initiative. The following is a summary of the discussion that followed:

- Mr. Pride noted that while Assemblyman Scarborough has committed \$50,000 for the laboratory, additional funding is needed. Remarking that the federal "Leave No Child Behind" program will focus on the science curriculum next year, Linda Caleb Hazel speculated that funds might be available through that source.
- Mr. Pride stated that Robert Hampton, York College president, has signed a letter of agreement with Nicholas Stapleton, I.S. 59 Principal, for I.S. 59 to serve as a "feeder" school for the Science High School. Mr. Pride added that he would be interested in speaking with Dr. Rabideau about extending this connection to SUNY-Buffalo.
- In response to a question from Earl Roberts, Mr. Pride stated that the science laboratory at I.S. 59 is intended to be a template for future similar facilities at other District 29 schools. He and Mr. Caughman noted that many volunteers are working to establish this laboratory, including several "talented engineers." Commenting that I.S. 59 has the available space, Deputy Commissioner Greeley added that the laboratory would be open to students from other schools in the district.
- Ms. Brown observed that the Fall 2004 deadline for opening the I.S. 59 laboratory is very ambitious and that there is much work to be done, including curriculum development and blueprints for modifying the classroom (water, electrical, etc.).
- Mr. Pride thanked Councilman Leroy Comrie for supporting I.S. 59 with funding for new lockers. Councilman Comrie stated that he is in the process of putting together a capital budget request for I.S. 59; he will make sure that it includes funding for the science laboratory. He noted that budget requests are due tomorrow and that the City Council will hold a series of budget meetings next week. Councilman Comrie invited CAC

members to attend these meetings, particularly the one with DEP, adding that they will also be televised on Channel 74.

- In response to a question from Mr. Richards, Ms. Brown and Mr. Cohen described the basic set-up proposed for the laboratory: a water table (to be donated by DEP) for ground and surface water modeling; areas for hands-on work in different curriculum areas; and materials to create living ecosystems. Ms. Brown emphasized that the focus will be on interactive learning, giving students the opportunity to realize that science is interesting. Ms. Neuhaus observed that that spark of interest was evident when students toured the Station 6 Pilot Plant. More information will be presented to the CAC as plans for the laboratory take shape.

Discussion of Trip to Hillview Reservoir and Van Cortlandt Valve Chamber

Ms. Neuhaus opened the discussion by asking for the CAC's impressions of the April 17th tours of Hillview Reservoir and the Van Cortlandt Valve Chamber. Jeff Diggs enthused that it was a "wonderful, fantastic day." He noted that seeing how the New York City drinking water distribution system works was a rare opportunity for CAC members. Ms. Hazel stated that she was "truly impressed" and feels much safer knowing the precautions that are taken with the water supply. Mr. Diggs joked that the only problem he noticed was the difficulty in keeping ducks away from the reservoir. Deputy Commissioner Greeley replied that geese and seagulls are more of a concern than the one duck family that lives there. Referring to the valve chamber, Ms. Brown remarked that the reality of this facility is much more impressive than hearing it described. Ms. Neuhaus noted that copies of photographs taken that day will be sent to CAC members who participated in the tour.

Other Business

- Debora Hunte inquired about the nature of work being performed by the company "Aquifer Drill" on 173rd and 174th Streets. Deputy Commissioner Greeley stated that this work is part of a roadway project and involves the installation of a large water main that will allow surface water to be distributed more efficiently. Mr. Yulinsky added that the drillers are collecting soil samples and identifying the location of underground utilities. In response to Ms. Hunte's question regarding the relationship between this project and Station 6, Deputy Commissioner Greeley replied that Station 6 will be able to tie into this main if necessary. [Subsequent to the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Greeley confirmed that the referenced work is part of Contract HWQ1161, which includes installation of a 48" trunk main and sewers. The work that Ms. Hunte observed involves televising the route of the sewer prior to the start of construction.]

In response to Ms. Hunte's suggestion that DEP inform the CAC of this type of project in advance, Deputy Commissioner Greeley noted that although the project is outside the purview of the CAC, he has mentioned it at previous meetings. He added that it is likely that, as District Manager of Community Board #12, Yvonne Reddick was informed of the work. Echoing Ms. Hunte's comment, Dr. Liroy stated that given the significance of the BQA Study to the local community, CAC members should be informed of any other projects in the area, even those that are only indirectly related.

- Ms. Hunte further noted that contractors were observed cleaning the sewers in the area of 175th Street and 110th Avenue. She asked if this was a DEP job. Kenneth Gill

commented that he saw similar work near his home at 180th Street and Murdock Avenue. Deputy Commissioner Greeley answered that he is not aware of the referenced work but would investigate the matter and report back to the CAC. In response to a comment from Mr. Richards regarding the need to clean out the sewers to alleviate flooding, Deputy Commissioner Greeley stated that it is possible that the sewers were being cleaned in order to determine the extent and type of repair work required. He noted that there is an effort underway to install sewer level indicators in order to monitor the level of water.

- Referring to *WaterNews*, a newsletter of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Ms. Hazel announced that a television program about protecting watersheds, “After the Storm”, will be aired on the Weather Channel on Sunday, May 9th at 8:30 and 11:30 p.m., Saturday, June 26th at 8:30 and 11:30 p.m. and Saturday, September 18th at 8:00 and 11:00 p.m. Ms. Hazel noted that copies of the “After the Storm” video are available free of charge from the National Service Center for Environmental Publications (1-800-490-9198). Deputy Commissioner Greeley added that the BQA project video was recently shown on Queens Public Television.

Upcoming Meetings

Observing that most of the project work over the next few months will involve permitting issues, Ms. Neuhaus suggested that the CAC take a break during June and July and reconvene on Thursday, August 5th. By that time, she noted, remediation of the WSC site should be starting and there may be progress on Station 6. Ms. Neuhaus added that if there are any new developments before August, a meeting can be scheduled. In the meantime, a newsletter to the community will be prepared and the project team will be available to meet with any interested groups or individuals.

The next CAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, August 5, 2004 at 7 p.m.** at the Hillside Manor Comprehensive Care Center, 188-11 Hillside Avenue, Jamaica Estates.

Follow-Up List

1. Provide data regarding groundwater sodium levels found in Reactivation Program wells as requested by Assemblyman Scarborough at March CAC Meeting. Responsibility: Malcolm Pirnie.
2. Investigate nature of work that was being performed by DEP contractor in vicinity of 110th Avenue and 174th Street earlier in the week. Responsibility: Doug Greeley.
3. Schedule visit(s) to WSC site once clean-up is underway. Responsibility: DEP, Malcolm Pirnie, HNA.
4. Provide additional information regarding curriculum and status of science laboratory being established at I.S. 59 as it becomes available. Responsibility: Nicole Brown.
5. Distribute photographs of CAC tour of Hillview Reservoir and Van Cortlandt Valve Chamber. Responsibility: HNA.
6. Consider subscribing to *WaterNews*, EPA’s on-line publication. Responsibility: HNA.
7. Prepare next issue of project newsletter for distribution to community this summer. Responsibility: DEP, Malcolm Pirnie, HNA.

Brooklyn-Queens Aquifer Feasibility Study
Citizens Advisory Committee
Thursday, May 6, 2004

Attendance List

CAC Members/Alternates

Linda Caleb Hazel
A Better Day Inc./St. Benedict The Moor/
St. Bonaventure

Manuel Caughman
Community Board #12/Brinkerhoff Action
Association

Leroy Comrie
New York City Council

Jeff Diggs
Councilman Leroy Comrie

Kenneth Gill
Addisleigh Park Civic Association

Irving Hicks
Brinkerhoff Action Association

Debora Hunte
Brinkerhoff Action Association

Peter Richards
Community Board #13

Earl Roberts
113th Precinct Council

Michael Turner
Addisleigh Park Civic Association

Guests

Sarah Hicks
Resident

Rodney Pride
New York City Administration for
Children's Services

Project Team

Nicole Brown
Malcolm Pirnie, Inc.

Don Cohen
Malcolm Pirnie, Inc.

Doug Greeley
New York City Department of
Environmental Protection

Helen Neuhaus
Helen Neuhaus & Associates Inc.

Denise Woodin
Helen Neuhaus & Associates Inc.

Anita Wright
Helen Neuhaus & Associates Inc.

Bill Yulinsky
New York City Department of
Environmental Protection