

9691
- Jerry Boyle ①

The Committee on Environment ~~conducted~~ met on Tuesday, August 5, 1986 at 7:00 PM in the Sullivan Chamber of City Hall. The purpose of the meeting was twofold: first to receive a brief update on environmental monitoring at the Dump, and secondly to discuss the Bellis Circle wetlands.

Councillor Alice Wolf, Chair for the City Council Committee on Environment opened the meeting welcoming all and introducing members of the City Council and City administration present. Those included City Councillors Francis Duehay, Sheila Russell, Mayor Walter Sullivan, City Manager Robert W. Healy ~~and~~ ^{Jill Healy, Asst. C.M. for Human Services} Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi, ^{and Skip Russell of the Engineering Dept.} Councillor Wolf explained the agenda for ^{the} meeting and introduced Mr. Rossi as the City ~~the~~ official ~~the~~ overseeing the project.

Mr. Rossi gave a brief outline of the environmental testing that had been done and reviewed the overall process for the development of the dumpsite. He introduced Mr. John Kissida of Camp Dresser & McKee, Inc., the environmental consultants that the City has hired to assist in development of the site. Mr. Kissida asked that specialists from CDM address the meeting to better explain particular aspects of the environmental testing. He ~~first~~ first introduced Mr. Paul Ozarowski.

Mr. Ozarowski explained that data on dumpsite testing goes back to 1972 with the Cambridge City Dump Feasibility Survey - ~~Technical Report~~ Technical Report by Haley and Aldrich, Inc.. This testing was done to allow a preliminary recommendation on dumpsite development. Included in this report were monitoring of the process by which the MBTA filled the site with material from the Red Line extension

excavation work. Initial effects of settling of the fill were also monitored.

Mr. Ozarowski then explained the nature of the most recent environmental tests. Groundwater and combustible gas testing were being done. The locations of test wells in and around the dumpsite were indicated on a map. There are currently 20 such wells with an additional 10 wells to be drilled in August of 1986. The next set of results will be available in September/October.

The major concerns addressed by the testing are:

- 1) Cover thickness
- 2) Groundwater quality and flow direction
- 3) Methane gas generation
- 4) Settlement (for design purposes)

In checking the cover thickness, CDM has found that the thickness ranges between 4 and 40 feet over most of the area with the exception of the wetlands at Bellis Circle.

Ten platforms have been set out on the site to monitor settling. This testing will continue.

Mr. Ozarowski then explained that the wells were dug to monitor the generation of methane gas and to test whether or not the vent trench was operating properly.

Councillor Wolf asked Mr. Ozarowski to explain exactly how the ~~methane~~ ^{air is} tested for methane and if all the data were kept.

Mr. Ozarowski explained that all the raw data from methane testing is available. The wells are drilled to whatever depth the refuse is, and the materials extracted are examined and

recorded. A combustible gas meter is used to determine what percentage of the escaping air is methane. It was noted that the methane is measured at the top of the well and the gas dissipates into the atmosphere 3 feet from the well.

Mr. Kissida explained that methane was a natural by-product of the decomposition process of refuse.

Mr. Ozarowski explained that information on the depth and location of the refuse itself is obtained from test borings and from the use of aerial photographs. These aerial photographs show the progressive filling of the dumpsite itself over the years.

Larry Weinstein, 25 Sheerman Street, asked about the effects of methane on foliage. Mr. Weinstein inquired as to what kind of tests would be conducted to determine whether or not grass would grow suitably at the site.

Mr. Kissida explained that a specialist from CDM was ^{currently} studying this question and it was the general opinion that the methane levels were low enough so as not to interfere with "turf establishment". He explained that methane inhibits foliage growth more so by preventing the root system from drawing nutrients from the soil than by affecting leaves, stems, etc. He stated that, since methane levels fluctuate from place to place and time to time on the site, spot testing for turf establishment would not be a good indicator of the effects of methane on foliage. He said the entire site would be planted and problem spots would be

subsequently examined and attended to. Mr. Kussida reiterated that CDM did not expect methane concentrations to be a problem based on recent work done in a Rutgers University study on turf establishment on landfill areas.

Mr. Kussida then introduced Mr. David Noonan, a geological specialist for CDM. Mr. Noonan began by stating that he has been overseeing the air and groundwater quality monitoring at the site.

Mr. Noonan showed the ¹⁹⁸³ location of monitoring wells in the landfill on a map. This monitoring is concerned with determining the direction of groundwater flow from the dumpsite. ~~The~~ results show that groundwater moves away from the dumpsite with most of the flow being intercepted by the New Street pump station. He stated that groundwater from the dumpsite does not flow into Fresh Pond.

Mr. Noonan then explained that air testing was done in a site walkover and along the vent trench. Results show that methane production is winding down. Only two sites showed methane concentrations higher than background levels, but these concentrations were still very low.

Councillor Wolf asked Mr. Noonan to explain the term "leachate". Mr. Noonan explained that leachate was the mixture that resulted when rainfall percolated through the ~~landfill~~ landfill cover and mixed with the buried refuse. This mixture then leaches out from the landfill through the groundwater flow.

Tom Maguire, of 85 Upland Road, and a member of the Cambridge Conservation Commission (CCC) asked Mr. Noonan to clarify the direction of groundwater flow. Mr. Noonan stated that most of the groundwater flow is picked up by the New Street pumping station and the remainder is in a northwesterly direction towards Alewife Brook.

Mr. Noonan explained that followup tests in 1984 and 1985 confirmed the 1983 observations of groundwater flow and quality - i.e., that the ~~the~~ flow direction was the same and that the groundwater is clean.

Shippin Page, ~~at Bellis Circle~~ Bellis Circle, asked if the well nearest Bellis Circle, #C6, was representative of the area and was the data from this well available.

Mr. Noonan responded that the data from well #C6 was available, showing the water to be clean. He pointed out that it is difficult to draw conclusions from this well concerning the wetlands since #C6 is up-~~grade~~ (higher elevation) from the wetlands. Testing ~~for~~ at well #C6 showed no volatile organic contaminants in the water.

Larry Weinstein then asked if there were testing wells located directly in the path from the dumpsite to Fresh Pond. Mr. Noonan used the map to indicate that there were wells in the direct path between the dumpsite and Fresh Pond.

Mr. Weinstein asked where the water from the New Street pumping station went. Nancy Beaton of CDM pointed out that the water was pumped into the MDC sewers where it travelled to the Deer Island treatment plant before being discharged into

Boston Harbor.

Dorothy Altman, of 43 Gibson Street and the CCC, asked if water samples had been taken in the wetlands ~~themselves~~ themselves. Mr. Noonan said that samples had been taken in 1982 and showed no problem except an isolated instance of low levels of beryllium. More tests of this portion of the site were planned.

Mr. Kissida pointed out that the wetlands were not an example of perched water. That is, it is not water that has collected in a cup-like, impermeable structure, but that it is a local expression of ground water. This is a place where the terrain is lower than the ground water level thus allowing an area for the ground water to permeate through and collect.

Councillor Wolf then introduced the members of the Cambridge Conservation Commission who were present: Dorothy Altman, Tom Maguire, Mary Kennedy, Don MacIver, Roger Greenbaum and Nancy Lin.

Mr. Noonan then outlined the tests that would be done in the next phase of monitoring. He explained the walkover method of methane testing. Soil testing will be done when the new wells are dug. Surface water quality samples will be taken at the wetlands. Finally he stated that a radioactive walkover would be done as a precaution but he did not expect to find anything.

Mr. Kissida then began the explanation of the proposed capping of the wetlands. He noted that he has met with City officials, the City Council Subcommittee on Environment, the Cambridge Conservation Commission and the state DEQE on the issue of capping the wetlands. He also noted that the 1982 Pine and Swallow report recommended additional capping. Subsequent studies have shown that there is adequate cover on the remainder of the site exclusive of the wetlands.

Mr. Kissida explained that the \$2 million state grant depends on DEQE approval. DEQE regulations specify that the entire site must be adequately capped. CDM recommends capping the entire site, including the wetlands since they are on top of up to 40 feet of refuse. Although the wetlands are on a upgrade, they are a 2 acre site of refuse that may pose problems in the future. Mr. Ozarowski added that the capping procedure would ^{slightly} improve stormwater retention ~~slightly~~ in the area.

Councillor Russell ~~asked~~ asked whether or not the runoff would go somewhere else, like someone's backyard for instance, if the wetlands were capped.

Mr. Kissida responded that this was not likely since the wetlands would be capped to an elevation above the highest ground water level.

Councillor Wolf then asked Mr. Kissida to explain the role of the Cambridge Conservation Commission in the process.

Mr. Kissida stated that the CCC had a very important role revolving around the ~~issuing~~ issuing of a determination for use of the land with whatever conditions are needed for that

particular use.

Mr. Kissida explained the capping process with the use of a map detailing the capping and water detention area concept. He explained that water on the 50 acre dumpsite will still need to be drained additionally, ^{that} natural ~~drainage~~ ^{the} would not be sufficient. CDM plans to recommend ~~the~~ installation of additional storm drains that would reduce natural runoff from 700,000 cubic feet of water to 300,000 cubic feet of water.

A Bellis Circle resident asked why the wetlands would be capped when the residents clearly opposed it. Mr. Kissida explained that capping was necessary because of the potential health dangers associated with the underlying refuse and the DEQE requirements for use of the site. Mr. Kissida said he ~~was~~ was aware of the Bellis Circle residents' concerns for security, ~~the~~ aesthetics and drainage. He felt that the capping ~~plan~~ and subsequent landscaping plan that was proposed would address each of these concerns.

Lawrence D. Agostino, 24 Bellis Circle, stated that heavy rain caused a flooding problem in his backyard and asked if this capping procedure would alleviate that ~~problem~~. Mr. Kissida stated that the reduction of ~~the~~ ~~runoff~~ ^{runoff} should address that problem somewhat.

according to the current CDM recommendation,

Rich Rossi added that, ^{the} capped wetlands would be replaced with a landscaped area. ~~according to the current recommendation.~~

Mr. Kissida then further explained the capping proposal through the use of a detailed cross-section map. He then stated

that the cap itself would consist of porous gravel laid in up to 1 foot above the groundwater level. On top of that would be placed the plastic liner, then 3 inches of sand, and finally 8 inches of loam. CDM ~~is~~^{is} anxious to work with the community ~~of~~ on the final details of design (fence, vegetation, etc.).

~~He~~ when asked whether or not this whole procedure would result in a "great plastic swimming pool", Mr. Kissida pointed out that the plastic liner would not be seen and that many beautiful ponds are created this way.

Dorothy Altman asked if the wetlands would be left as they are now if further tests showed no contamination, and if so, would the DEQE relax ~~the~~ capping requirements.

Mr. Kissida stated that he could not speak for the DEQE. He pointed out that even though continued tests of the wetlands and underlying refuse would provide more information, he still recommends capping as a precaution ^{against} any contaminants appearing in the future with further decomposition of the refuse.

Councillor Wolf asked if the tests planned would give a better idea of the composition of the refuse. Mr. Kissida said that future tests would.

Mr. D'Agostino asked what ^{kind of} vegetation would replace the wetlands when capped. Mr. Kissida responded that it would be up to the community exactly what type of vegetation was put back in.

Councillor Wolf asked what kind of time span would be involved in the capping procedure. Mr. Kusside stated that if the work is started next spring, planting could be done in the fall with full growth showings in two years.

Councillor Duehay expressed his concern that if all the proper approvals for the project were given, what guarantee is there that this portion of the project would be done first so the area would quickly become re-established. Bob Healy stated that money is available for this aspect of the project.

Councillor Duehay then ~~introduced~~ introduced into the record a memorandum ~~and survey~~ from Shippen Page and a survey of Bellis Creek residents relative to the capping of the wetlands. Councillor Duehay then indicated that Mr. Page had to leave for another meeting.

Councillor Duehay reviewed a brief history of the dumpsite. He noted that much of the work currently being discussed for the dumpsite was due to the poor nature of recreational ~~facilities~~ facilities that the City and its schools have had to deal with over the years. Citing other instances of toxic waste contamination he stated that safety of the users is the City's primary concern. He noted that although the City does not wish to cover the wetlands against the wishes of the Bellis Creek residents, if it must be capped for safety reasons then it should be done.

Mr. Vic Karanian of the State's DEQE was introduced and he explained that although there appears to be adequate cover on most of the dumpsite, DEQE regulations ~~state~~ specify

that all of the site containing refuse must be ~~covered~~^{capped} for it to be considered a recovered landfill.

Olive Johnson of Concord Avenue then addressed the meeting, noting her 73 years residence in the area. She said she was concerned with the site and the wetlands, but was concerned also about people and about the future generations of Cambridge residents. Ms. Johnson expressed concern as to why this much attention was not paid to parks, schools, elderly apartments in East Cambridge. She stated that she would like to see a safe, open space for the children of Cambridge at the dumpsite.

Anna Kimball, 31 Bellis Creek, asked if the soil from the Red Line extension was tested. Mr. Lussida said that CDM was currently testing the soil. He noted that the DEQE had previously tested the soil and found no contaminants.

Councillor Wolf pointed out that the T soil was made up of very diffuse material and how would anyone know if anything would grow in it. Mr. Lussida explained that the entire site would be covered with loam. Mounding would be done where trees were to be put.

Jennifer Jones of 157 Fayerweather Street said that she had received many calls for information. She suggested that all the information concerning the dumpsite should be available in the library.

Mr. Rossi stated that a package of materials was being prepared and would be available in the main and branch libraries. He said that anyone wishing to be on a mailing list of materials should contact the City Manager's office.

Ms. Jones followed up Mr. Weinstein's question concerning the growing of grass on the site. She asked whether or not some kind of mulch had been put down previously. Mr. Kassaia explained that straw mulch had been put down by the T to prevent erosion, but not for growing anything.

Councillor Wolf asked the neighbors for their initial response to the proposal. Some felt they would like to study it further.

Councillor Duehay suggested another meeting at the home of a Bellis Circle resident to study the proposal more carefully.

Councillor Wolf asked Mr. Rossi to outline the next steps in the project. Mr. Rossi said a report would be mailed to residents and another meeting would be scheduled for after Labor Day. A copy of Shippen Page's memo and the minutes of this meeting would be mailed out.

Olive Johnson said the next meeting should be better publicized.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM.

- adjourned on motion of
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For the Committee,


Councillor Alice K. Wolf
Chair

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City of Cambridge

In City Council..... September 8, 1986

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Councillor Alice Wolf, Chair for the City Council Committee on Environment opened the meeting welcoming all and introducing members of the City Council and City administration present. Those included City Councillors Francis Duehay, Sheila Russell, Mayor Walter Sullivan, City Manager Robert W. Healy, Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi, Jill Herold, Assistant City Manager for Human Services and Skip Russell of the Engineering Department. Councillor Wolf explained the agenda for the meeting and introduced Mr. Rossi as the City official overseeing the project.

Mr. Rossi gave a brief outline of the environmental testing that had been done and reviewed the overall process for the development of the dump site. He introduced Mr. John Kissida of Camp, Dresser and McKee, Inc., the environmental consultant that the City has hired to assist in development of the site. Mr. Kissida asked that specialists from CDM address the meeting to better explain particular aspects of the environmental testing. He first introduced Mr. Paul Ozarowski.

Mr. Ozarowski explained that data on dump site testing goes back to 1972 with the Cambridge City Dump Feasibility Survey - Technical Report by Haley and Aldrich, Inc. This testing was done to allow a preliminary recommendation on dump site development. Included in this report were monitoring of the process by which the MBTA filled the site with material from the Red Line extension excavation work. Initial effects of settling of the fill were also monitored.

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3. Methane gas generation
4. Settlement (for design purposes)

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Ten platforms have been set out at the site to monitor settling. This testing will continue.

REPORT

Committee on Environment

Re: update on environmental monitoring at
the former City Dump site & the Bellis
Circle Wetlands.

In City Council,

September 8, 1986

Placed on File