

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

MEETING MINUTES
Fairmont Community Liaison Panel
October 1, 1998

(Roberta to add Attendees)

The October meeting of the Fairmont Community Liaison Panel was called to order by facilitator Roberta Fowlkes at 5:30 p.m. Roberta welcomed panel members to the meeting.

Roberta outlined plans for evening, which began with a tour of the Fairmont Coke Works Site.

After the site tour, the meeting continued. Roberta officially welcomed guests, who included several students from Fairmont State College, and thanked the tour hosts and guides.

In discussion after the tour, a question was asked regarding ownership of a small parcel of land that juts into the site property. Art Chin said Exxon has attempted to purchase the portion of land, but the owners have not been willing to sell.

A question was raised about the purpose of the drilling the group observed during the tour. Doug Taylor explained that soil samples obtained during the drilling process will be used primarily to generate a geologic log of the site, not for testing purposes. He said another drill rig will be brought in within a few weeks to begin drilling for analytical samples in the targeted areas.

Another question was raised about how soil samples were transported to the laboratory. Doug explained that soil samples containing low concentrations of hazardous materials (according to levels set by the Department of Transportation) are placed in a glass jar, wrapped in protective plastic, refrigerated, labeled as restrictive material, and then shipped to the laboratory via an authorized overnight carrier.

Proceeding with the agenda, Roberta also reviewed the panel's purpose statement and the ground rules for meetings.

Minutes from the September 3 meeting were approved as distributed.

Unfinished Business

Communications Update

In response to a question, the group indicated there has been little discussion or reaction to the work underway at the site from their neighbors or others in the community.

When asked how many panelists have access to the Internet, approximately half signified they do. Nick Fantasia mentioned that every school in Marion County, as well as Fairmont State College and the Marion County libraries, have Internet capability.

Roberta asked the group to consider what would be helpful to display on

the website once it is established. Melissa Whittington said EPA's practice is to put as much on the website as possible and let users select what they want.

Roberta reminded the panel that a binder, similar to the one each of them has, is now available to the public in the Reference Room of the Marion County Library. The information is updated monthly, or as needed.

Project Update

Art gave the project update. [A copy of Art's report is attached to the minutes of those who were absent from the meeting.] The site security upgrade will be completed in two weeks, when the fencing work is done. The plastic grids, which serve to warn people that caution is needed, have been placed on openings in buildings and on the grounds throughout the site.

Demolition has begun. The stack and conveyer have been taken down. The remaining structures in the coal and coke handling area, except for the coke oven, will be demolished before the end of the year. Art said demolition of the coke oven may be started by the end of the year, although it has been scheduled for demolition in 1999. On October 5, prebidding will open for the three-phased demolition planned at the site and for asbestos abatement. On October 16, the selection process for the demolition and asbestos abatement contractors will begin.

Doug reported the work plan for the site will be placed in the County Library on October 2. The reference is divided into four documents: the work plan addressing what the project is and why it is being undertaken; the field sampling plan, explaining how the work will be done; the health and safety plan outlining the provisions to protect workers; and the Quality Assurance Project Plan, which spells out procedures to ensure samples are handled in a way that ensures accurate test results.

Art said Exxon submitted on September 10 a proposal to the EPA and the WVDEP for remediation at the site to be administered under Project XL. The proposal, which will speed the investigative and decision-making process, is now under regulatory review. If approved, the Fairmont Coke Works will be the first Superfund site to use Project XL. A formal decision is expected within the next two weeks (mid-October).

John Hannig provided feedback on suggestions for overall site security made by community members at the September meeting. The proposal to use a call box has been deemed to have more disadvantages than advantages. Chief Wimer's suggestion to store the gate keys in a Knox Box is being implemented. [A Knox Box can be opened with a universal key carried by emergency personnel throughout the county.] John said a Knox Box will be placed at each of the two street entrances to the property.

Project XL

David Nicholas, with the EPA Office of Reinvention, presented information on Project XL. [A copy of David's presentation is attached to minutes of panelists who were unable to attend.]

David described Project XL as part of the reinvention initiative at the EPA. Some of the key messages from David's presentation include:

Traditional programs do not address the new challenges that exist. Program reform is needed to change administrative practices.

The EPA has adopted a multi-media (i.e., different aspects of the environment-- air, soil, water), holistic approach to administering projects.

The Fairmont Coke Works Site project is in the proposal review stage of the XL process.

Project XL (which stands for Excellence and Leadership) offers the benefits of shortened review periods, less paper work, fewer processes, and quicker project completion.

If approved, the Fairmont Coke Works Site will be the first Superfund project to be implemented under Project XL.

Another XL project (not a cleanup project) is underway in West Virginia at Osi Corporation in Sistersville.

Art emphasized the important role of the community liaison panel throughout the process. The panel is the "voice of the community," providing input to decision-making about the site. A partnership among the community, the potentially responsible party (the PRP, in this case, Exxon), the EPA and WVDEP, will ensure a course of action all involved can support.

David was asked to explain the availability of Technical Assistance Grants from the EPA. David said funds are available for community organizations to apply for. The purpose of these grants is to make resources available for communities to hire technical advisors who can interpret technical information and help increase understanding of the documents related to cleanup work.

A Project XL designation won't change the substantive work associated with the project, Melissa said. The investigation of the site won't change. Demolition and redevelopment work won't change. And, there will continue to be community participation, especially in the redevelopment phase, which will involve the panel. Exxon has made a strong commitment to the project, according to the EPA.

Tom Bass explained, and Melissa reinforced, the amount of early outreach to the community, as in Fairmont, is very rare. Exxon included the concept of the early formation of the panel in its Project XL application to the EPA. Robert Sapp said that up to this point the panel members have received a lot of information.

Art replied the information the panel has provided to Exxon has helped the company to better focus its resources. Under the traditional approach with Superfund projects, there was not as much dialogue with the community, and historical documentation was relied upon. He said, with increased community involvement earlier in the process, the project benefits from the community's experience. Art said the panel had already provided important information about locations to investigate. The goal is to be sure that people are involved all along and the decisions that are made have the support of the community.

Karen Gribben stated her appreciation of the efforts of those involved

at the site.

Bea Hunter said she has listened and learned a lot at panel meetings. She commented that she now has information that needs to be shared with others in the Fairmont community. Bea suggested that each panel member commit to talking to a group. There was discussion that the fact sheet, the map and some talking points would help in communicating information to others. John volunteered to develop talking points which may be used by panel members in presenting information to the public. Bea said knowledge and education will stimulate positive thinking in other residents.

Robert Ashcraft, who was sitting in for Bruce McDaniel, mentioned residents have been "quiet" about the project because of the panel's existence. Robert supported the suggestions made by Bea and Karen. He said the openness with the panel has led people to believe the parties are not covering up something.

Ron Swope asked if photographic or video documentation of the project, along with a timeline, could be provided to the speakers for presentations to other groups. John responded there were probably enough photographs available to assemble such a display. If video production is too expensive, Ron suggested the photos could be used on video with narration. Debbie Saurborn suggested the materials be kept in a central place and members could borrow them for presentations. John will look into making a visual record (either photos or video) of the project for use in these presentations.

Next Meeting

Roberta reported that the results of the group voting on potential Agenda items at the last meeting indicated a strong interest in finding out the impact of the cleanup work on the neighborhood. She asked if it would be appropriate to have an overview of the impact. Melissa said she has invited an EPA toxicologist, Lynn Flowers, to build some ground work on risk assessment at November's panel meeting. Roberta asked if there were other aspects the panel would be interested in, in addition to risk, such as air monitoring. Melissa said that monitoring may be a bigger issue later on. There was agreement that the risk assessment discussion would be useful. It was agreed also that the group will discuss at the next meeting what else they want to know about community impact from the work.

Meeting Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, November 5, 1998.

Circle W Building
5 p.m., Refreshments
5:30 p.m., Meeting