

**South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority
Environmental, Health & Safety Committee**

**June 18, 2020
Meeting Transcription**

A regular meeting of the Environmental, Health & Safety Committee of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority ("RWA") took place on Thursday, June 18, 2020, via remote access. Chair Curseaden presided.

Present: Committee –Messrs. DiSalvo, Borowy, Cermola, Curseaden, and Ms. Sack
Management – Mss. Discepolo, Kowalski, Nesteriak, and Messrs. Bingaman, Hudak, and Norris
RPB – Mr. Rescigno
Staff – Mrs. Slubowski

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:31 p.m.

Tony:

Okay. Thank you very much. I'll entertain a motion to recess the Authority and convene as Environmental, Health and Safety.

David:

So moved.

Tony:

Is there a second?

Suzanne:

Second.

Tony:

Okay. Kevin, it's all yours. Can you see? You have an agenda up, Kevin?

Kevin:

No, I don't, but that's okay.

Jennifer:

It's the agenda.

Kevin:

Oh, there it is there. Yeah, thank you. May I have a motion to approve the minutes from the March meeting, please?

Suzanne:

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So moved.

Tony:

Second.

Kevin:

Any discussion? All in favor.

Group:

Aye.

Kevin:

Thank you. We have an update from John Hudak on the Hamden [crosstalk 00:01:48].

John:

Yeah, do you mind if I share my screen here.

Kevin:

Sure.

Jennifer:

Do you want me to get rid of mine?

John:

Yeah. Okay. I think we're good. There we go. Can everybody see that?

Tony:

Yes.

David:

Yes.

John:

Okay. Good afternoon, everyone. And thanks for having me. I'm going to give you a fast, but very comprehensive overview of what our part was in the largest environmental cleanup in Connecticut's history. I became intimately involved with this in 2013, but it really starts at the beginning of the 20th century. This image you see here is from August 9th, 2019. It's right from Google Earth. And it nicely captures the last and largest of six remedial projects that I'll talk about.

John:

This is an aerial image from 1934 of the same area. Actually, and the story starts for us in 1900 when we purchased this area outlined in red, about 25 acres. And this is in the Newhallville or Highwood section

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of Hamden. The green areas show the properties that we currently own, how they existed, the old parcel to the North, that's wetland. To the east, you can see crop basins. You'll notice they actually weren't covered then. And then further out you see the Lake Whitney Water Treatment Plant as it was at that time. And a little piece of Lake Whitney over here.

John:

In the lower right hand corner, this building here that's what was the Newhall Street elementary school built in 1917. It later became the Hamden Community Center, which figured prominently in our remedial actions. And if you just noticed a couple of things about this parcel that the New Haven Water Company owned and across the streets, see all this black here, that's swamp land. And that was viewed back in the time as a major public health threat.

John:

From the late 1800s to the mid-20th century mosquito borne diseases like malaria were a major public health issue. Also, you had rapid urban development industrial growth occurring at that time, and a lot more waste being generated. So kind of in an early version of the triple bottom line approach, public health officials encouraged filling of swamps to control mosquitoes, to get rid of waste and to create more usable land for development.

John:

So the lower right corner here, this is the general area, where you see the 10 is the New Haven Water Company property or future Hamden Middle School. But all around the neighborhood, there was these landfills established and you had everything in anything. Domestic, municipal waste, industrial waste, automotive waste being dumped here and filling swamp land. The height of the dumping was about the 1920s to 1950s. On our parcel, a good part of the dumping was from Winchester Repeating Arms to New Haven, which dumped coal waste, ash, spent shells, batteries.

John:

But the New Haven Water Company sold this property in 1952, the town of Hamden and which immediately transferred it to the state for a planned technical school, which didn't happen. And then back to the town in 1954. And by 1956, the Michael Whalen Middle School was built on the property.

John:

This is a photo from 1965. Dumping on this property continued as late as 1976 and the rear part of the property by local residents until they established athletic fields in this location. There were kind of anecdotal and incidental reports of contamination surfacing starting in the late 1970s. In the 1990s, Connecticut DEEP and EPA actually had testing done here. There was enough concern where the school or the town put a thin layer of clean soil over the athletic fields in 1995. But the contamination really became kind of explosive in 2000 when there was an environmental study for a planned school expansion that revealed a lot of contamination in the soil; lead, arsenic, antimony, petroleum hydrocarbons. And this played out in the press and the community and the school was ultimately abandoned for a new school downtown in 2006. And this was left behind in the heart of the neighborhood as a kind of decaying eyesore.

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John:

So Connecticut DEEP researched the history of the properties involved with the filling. In July 2001, they issued an enforcement order that assigned responsibility for investigation or remediation of the entire neighborhood four parties. [inaudible 00:07:28] Corporation, which was the successor to Winchester, you had state board of education, the town of Hamden and the Regional Water Authority. That initial order was appealed. A consent order was negotiated and assigned specific geographical areas to each party. [inaudible 00:07:48] 50/50 share the cost of the 240 residential homes in the neighborhood that needed to be remediated. The town took responsibility for the two parks across the street, Rochford and Mill Rock park. And we were assigned the original footprint of the New Haven Water Company property that included the former middle school, the housing authority, two residential properties owned by the Hamden Housing Authority and the former community center.

John:

Now, DEEP's strong preference was to proceed with the largest project first. So that was the residential neighborhood and those 240 residential properties. Basically, we were waiting both that and to find out if the middle school property was going to be part of a development project. The neighborhood properties were completed in 2012 at a cost of \$70 million. The town completed the two parks with some help from state funding for some park amenities. And 2015, Mill Rock park was named Peter Villano Park in honor of the former legislator. That was a cost of about \$11 million.

John:

Also, Dale Kroop, who's the Town Economic Development Director, he was successful in obtaining a state funding to demolish the former auditorium and cafeteria at the middle school in 2018. Dale, by the way, was our main liaison to the town the whole time and continues in that role to this day.

John:

Now, there's a couple of key milestones that kind of laid the groundwork for our remediation. First was a successful petition to DEEP in 2009, to change the groundwater water quality standard for the vast majority of the site. From a drinking water classification or GA to a non-drinking water or GB. This is because our data collection concluded that the groundwater for most of the site was actually flowing away from Lake Whitney. This was a real game changer, it lessened the remedial standards we had to meet. And of course, the cost of remediation.

John:

Second, enabled in large part by that ground water classification change, was we were able to demonstrate simply a paper submittal that a solvent hotspot on the site in the groundwater already met Connecticut DEEP remediation standards. So we didn't need to do any remediation for that VOC or solvent plume. Costs for that ranged up to \$1 million. 2014 was the beginning of our active remediation to comply with the consent order. Ultimately, the remediation of the site was implemented through six projects that took place from 2014 through 2020.

John:

Our remedial objectives were guided by the Connecticut Remediation Standards or RSRs. They're very complex and long. And they contain the numeric and narrative standards for remediating soil and

ground water. In our case, it came down to some pretty simple [inaudible 00:11:23] steps, really, and that was rendering soils inaccessible to humans coming in contact with it. So that consisted of making sure that all the contamination on the site was covered either by four feet of clean soil, pavement or building.

John:

This case, you can see this picture here. That's in the first few projects, we were able to just mine clean fill from the site. It was clean. And so left behind these big pits. We took this black [inaudible 00:11:56] soil, back-filled it into the pits and covered it with four feet of clean soil. Actually, in this particular case, this is the Hamden Community Center, which was redeveloped. This soil is now sitting under a parking lot.

John:

Getting DEEP's authorization to proceed involves submitting three remedial action plans, or RAPs, that described how our remediation would comply with their remediation standards. We submitted three of them, one for a PCB hotspot, one for the former community center, and one for the remainder of our consent order area, which includes the middle school and the housing authority. And April 2014 marked our first remedial action. There were soils within an isolated area here west of the tennis courts, were found to contain very high concentrations of PCBs, most likely due to a historical fill. 112 tons of contaminated soil were excavated and transported to reported to Model City, New York, a licensed landfill. These were in fact, the only soils in the entire six years that left the site.

John:

Our first major remediation project was in conjunction with a Brownfield redevelopment project by the Hamden Economic Development Corporation. [inaudible 00:13:31] Dale Kroop approached us and informed us that the HEDC would be acquiring the former Hamden Community Center property at the corner of Newhall and Moore Street for redevelopment to a small business incubator. So this put this particular location on an accelerated schedule for remediation. And also we had to design our remediation to conform to the development site plan. So in some cases it created more work, where if there were utility excavations deeper than four feet, we actually have to dig deeper than four feet. On the other hand, areas that were going to be paved over, we didn't have to remediate at all.

John:

And also very importantly, we had to get the designers to commit to not to tinker with the plans once we started remediation because it was very location sensitive. We completed remediation at the end of fiscal year 2015. All of the clean fill was mined from the site and all the contaminated fill is now buried beneath the parking lot for the brand new BOROUGH496 business center incubator. They had the grand opening in December 2019. Also, Dale Kroop credited the RWA for their part in enabling what was really an exciting new project.

John:

The remainder of the site remediation proceeded in four phases with multiple contractors from December 2017 to just this past May. You see phase one in the Southeast corner of the site. Phase two, these two areas in the Northern part of the site. Phase three, along Newhall Street, in front of the

buildings. And lastly, phase four, to the rear of the buildings, which included a repaving this dark purple area here.

John:

And, it was initially envisioned that for site-wide remediation would take place in conjunction with the planned multifamily development project. However, this development was stalled by the inability to obtain state financing. So it became clear at the end of 2017 that we needed to go into a different direction. And we informed all the parties involved, including DEEP, that we intended to proceed with remediating the site as is, and irregardless of future development, everyone understood and concurred with our approach. And there's some challenges along the way. The first phase, we took place in the winter and it's right at the beginning, it was a polar vortex, extreme cold. And what happened when the equipment traveled along the ground, it created vibrations that felt like a small earthquake. We got a lot of complaints from the neighbors. We implemented some vibration monitoring. We were able to mitigate things until the ground thawed, however, that resulted in a lot of rain and mud. And so, the lesson learned is we didn't do any more projects in the winter.

John:

Also during phase one, very importantly, we found a lot of random layers of contaminated material within the clean soil, that we had planned to mine for the site, this created the need for importing fill in the latter two projects. So there was a change in approach in design then, we created this raised plateau here in the Southwest corner. And basically what that is, is we mounded the contaminated material that was excavated into this above grade, and then put four feet of clean fill over it. Thinking about possible future use of the site, we designed this plateau to conform approximately to the dimensions of a soccer field, which the town was very pleased with. So in the end, we imported over 44,000 cubic yards of clean fill, a three and a half thousand cubic yards of top soil. We also brought 5,000 cubic yards of our own water treatment residuals from the treatment plants. We have a beneficial reuse authorization from DEEP. We can blend this material for top soil beside the dual benefit of reducing the cost of the project, and also freeing up room in our drying beds in our treatment plants.

John:

The fourth and final phase of the project commenced in Summer 2019, was completion of all the soil remediation by early fall of last year. The last part of that phase was repaving about a half-acre of degraded and damaged pavement adjacent to the site buildings this past May.

John:

We talked a little bit about costs. There's been various costs for site-wide remediation. Going back to 2003, we initially had a figure of about 2 to 4 million. When I took over the project in 2013, it was a 3.1 million plus the cost of the PCB and VLC focused remediations. Fact is that these were never more than kind of educated placeholders at the time. We didn't know what DEEP was going to accept as a remedy, what the future development or whether we're going to be doing this project in conjunction with the development. And also there was some uncertainties about onsite clean fill available. So as it turned out, we had to bring a lot of outside material onsite.

John:

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When we got to about 2017, we were really, I think, zeroing in on a real number, which is somewhere in the 4 to 4.2 million. We still have some more regulatory work to do this year. If you add up what's been spent and for all the projects I just discussed and what's to come, you're talking about 4.27 million. If you take out the 162,300 for the PCB focused remediation was recognized as an expense, you've got a balance of about 4.1 million.

John:

Now, that's a lot of money, but there's also significant savings realized and some key actions we took since 2009. The change in groundwater classification was enormous. Before this action, DEEP was advocating for an engineered control that could have added a few million to the remediation, but also would have put long-term obligations on us, maybe 30 years or more, including posting financial insurance and requiring long-term monitoring. That action enabled probably about 500,000 at least, in savings for not having to do the solvent hotspot remediation.

John:

And when we recognized that we were going to need a lot of fill to be brought in from outside, we went to this board and got a bid waiver for clean fill and topsoil. And what that did is it enabled us to act quickly and opportunistically to purchase fill as it became available at other sites. Now, if you compare the cost of what we actually paid to what the costs the contractors were estimating per cubic yard, for clean fill, you're talking of savings about \$1.2 million. Top soil, almost a \$100,000. Bringing our own treatment residuals to the site, if you use our bid waiver number by about \$85,000 in savings. And if you use the contractors numbers for top soil, over \$200,000. So without these actions, you could be talking about a 6 to \$9 million project.

Tony:

[inaudible 00:22:25].

John:

We have a few more things left to do, plan for FY20. They're all regulatory submittals and monitoring. Each of the four properties is going to require what's called an environmental land use restriction. So we have four properties and three owners. Applications for the ELURs are sent to DEEP. They approve the ELURs, they all have to be signed by the owners. We need to get subordination agreements with any easement holders, such as Greater New Haven WPCA and ultimately these get filed on the town land records. What an ELUR does is prohibits any disturbance of the remediation, unless they get a release from Connecticut DEEP.

John:

Also, we'll be doing this fiscal year, preparing a final closure report for submittal to DEEP. We're going to propose a groundwater monitoring plan. This will only be for the northern portion of the site, that drains to Lake Whitney. Once we can demonstrate that the groundwater there meets standards, we'll essentially be done. And that consists of getting four compliance samples within a two year period.

Tony:

John, are there any holdovers from the homeowners?

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John:

You mean hold up for the four Olins [crosstalk 00:00:24:05].

Tony:

Yeah. Yeah.

John:

Not that I know of. I know they did find some other properties they wanted to remediate. And so DEEP, I think is going to be doing some more work, on several other properties. As far as I know, I don't know of any holdovers.

Kevin:

And are there anticipated costs to finish up the rest of the monitoring? Are there estimates for those costs? Or...

John:

Yeah, I would say for annual monitoring and reporting, you're talking about 15,000 per year. There will also be one time... Once we demonstrate we're compliant, there'll be one-time costs to remove the monitoring wells and submit a final report. And you're talking probably in order of \$12,000.

Kevin:

Thank you.

John:

Sure.

Kevin:

Anybody have any other questions?

Tony:

No, I just wanted to mention, I thought this was a well-managed project. When we first were started in it, we thought it was going to cost us an arm and a leg and our shirt. It looked like we ended up coming out the easiest of all of the partners.

John:

Yeah. And, in acknowledgements, I just wanted to credit Mike Manolakas because he's still a young guy, but he was with this project back in early 2000s with Tom Chaplik. In my 30 years here, he's maybe the best consultant I ever worked with. Always had our back, work was creative and pushed back against whoever needed to be pushed back against. And so a lot of credit goes to him. And also Amy, who helped me with a lot of the legwork for getting bid specs done and invoicing and things like that.

Tony:

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Thank you, John.

Kevin:

Thank you very much. We have our committee work plan, is the only other thing on the agenda for our [crosstalk 00:26:16].

Ted:

Thanks, John.

John:

Okay. Can I check out now, or ...

Kevin:

Yeah, thanks John.

John:

Thanks.

Kevin:

So that's just what we have proposed over the next year, mostly standard stuff. I guess the business continuity work plan, some of the practices, if not... not all of the practices, but some of the practices have been ongoing, I think, with the COVID-19 restrictions and requirements. So it's actually been... I think, some of the things that have been put into practice. I don't know if there's anything specific like that, Ted, from the business continuity `plan that has been ongoing, but I just wanted to point that out that a lot of these things are working along with that plan.

Ted:

I would agree, Kevin. We may try to do one tabletop exercise and do some improvements on the plan this year, depending our out of the budget [inaudible 00:27:24] Most of our work can be concentrated on the AWIA Emergency Response Plan submission that's due in September.

Beth:

Ted, if I could just add some of the recent work that you've kind of initiated regarding emergency response during the time of the pandemic. We've been reviewing our business continuity plans in terms of social distancing and how many people we thought we would put where, and obviously that's kind of, has changed dramatically. So Ted and I are working with a group to look at potential EOC sites, how many people, where we would put them and just reconfirming things now based on the new normal, and also some of our changed work practices. So I think that's been a good effort just as of how we deal with COVID and how we would deal with COVID during a time, like a hurricane or some other emergency.

Kevin:

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And so I guess Ted and Beth and Larry, as well, have had the existence of these business continuity plans, has that, did that, was that helpful in a foundation for COVID planning and response? I know there's going to be some changes and revisions based on what's actually happened, but do you think so, does anybody think it was helpful to have those plans in place?

Ted:

I think it was definitely helpful to have them in place, Kevin, because we use those, a lot of them, we asked folks/departments to look at their own individual BCPs in light of our infectious disease policy that we wrote up right in the beginning of COVID and make sure that everybody was, and to ensure that they were their own departments were ready for something like this. So yeah, it's been, it's all kind of mixed together and it's all working well, which is great.

Kevin:

Thank you. Tony, or anybody from the Authority, have any questions or comments?

Tony:

No, thanks.

Joe:

Nothing here.

David:

I'm fine. Thank you.

Kevin:

Okay. Thank you, Ted and Beth. Appreciate it. That's all we have for this committee today. Do I have a motion to adjourn and reconvene?

Joe:

So move. [crosstalk 00:29:32]

Kevin:

I heard a motion and a second. All in favor?

Group together:

Aye.

Kevin:

Thank you. [crosstalk 00:29:39] Thank you.

ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING ADJOURNS AT 1:00 P.M.