

## **RIDEM Environment Justice**

### **Community Involvement Sub-Committee Meeting**

**Meeting Minutes from Tuesday 7-28-09 @ 3:30 pm**

**RI DEM, Conference Room A**

#### **Attendees:**

**Sandra Brownell. Terry Gray. Elizabeth Stone, Susan Forcier, Phil Brown, Art Yatsko, and Bob Vanderslice.**

**Began 3:35 pm**

#### **Welcome/Open Remarks/Introductions**

- **Terry Gray (Gray) from RIDEM provided some opening remarks welcoming everyone for coming back to the table for this specific sub-committee discussion on Community Involvement in the Site Remediation program.**
- **Gray explained that this sub-committee should feel completely free to explore all options for improving the scope and efficacy of RIDEM's public/community involvement process as part of it's Site Remediation program.**

**Discussion of DEM Authored Memo (dated July 13, 2009) "Internal Evaluation of Community Involvement Process During the Investigation and Remediation of Contaminated Sites."**

- **Gray explained the process by which RIDEM undertook an intensive internal evaluation of the community involvement process as directed by the 2009 amended court order.**
- **Elizabeth Stone (Stone) provided a detailed summary of the sections of the memo (distributed prior to the meeting) which summarizes RIDEM's public/community involvement process as part of its Site Remediation program. Part 1 outlines existing requirements in statute, regulation and policy addressing community involvement in the Site Remediation program. Part 2 serves as an evaluation of the existing community involvement process, identifies challenges encountered by DEM staff, and puts forth some recommendations for improving the existing process.**
- **It was pointed out by Gray that the memo may have missed identifying one particular step in the community involvement process that is called for in statute and regulations. It was noted that the memo will be amended to correct this omission.**
- **It was suggested that there are 2 particular issues or "points in time" that could be explored further in an attempt to improve the overall community/public involvement process:**
  - o **"Change of use" of the property (e.g. from industrial to commercial or residential) might trigger a more involved community involvement process.**
  - o **The type of industrial activity (currently or historically) undertaken on a particular site might cause it to become "jurisdictional" under DEM's program, hence triggering a different level of community**

**involvement.**

- **The group debated how to address the so called “sneak peak” investigation that is undertaken by potential purchasers/developers (see the memo Part 2, the 5th bullet). The potential negative consequences of this step were raised by Art Yatsko – the group debated the pros and cons of this particular issue.**
- **The group debated ways to ensure that notice to abutters happened EARLIER in the redevelopment process. Unfortunately, the way the statute and regulations are drafted, sometime the first time abutters receive notice of a site cleanup is quite far into the redevelopment process.**
- **The group debated whether or not there was a way local government (e.g. zoning) could incorporate various “triggers” in the land use planning process to bring about increased community involvement – examples given included notice to abutters when there is a proposed “change of use” for a particular site and amending local comprehensive plans. It was suggested that we need to focus our discussions on when land use changes, not when there are prospective buyers proposing redevelopment projects.**
- **The group was very receptive to the suggestion that DEM should hire a full time community involvement coordinator.**
- **It was asked if DEM could spend more time attending conferences where issues of community involvement are debated. The limitations on the ability of DEM staff to get approval for travel were debated.**
- **The possibility & desire to keep specific staff recently hired with ARRA/stimulus funding as a full-time, permanent Community**

**Involvement officer was discussed.**

### **Closing Remarks & Next Steps**

- **The group will need at least 1 additional meeting to continue discussing recommendations for improving the existing Community Involvement process. Aim for a next meeting during the first week of September.**

**(Final – As Approved by Sub-Committee on September 2, 2009)**