

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

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING: February 28, 2002

Minutes

The first meeting of the Brooklyn-Queens Aquifer (BQA) Feasibility Study Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was held on Thursday, February 28, 2002 at York College. (Attendance List attached.) This initial meeting was scheduled to review project goals and timeframes, discuss CAC roles and responsibilities, and establish operating procedures for the group, which has been formed to assist the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in developing its BQA Study.

After welcoming attendees and thanking CAC members for agreeing to participate in the Committee, Roman Kensy, DEP, explained that the CAC would primarily be providing input to DEP on water quality, flooding and environmental issues in the vicinity of Stations 6 and 24, as well as outreach to the general community. He then indicated that the anticipated agenda for this evening's meeting has been changed to address issues related to DEP's recently announced drought emergency program, in particular its plan to reactivate specific wells in Queens. Noting that he is aware that the possible reopening of wells is of great concern to CAC members, Mr. Kensy explained that the project team would use this evening's meeting as an opportunity to respond to questions and clarify issues involving the reactivation of wells. He emphasized that the Station 6 and Station 24 projects, which DEP has been discussing with the community over the past few months, are separate and apart from the drought emergency plan and that they are not involved in the well reactivation program.

Before introducing Don Cohen, Malcolm Pirnie, Inc. (MPI), Mr. Kensy reiterated DEP's commitment to only providing the community with acceptable water that meets all required standards. He also announced the appointment of Christopher Ward as DEP's new Commissioner.

Drought Emergency Plan

Don Cohen, MPI, reiterated that work related to Station 6, as well as clean up activities at the West Side Corporation (WSC) site, are not connected to the drought emergency plan. Mr. Cohen described the Groundwater System Reactivation Plan (See handout), which provides a summary of DEP's proposal to use existing wells and reactivate others. After re-emphasizing that none of the wells included in the plan are near Station 6, he provided a brief history of New York City's acquisition of the Jamaica Water Supply (JWS) Company, which included 69 wells. Mr. Cohen explained that although some of the wells have been operating since the time of the acquisition, many were left to stand idle as they were too expensive to repair and put back into service at the time they were bought.

Mr. Cohen then described the four categories of wells (A, B, C and D) included in the reactivation plan, which is not an inventory of all wells in the system (only those that could be activated by the summer). For security reasons, the exact location of the wells could not be provided.

- Category A (13 wells) – these wells are operational and available for use. Some are currently used on a regular or intermittent basis. The wells in this group could add approximately 21 million gallons a day (MGD) to the system.
- Category B (3 wells) – water from these wells will be sampled and analyzed and the information submitted to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) for approval. Upon NYSDOH approval, these wells could be put back on line, providing approximately 4 MGD.
- Category C (9 wells) – the wells in this category need additional work (i.e., piping, mechanical upgrades, etc.) before being put back in service. As above, each well would be sampled, analyzed and require NYSDOH approval before being introduced to the water supply system. These wells could provide approximately 10 MGD.
- Category D (11 wells) – these wells would require additional improvements, including treatment and filtration, along with mechanical and electrical upgrades. Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) would be used to remove volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including PERC. It was explained that GAC is the most effective treatment for a short period of time. It differs from the membrane filtration system being proposed for Station 6, which is more effective over a longer period of time. As above, each well would be sampled and require NYSDOH approval prior to being put into service. This group of wells could provide approximately 15 MGD.

If implemented in its entirety, the plan would add approximately 50 MGD to New York City's water supply system. It was noted that the City, which currently uses about 1 billion gallons of water a day, is also considering ways to increase water supply from upstate sources and from possible reactivation of an intake valve that would facilitate using water from the Hudson River.

In response to questions, the following additional information was provided:

- . Water from the wells is pumped to waste while samples are collected and analyzed. No water is sent to the distribution system until NYSDOH approval is received.

- . Wells included in the reactivation plan could be put into service anywhere from 3 weeks to 3 or 4 months, depending on the extent of required repairs. Some of the wells might require parts that would need to be manufactured.

- . The current ratio of surface to groundwater in the Station 6 area will not change if the wells are reactivated. Other areas, which now receive approximately 90% surface water, could receive 50-80% well water, depending on the severity of the drought.

- . Although the City experienced drought conditions in the 1980's, the last severe drought was during the 1960s. At that time, JWS was still in operation, and the use of wells was not a factor in the City's drought emergency plans.

- . Wells 48 and 48A have been sampled and meet NYSDOH criteria. The Bureau of Water and Sewer Operations is waiting for a letter from its sister bureau, the Bureau of Water Supply, before water is sent to the distribution line. Several persons commented on the need for streamlining the process and a clearer understanding of the relationships within DEP, as well as between DEP and outside agencies. Linda Hazel expressed concern that wells 48, 48A and 54 (which would only produce about 4 MGD) are being considered, even though they were previously closed because of high levels of nitrates (wells 48 and 48A) and VOCs (well 54). For "the community's peace of mind," she asked DEP to consider not reactivating these wells, given the low volume that they would produce.

Well 14 would not require treatment before being put back in service; it would only require repiping and mechanical improvements.

A chart indicating when wells are run (every day, 2-3 times a week, etc.) is produced each week. During the summer, more well water is often used to meet increased demands.

Mark Lanaghan, DEP, briefly commented on Commissioner Miele's presentation on the drought management plan to the City Council earlier this week, specifically noting that a number of questions were raised concerning the use of wells in Queens.

Assemblyman William Scarborough questioned whether the City would still open the wells if a drought emergency is not announced. Mr. Kensy responded that although all of the wells in the plan would not be activated, the wells that are currently in service would continue to operate. Additional wells would be turned on to meet increased demand, in the event of a hot spell. In a further comment on this issue, Mr. Cohen reiterated that the Category A wells are all old JWS wells that DEP has kept up-to-date and that are approved by NYSDOH. In response to a follow-up question, Mr. Kensy explained that some of the old wells were shut down when the surface water system was expanded.

In response to questions from Dr. Canute Bernard regarding timeframes for announcing and implementing the drought plan, Mr. Kensy indicated that the weather over the next two months will be a deciding factor. A drought emergency could be avoided if the area receives enough rain during this period to build up the upstate reservoirs. It was explained that the City's current water inventory is approximately 35% below normal and that the storage volumes in the reservoirs will be reviewed by DEP at the beginning of June, prior to making a decision about drought conditions.

Several persons expressed concern about whether a state-of-the-art system can be implemented in a safe and timely manner. A number of CAC members emphasized the community's concern, given the area's extensive contamination. Mr. Kensy reassured the group that water is sampled on a daily basis and that samples are collected from water sampling stations on a routine basis for analysis and review by NYSDOH and DEP. Ms. Brown then explained the technology involved in using the GAC system, which is similar to a Brita filter. After indicating that volatiles in the water adsorb on the carbon, she noted that the proposed system will provide an extra measure of removal, by using two GAC units at each location. (Additional information on the GAC process will be distributed at the next CAC meeting.)

Manny Caughman remarked that southeast Queens residents once again feel as though they are being "picked upon" and asked whether the drought emergency plan could use any wells in Brooklyn. Mr. Cohen responded that, although the project team is trying to identify additional wells, there are currently no wells in Brooklyn that could be used. Mr. Caughman also reminded the group of Mayor Bloomberg's campaign statement concerning the importance of connecting former JWS customers to the NYC system, in order to eliminate their reliance on well water.

As a follow-up to a question from Kenneth Gill, it was reported that approximately 20-30 MGD is being lost as a result of the leak in the Delaware Aqueduct. Mr. Lanaghan explained that the

leak is 600 feet underground, stretches 20 miles and has no easy access points. He added that DEP is exploring options to repair the leak and offered to arrange a presentation on the status of the situation for a future CAC meeting.

Other questions and comments are summarized below:

- Celeste Morris, Senator Malcolm Smith, expressed concern that the CAC was not informed of the reactivation plan prior to hearing the information on the news.
- Ms. Morris announced that, in response to a letter from Senator Malcolm Smith, NYSDOH would be conducting a door-to-door cancer study.
- Rob Yamuder, Queens Borough President's Office, commented that DEP's web site is a very good source of information, including daily updates on drought conditions. (The web site address is [www.ci.nyc.us/html/dep/html/current.html](http://www.ci.nyc.us/html/dep/html/current.html).)
- Yvonne Reddick, Queens Community Board #12, commented that the opening of hydrants on hot days was a serious problem last summer and suggested that custodial locks be installed (particularly in light of the upcoming drought).
- It was noted that Rochdale Village is served by a dedicated 20" water main, which may have been installed because wells in the area could not meet the development's demand.
- Mr. Caughman asked for an explanation of recharge areas, noting that there are a number of brownfields in the area, including a site on 229<sup>th</sup> Street, which is on the State's list for chromium. After indicating that the aquifer recharge area runs the entire length of Long Island to Brooklyn, Mr. Cohen explained that the United States Geological Survey mapped the deep recharge area in the 1980s and found some low-lying areas near the ocean and Long Island Sound. He added that the results of that survey are still valid, since the geology of an area does not change.

#### Project Update - Station 6 Modifications

In a brief update on work related to the Station 6 project, Mr. Cohen reported that some of the equipment for the Pilot Test has been installed at the site and that water is being run through the aeration system. The filter units should be installed in about a month. He invited the CAC to visit the site and view the treatment processes, as soon as the system is fully operational. Mr. Cohen also reported on DEP's continuing coordination with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) regarding clean up of the WSC site and Station 24. He indicated that DEC is proceeding with plans to clean up soils at the WSC site and that DEP is proceeding with plans to install remediation wells at Station 24 to control the groundwater plume. Mr. Cohen again emphasized that the work at Station 6 and Station 24 is not related to the drought emergency plan and that Station 6 wells will not be turned on this summer.

Ms. Hazel commented that news articles and other documents have inaccurately identified the location of Station 6 as 110<sup>th</sup> Road and 164<sup>th</sup> Street. The facility is located at 110<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 164<sup>th</sup> Place. Ms. Hazel also expressed concern that the Station 6 project is proceeding ahead of work at the WSC site and that pumping will begin at Station 6 before Station 24 is cleaned up.

### CAC Organization and Management

Helen Neuhaus, Helen Neuhaus & Associates Inc., reiterated that this evening's anticipated CAC agenda was altered to address the community's overriding concern about the drought emergency plan. She confirmed that the next meeting will focus on functional and operational issues related to the Committee's role as an advisor to DEP on the Station 6 project, specifically the water quality of Station 6, groundwater flooding in the community, and clean up activities at the WSC site.

Before adjourning the meeting, Ms. Neuhaus briefly identified some of the issues that will be discussed in detail at the next CAC meeting. These include membership (composition, size, roles and responsibilities of members, designation of alternates); formation of subcommittees; governance (scheduling, frequency of meetings); meeting facilitation; reaching consensus on major issues; public access/media access; and documentation. In related comments, several persons requested NYSDOH participation at CAC meetings, to address health issues that many believe are related to water quality and contamination at WSC.

The next CAC meeting was scheduled for Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m. Due to the unavailability of York College on that date, the meeting was subsequently rescheduled for **Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m. in the York College Faculty Dining Room**. A light supper will be provided.

### Follow-up Items

1. Investigate possibility of installing custodial locks on fire hydrants in Community Board District #12.
2. Provide water quality analysis information for wells #48, 48A and 54.
3. Provide a flow chart to illustrate DEP's intra- and interagency relationships.

Brooklyn-Queens Aquifer Feasibility Study  
Citizens Advisory Committee  
Thursday, February 28, 2002

Attendance List

CAC Members/Alternates

Canute C. Bernard, M.D.  
Community Board #12

Gloria Black, Ph.D  
Community Board #12

Tracey Bowes  
Community Board #12

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

Manuel Caughman  
Community Board #12/Brinkerhoff Action  
Association

Kenneth Gill  
Addisleigh Park Civic Organization

Jon Goldblum  
Office of Councilmember Leroy Comrie

Irving Hicks  
Brinkerhoff Action Association

Debora L. Hunte  
Brinkerhoff Action Association

Celeste Morris  
Office of Senator Malcolm Smith

Yvonne Reddick  
Community Board #12

Earl Roberts  
113<sup>th</sup> Precinct Community Council

Dr. Dhanonjoy C. Saha  
Resident

Assemblyman William Scarborough  
New York State Assembly

Patricia H. Vosges  
Allen A.M.E. Church

Robert Yamuder  
Office of Queens Borough President

Guests

Sarah Hicks  
Brinkerhoff Action Association

Charles A. Pringle Jr.  
Resident

Media

Courtney Dentch  
Jamaica Times

Dan Hendrick  
Queens Chronicle

Warren Woodberry Jr.  
NY Daily News

Project Team

Nicole Brown  
Malcolm Pirnie, Inc.

Don Cohen  
Malcolm Pirnie, Inc.

Roman Kensy  
New York City Department of Environmental  
Protection

Mark Lanaghan  
New York City Department of Environmental  
Protection

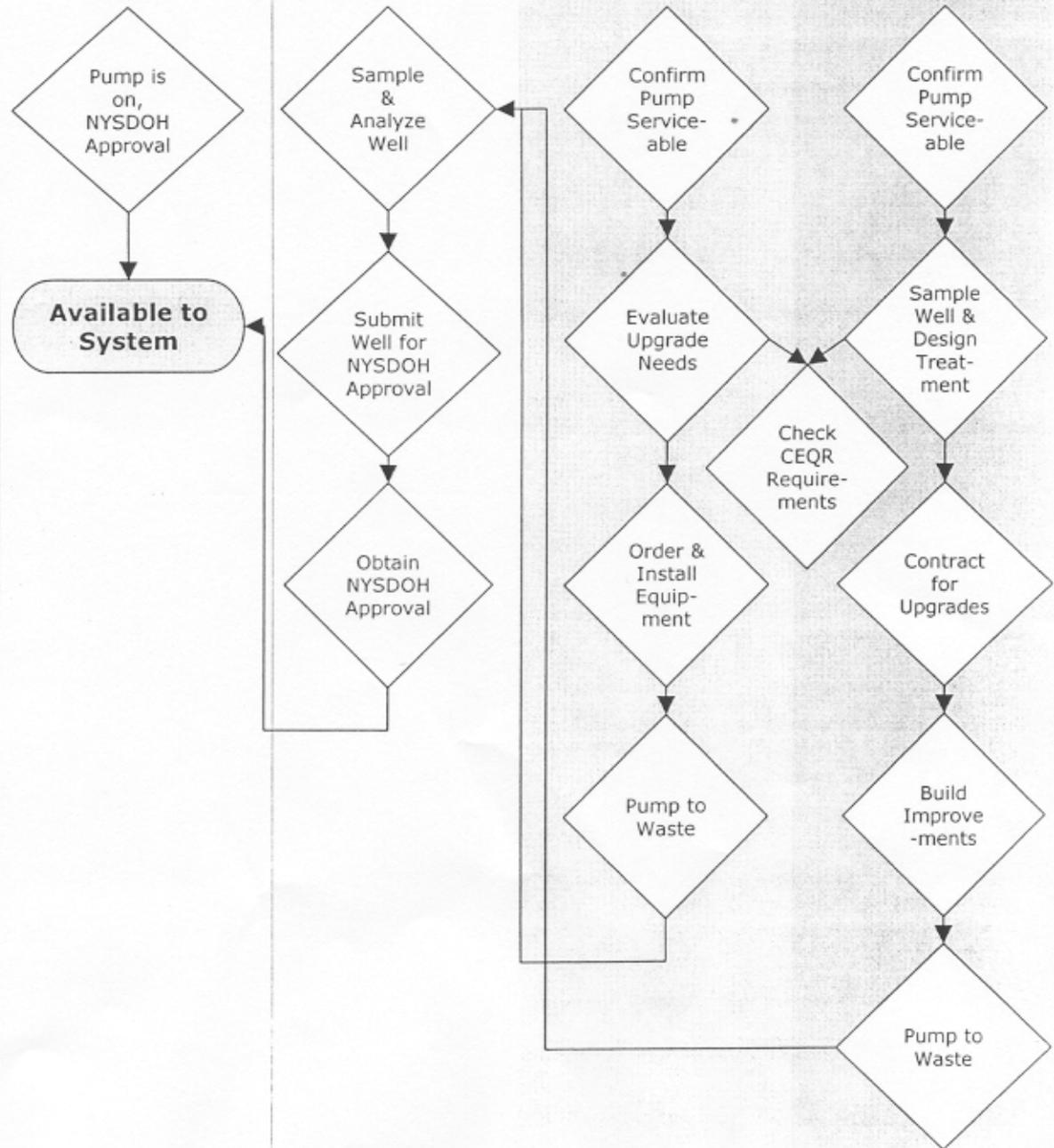
Mark Lenz  
Malcolm Pirnie, Inc.

Helen Neuhaus  
Helen Neuhaus & Associates, Inc.

Anita Wright  
Helen Neuhaus & Associates Inc.

# Groundwater System Reactivation Plan

<b>Station No.'s</b>	5, 5A, 10, 10A, 23A, 32, 36, 39A, 43A, 50A, 53A, 56, 59	48, 48A, 54	7, 7B, 13, 13A, 14, 21, 21A, 50, 58	22, 26A, 27, 38, 38A, 43, 45, 51, 52, 53, 55
<b>Neighborhoods</b>	Cambria Heights, Holliswood, Ozone Park, Valley Stream, Queens Village, Hillcrest, Kew Gardens, Springfield Gardens, St. Albans	Hollis, Bellaire, Cambria Heights	Queens Village, South Jamaica, South Ozone Park, Bellerose, Kew Gardens Hills, Jamaica Estates	Hillcrest, Kew Gardens, Hollis, St. Albans, Holliswood, Ozone Park
<b>Max. Potential Capacity (MGD)</b>	21.7	4.0	10.3	15.4
<b>Current Status</b>	Station Available	Pumps to Waste	Requires Minor Upgrades	Needs New Equipment



**Bureau of Water & Sewer Operations**