

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

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING: December 4, 2003

MINUTES

The 16th meeting of the Brooklyn-Queens Aquifer (BQA) Feasibility Study Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was held on Thursday, December 4, 2003 at the Hillside Manor Comprehensive Care Center. (See Attachment A for Attendance List.)

Deputy Commissioner Doug Greeley, New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) opened the meeting with a few thoughts about the holiday season and the work of the CAC. Observing that “diversity is a wonderful thing,” Commissioner Greeley remarked that the BQA Study has led him to reflect on the common goals that unite the community and the project team. He noted that the public meeting held in October could be compared to Thanksgiving: after a year of hard work, with “no droughts or floods,” the CAC and the team reaped a large harvest when the project was brought to the public. Like the early farmers who toiled all year in order to store food for the winter, the work of the CAC has laid the groundwork for next year’s activities. Commissioner Greeley concluded by wishing everyone “peace, plenty and a happy holiday season”.

Helen Neuhaus, Helen Neuhaus & Associates (HNA), then facilitated a discussion of follow-up items from the October 2, 2003 meeting. These included the following:

- In response to a question regarding DEP’s water sampling protocols, Nicole Brown, Malcolm Pirnie, Inc., indicated that the current procedures are extensive and include testing of both the distribution system and individual wells. She explained that for the distribution system, about 30 sampling locations are representative of the groundwater system; however, the number of sampling locations can vary depending on which wells are operational. On a daily basis, two (2) locations are sampled and tested for general chemistry and bacteria. On a monthly basis, five (5) of the 30 locations are randomly sampled for more extensive testing, including metals, alkalinity, sulfates, nitrates, and nutrients.

Ms. Brown explained that sampling protocols vary based on the treatment performed at the well station. There are three levels of treatment: well stations with air strippers, to treat volatile organic compounds (VOCs); well stations where a sequesterant is added; and well stations where only chlorine and fluoride are added. As an example, she noted that well stations with air strippers are sampled weekly for general chemistry (i.e. fluoride, pH, conductivity, color, turbidity); monthly for the short-list of VOCs (about 48 compounds) and bacteria; quarterly for nutrients and lead and copper rule metals (i.e. nitrates, nitrites, alkalinity, hardness, sulfates, calcium, chloride, lead, copper and manganese); and annually for the complete list of organics (approximately 125 compounds). Although DEP is required by law to test for the complete list of organics every 18 months, the Department tests for these compounds on an annual basis.

- In response to a CAC request to visit a nearby operational air stripping facility, Ms. Neuhaus stated that this could be arranged at any time (though preferably during business hours). There was general agreement that the tour should be scheduled in the spring. Ms. Neuhaus suggested that it be held on the same day as a CAC meeting, if possible.
- Answering a question from Linda Caleb Hazel, Commissioner Greeley indicated that the difference in cost between reverse osmosis and nanofiltration would not necessarily be borne by consumers. He noted that while the consumer generally pays for increases in operational expenses, DEP is planning to use the department's Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations budget to construct and operate the Station 6 plant. It is not anticipated that water rates will rise as a result of using reverse osmosis.
- In response to a question regarding reimbursement for the remediation of the West Side Corporation (WSC) site, Commissioner Greeley stated that DEP intends to pursue reimbursement from the responsible parties. Speculating that DEP would be one of several creditors seeking compensation, he noted that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) plans to pursue full damages from the WSC's owner once the clean-up is complete.

Following adoption of the Minutes of the October 2nd CAC meeting without changes, Donald Cohen, Malcolm Pirnie, Inc. provided a project update.

Project Update

Mr. Cohen reported that the project team is continuing to work with DEC to obtain discharge permits for Station 6 and Station 24. While the process for Station 24 is moving forward, there are several issues surrounding discharge limits from Station 6 that must be resolved. He noted that although DEC is being cooperative, the agency is concerned about the impact of discharges to Jamaica Bay.

In response to a question from Peter Richards, Mr. Cohen indicated that treated discharge from Station 24 will flow into the storm sewer and then Jamaica Bay. The discharge from Station 6 will also flow into the bay; however, it poses more of a problem because it will contain high concentrations (though not a high volume) of nitrates. Ms. Hazel asked if effluents from Connecticut or other sources affect the nitrate level in Jamaica Bay. Mr. Cohen replied that since Jamaica Bay is on the south shore, it is not affected by discharges from Connecticut. Commissioner Greeley added that total nitrogen removal (i.e. nitrate, nitrite and nitrogen) is a serious issue for DEP, which is spending \$1 billion to upgrade its sewage treatment plants. He added that although much of the pollution comes from outside New York State, DEC is also committing a significant amount of funding to address this issue. In response to a related question from Ms. Hazel, Mr. Cohen stated that three wells (48, 48A and 54) which were known to have nitrate concentrations and were slated to go online during last year's drought, were not put into service.

Mr. Cohen further reported that DEC is working with Con Edison to arrange for the provision of electricity for the Electrical Resistance Heating that will be used to clean up the WSC site. He noted that the system requires a lot of power, adding that locations have been selected for the transformers, poles and lines and that work is progressing.

Mr. Cohen stated that the project team has had discussions with the Board of Standards and Appeals and the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) regarding the building and special use permits that will be needed for Station 6. He explained that although Station 6 is located in a residential zone, it currently has a special use permit for water distribution. However, DCP has indicated that since the new plant will be treating, as well as distributing water, other permitting issues must be addressed. Mr. Cohen remarked that discussions are continuing and that zoning changes are expected to be less of a hurdle than obtaining discharge permits from DEC. He reiterated that design work is on hold pending the resolution of permitting issues.

In response to a question from Manuel Caughman regarding the status of street de-mapping at Station 6, Mr. Cohen stated that the surveyor is preparing maps for DCP. He added that while this work is moving forward, street de-mapping involves a lengthy review process, including approval from the Community Board. Mr. Caughman remarked that de-mapping of these streets will be a “blessing” for the neighborhood.

Public Meeting Debrief

Kenneth Gill commented that he received positive feedback from community members, who had no idea that a CAC had been formed or that so much had been accomplished. He noted that they were impressed with the cooperative effort and with the community’s extensive involvement in the project. Commending DEP, Mr. Gill stated, “in their view, and mine too, nothing like this has ever happened”.

Ms. Neuhaus thanked CAC members for their hard work and for bringing other members of the public into the project through plant tours and involvement with the local schools. Calling the CAC a “great group,” she remarked that the process is just beginning.

Ms. Hazel noted that as a member of the Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board, she will recommend that the BQA Study be used as a model for that organization. Tara Smith observed that as a newcomer to the project, she found the newsletter very helpful. Mr. Caughman added that Ms. Smith is a member of Community Board #12’s Environmental Committee.

Other Business

- Mr. Richards reported that the BQA Study has been incorporated into a course at York College. Commissioner Greeley stated that York College has also expressed an interest in having a monitoring well installed on its campus. DEP is working out the details with the United States Geological Survey. Mr. Cohen added that, in addition to being a useful teaching tool, installing a well at York would provide good information for the project.
- Mr. Caughman thanked Commissioner Greeley, Ms. Brown and Ms. Neuhaus for working with representatives of the school district to establish a water quality laboratory at I.S. 59. Commissioner Greeley commented that an environmental excellence program is being started in the junior high school, which could possibly link to a specific high school and eventually lead to a program at York College. Ms. Neuhaus observed that the educational initiatives that are being created in different disciplines are very exciting.
- In response to a question from Mr. Caughman, Ms. Neuhaus noted that the project team has not yet been contacted by Community Board #12 regarding a presentation on the

project at its January 21st meeting. Mr. Caughman agreed to follow-up and notify Ms. Neuhaus if a project update is requested.

The meeting was adjourned for a holiday party. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, January 8, 2004 at 7 p.m.** at the Hillside Manor Comprehensive Care Center, 188-11 Hillside Avenue, Jamaica Estates.

Follow-Up Items

1. Present project update at January meetings of Community Boards #12 and 13. Responsibility: DEP, Malcolm Pirnie, HNA.
2. Schedule visit (Spring 2004) to DEP air stripping facility currently in operation. Consider scheduling visit to coincide with CAC meeting. Responsibility: DEP, Malcolm Pirnie, HNA.

Brooklyn-Queens Aquifer Feasibility Study
Citizens Advisory Committee
Thursday, December 4, 2003

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

Kenneth Gill
Addisleigh Park Civic Association

Debora Hunte
Brinkerhoff Action Association

Peter Richards
Community Board #13

Earl Roberts
113th Precinct Council

Michael Turner
Resident/Addisleigh Park Civic Association

Guests

Tara Smith
Community Board #12

Project Team

Nicole Brown
Malcolm Pirnie, Inc.

Don Cohen
Malcolm Pirnie, Inc.

Lillie Farrell
New York City Department of
Environmental Protection

Natasha Harper
New York City Department of
Environmental Protection

Mark Lanaghan
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