

Central Landfill-Management Action Committee
Meeting #1- November 17, 1999- Final Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Mayor William Macera (Johnston), Mr. Jan Reitsma (Director DEM), Senator William Tocco (Johnston), Representative Alfred Russo (Johnston), Representative Beatrice Lanzi (Cranston), Representative Carol Mumford (Scituate), Representative Aram Garabedian (Cranston), Councilwoman Mary Cerra (Johnston), Councilman Michael Fagnoli (Johnston), Ms. Lisa Gargaro, Mr. William Major, Ms. Sherry Giarusso-Mulhearn (Executive Director, RIRRC), Mr. Michael Hill (EPA), Ms. Stacy Greendlinger (Facilitator-EPA), Mr. Terrence Gray (Assistant Director, DEM)

Johnston Mayor William Macera and RI Department of Environmental Management Director Jan Reitsma called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM on November 17, 1999 at the Ferry Middle School Library. Director Reitsma explained that the idea of the Management Action Committee came out of the discussions held at the public meeting on October 21, 1999 concerning odors and erosion at the Central Landfill. He further explained that this model has been very successful on the dioxin contamination in the Woonasquatucket River. The Director emphasized that this needs to be a results-oriented working group aimed at finding solutions to the environmental problems that the community is faced with right now. Mr. Reitsma also thanked the US Environmental Protection Agency for offering to facilitate the discussion and turned the meeting over to Stacey Greendlinger, the EPA facilitator.

Ms. Greendlinger opened by apologizing for any problems with respect to the time of the meeting and explained that the committee should decide the time and place of future meetings. She walked people through the proposed agenda (copy attached) and explained that the purpose of the first meeting was organization and orientation and, since the members of the public who would ultimately participate on the committee had not been established, no decisions would be expected or reached at this first meeting. No comments were raised on the proposed agenda and the committee accepted it.

She explained the ground rules for the meetings, which were outlined in a handout (copy attached) and explained that there would be an opportunity for public comment from people not on the committee during the brainstorming session. The members of the committee then introduced themselves and explained their affiliations and interests. Ms. Greendlinger also distributed a draft mission statement (copy attached) for the committee. Members of the committee were asked, and agreed to, review the draft mission statement by the next meeting.

Ms. Greendlinger then introduced Lisa Gargaro, who had formulated a proposal for citizen involvement. Ms. Gargaro explained her proposal to get citizen representation from the neighborhoods around the perimeter of the facility. Representative Aram Garabedian noted that he sits on the Board of a group representing the neighborhoods around Plainfield Pike in Cranston and that they would be able to select a single member to represent their interests on the committee. Ms. Gargaro explained that she had distributed over 2000 flyers to members of the public outlining the opportunity for participation and she would continue to solicit members from other neighborhoods. DEM offered to assist in distributing information in the future.

Councilwoman Mary Cerra expressed her opinion that at least five Johnston residents should serve on the committee. Mr. William Major also requested that his wife, Mrs. Patty Major, serve on the committee with him as a team. Director Reitsma suggested that the ultimate decision on the number and names of the members of the public serving on the committee should be left to the citizens themselves. This was agreed to by the committee and Ms. Gargaro said she would work with other parties to firm up the citizen participation by the next meeting.

Ms Greendlinger then opened a discussion on the operating procedures for the meetings. Specific issues she raised included the frequency of the meetings, the time and location of the meetings, and the continuing need for a neutral facilitator. Representative Garabedian suggested that a regular press release should be prepared and issued announcing the meetings. Ms. Gargaro suggested that a web site would be a good way to continue to make information available to the public. No decisions were reached on these issues.

Terrence Gray explained the actions DEM had taken to date compelling response actions from the RI Resource Recovery Corporation. An information package was distributed that included letters dated October 1, 1999 and October 21, 1999 from Director Reitsma to the RIRRC, a summary of the status of general issues raised at the October 21, 1999 public meeting, and DEM's response to comments presented by Ms. Gargaro and Ms. Nicole Franco at the public meeting. Mr. Gray also offered to try to find funding for an independent consultant who could review the technical documents and proposals for the citizen's group.

Sherry Giarusso-Mulhearn, Executive Director of the RIRRC, then updated the panel on the actions they had taken to abate the odors, repair the erosion damage, and respond to DEM's letters. She explained that their recent actions had increased the landfill gas collection and destruction capacity at the facility up to about 8000 cfm. She further explained that modeling had shown the expected total amount of gas generated at the facility is around 8500 cfm. She explained that further actions, including the construction of a gas collection trench at the top of the landfill and the installation of more collection wells, were planned in the near future.

Note: In reviewing the Draft Minutes, Councilwoman Mary Cerra added her recollection that Ms. Mulhearn outlined that 7 more flares would be added for a total of 21.

Ms. Gargaro commented that odors are still present in the community though not as often, but very strong when they occur. She noted that odors are often present late night or in the early morning.

Senator William Tocco reiterated his proposal from the October 21, 1999 for the establishment of a 24-hr DEM headquarters at the landfill supplemented by roving patrols through the neighborhoods. He noted that part of the problem in responding to odors was that no one was actually on the landfill property when the odors were experienced.

Representative Garabedian explained that he had been working with DEM to develop a permanent monitoring system in the community. It was agreed that the type and scope of monitoring would be a discussion point of the committee at future meetings.

Representative Garabedian also noted that he thought it would be beneficial to invite some from New England Ecological Development (NEED) to sit on the committee as well. No decision was reached on this issue.

Ms. Greendlinger then led a discussion to identify priority issues of the community and members of the panel. Those issues were listed as key words and are outlined in proposed groups in an attached list. Issues were first solicited from the committee members, and then the discussion was opened to the members of the public in attendance.

After the list was generated, it was agreed that further discussions would be held to prioritize the issues.

Note: In reviewing the draft agenda, Mr. Major added his recollection that he had requested Beverly Migliore's participation on this project.

The agenda was reviewed for purposes of wrap-up and the meeting closed at approximately 5:50 PM. The next meeting was scheduled for November 30, 1999 at the Ferri Middle School at 6:30 PM.