



City of Cambridge

Committee Report #8

IN CITY COUNCIL

July 29, 1996

COUNCILLOR DUEHAY

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to request the attendance of the MBTA, the Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at the next meeting of the Environmental Committee; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to make a public records request for the missing MBTA contract, No. 091-508A; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to notify state officials and legislators of the Environmental Committee meeting.

In City Council July 29, 1996

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

D. Margaret Drury

ATTEST:-

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City Clerk



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W/g

Councillor Duehay noted the presence of Harold Cox, Chief Public Health Officer, Kathleen Brown, Environmental Program, Community Development Department, Alex Strysky, Executive Director, Conservation Commission, Sara Nolan, Senator Warren Tolman's office, Joseph Grassi, School Committee member, and former Mayor Tom Danehy.

Maureen Quinlan, 53 Madison Street, stated that she has lived across from W.R. Grace almost all her life. She urged support for the studies, including a health study. She has seen many cases of cancer in the neighborhood over the years.

Lisa Burke, 28 Magoun Street, stated that she is Co-Chair of the Alewife Study Group. She commended the Environment Committee for holding the hearing and having it in the neighborhood. She urged adoption of the petition in total with full community participation and inclusion. She said the reason for independent studies is that an agency with a conflict in its mission to assist development and protect residents results in raised eyebrows and some doubt. In addition, there should be no permitting until the studies are completed.

Susan Maguire, 125 Jackson Street, thanked Councillor Duehay for his interest in environmental matters. She addressed her comments to the issues of trust. She stated that the community wants to trust that the wildlife and wetlands will be preserved. The traffic issues are very important. The fact that W.R. Grace was involved in commissioning Dr. Spengler's report raises an issue of trust. Whereas The Board of Zoning Appeals said the permit continues to be viable, reading it convinces many community people that it is not. This also raises an issue of trust. There is also the issue of David Vickery. Can he be trusted? W.R. Grace does not raise confidence. If you want to trust somebody, trust Peter Cignetti.

Aram Hollman, 15 Clifton Street, stated that he has gotten involved to protect his home and its neighborhood. There hasn't been any decent planning for the Alewife area as a whole. W.R. Grace does not have the ethical and moral competence to develop any sites in the City. The permits should be killed until the studies are done. Mr. Holman sang a song listing the chemicals at the W.R. grace site, and the traffic problems. He submitted a copy of the lyrics. (Attachment B).

Patricia Cassola, Rindge Avenue, stated that she has lived in North Cambridge for over ten years and is a member of the W.R Grace Study Committee. She stated that many Rindge Towers residents were more concerned about protecting the environment than having a new food store. Dr. Spengler could not answer her health questions. She urged support of the independent studies.

Ralph Yoder, 364 Rindge Avenue, W.R. Grace Site Study Committee, stated that the site is part of a larger watershed and wetlands area. In daily audits of wildlife species in the area, he saw over 90 species. The site is within a 100 year flood plan. There are no frogs at Jerry's pond. There is a dirty pond in the northeast corner that never freezes over. It is important to get state and federal cleanup money. Paving over is not a good solution for an area that is sensitive to wildlife. The study should include an epidemiological study because of the number

of cancer cases in the area.

Dave Boris, 126 Harvey Street, stated that he has lived there about one-and-one-half years, and discussed environmental damage. He is a piledriver so he spends a lot of time working with dirt. You do need to excavate even with pressure injected pile driving, which is what will be used at W. R. Grace site. They will be moving dirt around. There should be a study. There also must be a traffic study. At rush hour there is a great deal of traffic on Harvey and Clifton.

Bob Eisengrein, 5 Valley Road, Acton, stated that his community group has been dealing with W.R. Grace for the past eighteen years. The first fifteen years were confrontation. The last three years the citizens have been equal partners. Citizens have a lot of common sense to bring to the table. Contaminants do migrate. Acton town wells one-half mile away were contaminated. W.R. Grace's past management were not good conservators of land. An air monitoring system was installed around the Grace construction area in Acton.

Michael Brandon, 27 Seven Pines Avenue, thanked the City Council members who came to the meeting. He stated that the City Manager had commented that those concerned are hysterical or paranoid and he said that this remark was untrue. He criticized the staffing of the Alewife Study Group. He said that independent studies are needed for environment, traffic and health. He stated that he has heard of an earlier study that indicated statistical anomalies in disease rates around this area. Regarding the trust issue, the permitting issues raise problems; as does the fact that the developer was former director of Community Development Department and was involved in designing the zoning which applies to this site. The community must be directly involved in the scoping of the independent studies. He noted the potential increase in pollution from new uses of the site.

Peter Cignetti, Theriault Court, thanked the members of the City Council for coming to a neighborhood hearing. He urged community-driven independent studies of traffic and the environment. He stated that he hopes the scope of development will be re-evaluated.

William Flynn, 111 Clifton Street, stated that right now he has a pump pumping water out of his basement. It has been running since they put the MBTA station in.

W.G. Taylor, 98 Clifton Street, stated that he lives on the edge of Russell Field. He has three concerns. There is a rumor that some agreement has been reached between the City and W.R. Grace in which Grace has been told they will be able to build there, and the decision has already been made. His second concern is that he does not believe the buffer zone is enough; he wants to know if these people can be stopped. His third question is would W.R. Grace be amenable to an offer to clean up the property at their own expense and then deed it over to the City.

Joe Joseph, 28 Magoun Street, thanked the City Council for coming to the neighborhood. He objected to characterizations of concerned neighbors in unpleasant ways. Mr. Joseph stated

that the chemical posing the most risk is not naphthalene; there is sulphiated naphthalene, which is more dangerous. He recommended subsoil testing to a depth of thirty feet around the MBTA land because that is the depth at which the acid problem was found. He discussed a document compiled by Peter Cignetti from many sources. The document has been given to Councillor Duehay. Councillor Duehay stated that the document is one of many that will be entered into the records of the hearing.

Mr. Joseph raised questions about the soil level at Russell Field. He is looking for a contract with the MBTA numbered 091-508A, and has not been able to find it in City files. Mr. Joseph proceeded to highlight several issues raised in the document. He noted the value of an urban wildlife site and the importance of preserving it. Mr. Joseph stated that the last Community Development Department study noted that traffic is maxed-every intersection is at or beyond its capacity. He noted recommendations for an independent note-taker for community groups and a new master plan for the entire neighborhood, and recommended a legal review of the permitting. PUD zoning is not appropriate for this neighborhood.

A letter from Laura Arena, 44 Magoun Street, was read into the record. She urged protection of the ecological environment from ecological violence. (Attachment C).

Margaret Harry, Dudley Street, stated that there is gridlock on Rindge Avenue at rush hour. Her primary concern is health. She has asthma; there is cancer in her family. The testimony tonight has made her nervous. She questioned whether an opportunity to make money is more important than the health of the community.

Ann Goodwin, 94 Clifton Street, stated that kids play at Russell Field all year round. A very thorough environmental study is necessary. She works with children and has noted a growing discouragement among them about the future.

Joel Nogil, 94 Clifton Street, stated that his house has a sump pump. Winds blow across Russell Field to their house. He is very honored to be associated with the Alewife Study group. These are very serious and complex issues. The Spengler reports list many issues that need further study. He said that over 750 neighborhood residents have expressed their concern about these issues.

Silvia Barnes, Harvey Street, stated that she moved to the neighborhood a year ago. People in North Cambridge really care about their neighborhood. She recalls attending a Planning Board meeting that went on until after midnight. There is mistrust of David Vickery because he used to work for Community Development Department.

Councillor Duehay then read into the record the following documents that have been given to the Committee. He stated that he will ask the City Clerk to give copies to the entire City Council.

1. Public Health Risk Evaluation for W.R Grace site, dated 4-23-96.

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2. Certificate of the Secretary of Environmental Affairs on the Final Environmental Impact Report, dated 1-20-81.
3. Memo from the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee to James Hoyt, dated 1-12-88.
4. Review of Draft EIR for the Proposed Alewife Center Development done by John Spager and Mark Smith, dated 2-19-87.
5. Letter from Department of Environmental Quality Engineering dated 2-29-87.
6. Internal correspondence of NUS Corporation Superfund Division dated 7-8-95.
7. Recommendations Submitted by members of the Grace Site Advisory Committee described in this hearing by Joe Joseph.
8. Transitional List of Confirmed Disposal Sites and Locations to be Investigated from the Department of Environmental Department, dated August, 1993.
9. Material Safety Data Sheet on Naphthalene, dated November, 1987.
10. New Jersey Department of Health Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet on Naphthalene, dated January, 1986.
11. Notice of Project Change for Alewife Center, dated 1-16-96.
12. Memo from City Manager to City Council dated 6-24-96.
13. Report on North Cambridge Neighborhood Survey, dated 6-10-96.
14. City Council Order dated 4-22-86.
15. Petition which is the subject of this hearing. These documents are contained in an appendix to this report.

Mayor Russell stated that, in response to the question asked by Mr. Brandon she believes there was a epidemiology report done in the mid or late 80's including this area and Danehy Park.

Councillor Sullivan thanked Councillor Duehay for his work. He stated that we need to know what is under the soil on which our kids play whether or not there is a development on the site.

Councillor Galluccio thanked the members of the community who have worked very hard on educating the City Council. He stated that he supports independent studies on the environment and traffic. He came to this conclusion after listening to Dr. Spengler, who acknowledged the need for more information in several areas. The development discussion cannot take place until after these studies have been done.

Councillor Triantafillou requested that Councillor Duehay communicate to the City Manager her dismay over his characterization of the community. She would like to see an apology. She hopes this committee will recommend that sufficient money be spent on studies to do a complete and serious job.

Vice Mayor Born stated that it is not radical to ask for another look at the site. A great deal of the knowledge and technology has changed in the intervening years, since the Love Canal and the W.R. Grace site in Woburn. She noted that the grade elevation has changed on the site. Over the last decade, the presence of the tunnel has changed the groundwater flow.

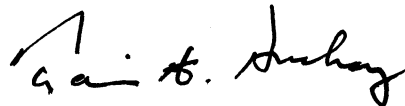
Councillor Davis thanked Councillor Duehay for his leadership and thanked Mayor Russell for referring this matter to the Environment Committee. It is important to slow down and get to the bottom of the issue in a measured and careful way. It is also important to follow up on the traffic issues.

Councillor Duehay stated that the Committee will take all these matters under advisement. The next meeting will go into the documents in detail with Dr. Spangler and city officials. The committee will work first on the environmental issue. All further meetings will be at the M.E. Fitzgerald School if space is available.

Councillor Duehay thanked those present for their attendance.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Francis H. Duehay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Francis H. Duehay, Chair

Alice K. Wolf

48 Huron Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
Phone (617) 868 - 8127
Fax (617) 497 - 7284

July 22, 1996

To: The Honorable Chair and Members of the Environment Committee
Cambridge City Council

From: Alice Wolf

Re: Support for independent traffic and environmental studies at
and surrounding the W. R. Grace site.

I am here to support strongly the proposal for independent traffic and environmental studies at the W. R. Grace site and in the neighborhood surrounding the site, including Russell Field.

Further, I recommend, based on my work in this neighborhood and on other controversial development sites, that the community be the driving force in the selection of consultants and oversight of the studies in collaboration with the City Manager's office.

In my experience, community concerns are addressed only if they are brought into play right from the beginning. Often the community has its say when the analyses are complete, sabotaging the possibility of building consensus around a plan. If the community is allowed to drive this process, everyone will be able to agree on a plan that works. A genuine cooperative spirit is necessary. And, after all, it's the community that remembers the mounds of sludge on the site and it is their children whose health is at stake. The residents should lead the process.

This environmental work is critical. The 1987 Spengler report, that was prepared when I chaired this Environment Committee, made it clear that additional environmental analyses are necessary before development work proceeds at the Grace site. I am pleased to see that, with renewed interest in development, this committee is moving forward with these analyses and with concern for an up-to-date traffic analysis.

I also urge the Environment Committee to contact the state's Department of Environmental Protection, as I have, to support the Technical Assistance Grant application that has been submitted by North Cambridge residents. This TAG grant would provide direct funding to residents to help them address environmental concerns related to the Grace site. Combined with a city sponsored analysis, this grant would help answer many important questions

residents have concerning contamination at the grace site.

At a future time, I would like to speak with the committee about a state and regional action plan in the area. Given the location of the Grace site, abutting a state parkway, wetlands, and public transportation and alternative pathways, and within a stone's throw of Arlington and Belmont, broader considerations and resources should be brought to bear here.

XYZ Chemicals

A ditty written and sung to City Council by Aram Hollman (© 1996) to the tune of H.M.S. Pinafore on June 25. Hollman attributes his inspiration to "something in the local groundwater."

*There's acetone, isophorone,
Theres napthalene and
anthracene*

*Ethyl-benzene, phenanthane,
Fluorene and pyrene*

*There's Tetra-chloro-ethane,
And bromo-dichlor-methane,
Bis 2 ethyl-hexyl-pthalate
And 1-2 diochloro-ethane.*

*There's arsenic and silver,
There's mercury and cadium,
There's antimony, nickel,
Selenium and barium
There's lead and copper,
Zinc and silver, little bits of
thallium*

*And if this list depresses you,
Take Benzadrine or Valium.*

*These aren't all the chemicals
That we have the names of
Just a sample of the toxic waste
That Grace should be ashamed of.*

Aram Hollman, continuation of "X.Y.Z. Chemicals", copyright 1996, Groundwater Music.

The traffic's bad, it crawls so slow, from Mass. Ave. to the Reservoir

And yet some think it's quite OK, that they should build and add some more

A useless mall, an office park, parking far as I can see

And public transit, 2 floors more, 3000 space for the T.

To Community Development and its hired Harvard whore

You've sold out your integrity for taxes and a store.

Be it Vickery or Healy from whom you take your orders

I promise you your scheming will stop at North Cambridge borders.

When Alewife's cars and Alewife Brook and Russell Field are clean

When you can plan a project, whose size is not obscene

Until then we'll just have to say, "We think it is a pity,

That you've chosen not to listen to the people of this city."

You held a bunch of meetings

But you didn't take good notes

You hand-picked certain members

And you tried to rig its votes

And as for David Vickery, for Spaulding and for Slye

We want a larger portion of the economic pie.

It's not fair to us that in your rush to build on open space

That you get rich while leaving us the traffic and the waste.

So welcome City Council, we're so glad that you have come

To hear from us direct 'cause CDD is deaf and dumb

Compared to CDD I'm sure you'll take much better notes

I know you know that money talks, but it's people have the votes.

And once you've heard us Council, I want you to take a stand

I want to know what you think, every woman, every man

You can calculate quite well which side your bread is buttered on

But can you tell, just as well, what's right and what is wrong?

So people, City Council

Note my wit and note my levity

And remember what I've said

It's full of thought for all its brevity.

From:

LAURA ARENA

44 MAGOUN ST - CAMBRIDGE 02140

7.22.96

The land we are have gathered to speak about is an area in Cambridge scheduled for development. This land is home to countless rabbits, dragonflies, butterflies, ducks, cardinals, bluejays, and other wildlife. Right now, it is open marsh and grassland. It is one of the few undeveloped areas in Cambridge. Therefore, we might say this is our rainforest--land which is home to many kinds of wildlife and enriches our value as a community in relation to nature. We ask other communities, other countries, to take stock and appreciate the valuable lifeforms in their undeveloped land. In order to maintain our own ecological integrity, we too must give value to the wild, still undeveloped parts of our own community, North Cambridge. We want our children and grandchildren to see and also share in the beauty of nature undisturbed. It is a choice we need to make at this critical point in time. We are at a critical stage in our history as humans in this planet. We can choose to continue to destroy all of its living forms or we can enter into a new era of ecological balance. It is through the choices we make for the survival of nature in our communities that will make or break our own future existence. This is no exaggeration for it is through the smallest of actions that great efforts can be realized. By helping to sustain the integrity of the land we are speaking of, we can as a community make a positive action towards the future of our world. Thank you.

Laura Arena 9/6
7-22-96

City of Cambridge

The Environment Committee held a public hearing on Monday, July 22, 1996, beginning at 7:20 p.m. in the Cafeteria of the M.E. Fitzgerald Elementary School on Rindge Avenue to hear public testimony regarding a petition signed by approximately 600 citizens requesting independent environmental and traffic studies at and surrounding the W.R. Grace site in North Cambridge and a permit moratorium at the site until those studies have been completed.

Present at the hearing were Councillor Francis H. Duehay, Chair of the Committee, Vice Mayor Kathleen L. Born, Councillor Henrietta Davis, Councillor Anthony D. Galluccio, Mayor Sheila T. Russell, Councillor Michael A. Sullivan, Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr., Councillor Katherine Triantafillou, and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury. Also present were Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager; Harold Cox, Public Health Officer for the City of Cambridge, and Elizabeth Epstein, Deputy Director of the Community Development Department.

Councillor Duehay convened the meeting and explained the purpose. He noted that the Grace site raises a complicated set of issues. The purpose of this meeting is basically to hear public testimony regarding neighborhood concerns. He explained that the Committee does not expect to make any decision tonight, but rather to listen. There will be additional meetings regarding this petition.

Councillor Duehay then opened the meeting to public testimony.

Alice Wolf, Huron Avenue, former Mayor, urged that members of the community be invited to help frame the issues and select the consultants. In 1987 she chaired the committee that resulted in the original Spengler report. That report made it very clear that before additional development was undertaken, additional environmental research was necessary. She also urged support for the community efforts to seek grants and noted that state and federal planning is needed. She submitted a copy of her remarks. (Attachment A).

John Morgan, Winchester, stated that he has fourteen years of information regarding Alewife's toxic materials and their illegal dumping in Winchester and he offered to share it with the committee. He and his wife are both patients at the Leahy Clinic and attribute their illnesses to toxic material dumped across from their home by W.R. Grace.

Mayor Sheila T. Russell asked where the toxic material in Winchester came from. Mr. Morgan stated that it came from Cambridge.

Cheryl Webb, Clifton Street, stated that she is an abutter of the W.R. Grace Site. Before the construction, the field never flooded. Now the basements all are flooded. With the construction came mice. A high number of people have cancer and asthma. Traffic is bad on Clifton Street. She urges traffic, toxicity and health studies.

Committee Report #8

S-383

A report from Councillor Francis H. Duehay, Chair, Environment Committee for a meeting held on July 22, 1996 for the purpose of discussing the petition for independent traffic and environmental studies at and surrounding the W.R. Grace site in North Cambridge.

In City Council July 29, 1996

Report Accepted,
Order adopted,