



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL. 349-4300
FAX. 349-4307



12.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

September 28, 1998

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 12, regarding a report on asbestos testing at both the W.R. Grace site and adjacent Russell Field and MDC properties, received from Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development Beth Rubenstein.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUSAN B. SCHLESINGER
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

BETH RUBENSTEIN
Deputy Director for
Community Development

TO: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

FROM: ^{BK} Beth Rubenstein, Acting Assistant City Manager
for Community Development

DATE: September 9, 1998

RE: City Council Order #069; Report on Asbestos Testing at Both the
W.R. Grace Site and Adjacent Russell Field & MDC Properties, with
Detailed Information

In response to the above referenced order, I report the following:

RUSSELL FIELD

The City has completed the collection and testing of surficial soil, Parkway Pond sediment, deep soil, and groundwater samples in accordance with the Russell Field Work Plan prepared jointly with Alewife Neighbors, Inc. (ANI). Soil samples were analyzed for metals, asbestos, cyanide, sulfate, pH, and semi-volatile organic compounds. The work plan called for asbestos testing in the surficial and deep soils, as well as Parkway Pond sediment. Groundwater samples were analyzed for the same parameters, except for the exclusion of asbestos and the addition of volatile organic compounds. Groundwater was not tested for asbestos because it does not migrate through groundwater flow.

Surficial soil samples were collected from December 1997 to February 1998 from 84 locations in 12 zones and two sediment samples were collected from Parkway Pond. No asbestos was detected in any of these samples. ANI's environmental consultant observed the City's sample collection and collected duplicate samples for asbestos testing. Asbestos was also not detected in ANI's surficial soil or pond sediment samples.

In July 1998, 17 deep soil samples were collected at Russell Field. Fifteen locations were selected on the basis of earlier soil gas testing in consultation with ANI. Two additional locations were selected based on the locations of the tot lot and community garden proposed in the Russell Field Renovation Plan.

The deep soil testing found exceedances of specific metals and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) at 10 of 17 locations. This means that reporting thresholds were exceeded for these compounds and the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (MCP) requires the City to report the results to DEP within 120

days. The City's consultants are in the process of validating the data and preparing a report. Upon receipt of the report, formal notification will be sent to DEP. Initial review of the groundwater testing results indicates no chemicals were detected above MCP reporting standards.

With regard to test results for asbestos, of the 17 City locations, 5 deep soil samples (collected between 2 and 5 feet below surface) were reported by the laboratory to contain "trace" (less than one percent) levels of asbestos. Of the 5 soil samples with asbestos, two contained chrysotile, two contained amosite, and one contained both types of asbestos. ANI also collected subsurface soil samples from the same locations, but from different depths. They reported 3 samples with asbestos at levels of 3, 4, and 11 percent. Chrysotile was the only type of asbestos detected in the ANI samples. Only one location was reported by both the City and ANI to contain asbestos in soil. Therefore a total of 7 locations were reported to contain asbestos.

Although different levels of asbestos were reported by the City and ANI and the sample depths did not correspond in most cases, the City does not consider the test results to be inconsistent. True split samples were not collected; further, soil is very heterogeneous and asbestos may not be uniformly present throughout the soil boring.

In response to the findings of asbestos, the following actions were taken by the City:

- Environmental Health & Engineering, the City's environmental consultant, immediately reviewed the data and concluded that no imminent health hazard exists, given that the asbestos is located below surface.
- The City has directed its consultant to perform a detailed review of data from Russell Field and the Grace site and propose further testing necessary to fully characterize the extent of asbestos and other contamination under Russell Field. The proposal will specify the number, location and depths of additional samples to be collected, the type and specific methodology of laboratory tests to be performed, and whether any air monitoring should be conducted. The City will review the proposal with ANI later this month to decide on next steps in the testing program.
- The City notified the state Department of Environmental Protection by telephone of the asbestos findings within 4 days of receiving the ANI results and followed with the submission of a Release Notification Form accompanied by the ANI data, although the DEP grants up to 120 days to file a report. The City is expecting DEP to issue a Release Tracking Number for Russell Field soon.
- The City has hired outside counsel to assist in responding to the release and identifying potentially responsible parties.

- A “standstill agreement” has been entered into by W.R. Grace and the City to freeze any statute of limitations that may affect possible damage claims and to establish the opportunity to negotiate a settlement, if appropriate, and avoid lengthy litigation.
- The City has also proposed a standstill agreement to the MBTA, which so far has been declined. It should be noted that the MBTA’s decision preceded the reporting of subsurface contamination.
- A “demand letter” was recently submitted to the MBTA requesting their involvement in responding to the finding of subsurface contamination and requesting copies of all relevant documents that may help identify the source of the contaminants. No response has been received to date.

The City is working with its consultants and counsel to investigate how contaminants came to be present under Russell Field and is taking steps to protect its rights while pursuing the sources, causes and extent of the problem. To date, all steps required to protect public health and comply with the Massachusetts Contingency Plan have been taken. Further measures will be taken as they become necessary.

W.R. GRACE PROPERTY

W.R. Grace sampled subsurface soils on its property in May 1998 at the request of neighborhood residents. Haley & Aldrich, the company’s consultant, collected soil samples at two-foot intervals down to depths of 8 feet from 14 locations. Ten of the 14 locations contained at least trace levels of asbestos in one or more of the total of 56 samples collected. Of the 56 individual soil samples collected, 25 contained asbestos. Eleven of the 25 samples contained levels ranging from 2 to 12 percent and 14 contained trace levels. All sampling on the Grace property was observed by consultants hired by the City and ANI. In addition, W.R. Grace had agreed to allow six duplicate samples each to be collected by the City and ANI and the City ceded part of its sampling opportunity to ANI, which had requested a minimum of ten samples.

Ultimately, ANI collected and tested six samples and the City collected and tested two samples. Sampling did not take place at two locations due to wet conditions which prevented equipment access. One of the six ANI samples was reported to contain asbestos at 20 percent while in the other five, asbestos was not detected. Asbestos was not detected in either of the City samples.

W.R. Grace reported the asbestos findings to DEP on June 17, 1998. A separate release tracking number has been issued by DEP. On behalf of W.R. Grace, Haley & Aldrich has proposed an asbestos response plan to further characterize the distribution of asbestos on the property. The original plan issued on July 23, 1998 was revised on August 13 and

made subject to an extended Public Information Plan comment period. Subsequently, DEP recommended that W.R. Grace hold a public meeting, which the company has agreed to do. The public meeting will probably be scheduled during September 1998 and the comment deadline will be extended to an appropriate date following the meeting.

W.R. Grace has also released the results of air monitoring conducted from July 10 - 14, 1998. W.R. Grace reported that testing of 20 air samples did not detect asbestos fibers above 0.01 fibers per cubic centimeter, a threshold used in indoor air monitoring to determine if any health hazards exist. The City has directed its consultants to review the W.R. Grace findings and develop comments on the revised asbestos response plan.

Prior to commencing any construction activities on the W.R. Grace site, the property owner must develop an environmental site remediation plan in compliance with DEP clean-up requirements. This plan must address measures to protect the public from any contamination remaining on the site or from potential exposures during construction.



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BETH RUBENSTEIN

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Community Development

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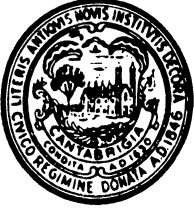
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ROBERT W. HEALY
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RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

September 14, 1998

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 17, regarding a report on asbestos testing at both the W.R. Grace site and adjacent Russell Field and MDC properties, received from Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development Beth Rubenstein.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

Consent Agenda #12

Relative to a report on asbestos
testing at both the W.R. Grace site
and adjacent Russell Field and
MDC properties.

In City Council September 14, 1998.

No Action Taken

SEP. 28 1998

Referred to Agenda # 29



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUSAN B. SCHLESINGER
*Assistant City Manager for
Community Development*

BETH RUBENSTEIN
*Deputy Director for
Community Development*

TO: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

FROM: Beth Rubenstein *VR*
Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development

DATE: 09/23/98

RE: City Council Order #069; Report on Asbestos Testing at
Russell Field, MDC properties and the W.R. Grace Site
-- Update

In response to the above referenced order regarding asbestos testing at the City's Russell Field, the adjacent MDC properties and the W.R. Grace site, I provide the following update to my previous memo dated September 9, 1998 (attached):

Groundwater Investigation

The City's consultants recently completed a data review and validation process for the Russell Field subsurface soil and groundwater test results. In connection with this process the presence of nickel above MADEP reportable concentrations was identified in 12 of the total of 15 wells installed. This finding does not alter the conclusion that no imminent hazards exist on Russell Field and normal use of the field can continue to occur, since users are not exposed to the groundwater.

Earlier preliminary reports had indicated that no chemicals found in the groundwater exceeded the reporting criteria. All other chemicals identified in the groundwater remain below reportable concentrations. These results require reporting to the DEP within 120 days. All 15 wells will be resampled to verify the presence of nickel.

The joint City and ANI protocol for groundwater testing did not call for asbestos testing based on the lack of scientific evidence that asbestos can be transported significant distances through groundwater flow. The DEP has recently requested that the W.R. Grace Company test groundwater below the W.R. Grace site for asbestos. The City will contact the DEP to discuss whether testing of the groundwater for asbestos below Russell Field will be necessary.

Identification of Potentially Responsible Parties

On September 22 the City received a letter from the MBTA in response to our demand letter denying any responsibility on the part of the MBTA for conditions at Russell Field based on information presently available. The MBTA also requested a variety of documents and information from the City. We are still awaiting a response regarding the MBTA's willingness to enter a Standstill Agreement with the City with respect to statute of limitations issues.

W.R. Grace Property

The W.R. Grace Company will hold a public meeting on October 1, 1998 at 7:30pm at 62 Whittemore Avenue to discuss their proposed asbestos response action plan.



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29.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

September 28, 1998

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached an **update** to Awaiting Report Item No. 12, regarding a report on asbestos testing at Russell Field, MDC properties and the W.R. Grace site, received from Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development Beth Rubenstein.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

Consent Agenda #29

5785

Relative to an update to AW
Item #12 regarding a report on
asbestos testing at Russell Field,
MDC properties and the WR Grace site.

In City Council September 28, 1998

PLACED ON FILE