



Eiler Heights Neighborhood Meeting

1-7-14

Minutes

Board Members:

President-Pam Kocman, Present

Vice President-Victor Navarro, Present

Treasurer-Joe Kockman, Present

Secretary-Beritt Odom, Present

Volunteer Coordinator-Karen Fortner, Present

District 4 City Council Representative-Sandy Daff-Present

Special Meeting regarding Superfund Listing-Eiler Heights "Letter to the Governor"

Neighborhood Association President, Pam Kocman welcomed everyone in attendance and updated attendees on the recent events that have occurred with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Pueblo City/County Health Department, Pueblo County Commissioners, and Pueblo City Council. Ms. Kocman informed the group that the Pueblo City Council drafted a letter to the Governor, requesting Superfund nomination for the Eiler's Neighborhood based on possible lead and arsenic contamination by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) in 2010. Ms. Kocman explained that the letter written by City Council was a draft letter and that the purpose of tonight's meeting is to write a letter to the Governor expressing the concerns of the neighborhood and conditions for the Superfund Designation.

Ms. Kocman thanked all the neighborhood residents and interested parties that have been working on this issue for a year and a half. Ms. Kocman introduced her husband, Joe Kocman, Eiler Heights Treasurer, to present personal research that he has done regarding on EPA policies and procedures for clean up. Mr. Kocman also stated that he has not taken information from the EPA and CDPHE at face value and believes that "105 years of history is more indicative of the health of our neighborhood." Mr. Kocman states that there is no real evidence of health or learning issues, within the neighborhood stemming from lead or arsenic contamination. Mr. Kocman then highlighted three other cities where soil abatement had occurred and did not lower lead levels in children. Mr. Kocman stated that we must work to abate all sources of lead within the home and environment to insure the health of our children, something that will not occur with EPA Superfund action alone. Other sources of funding and programs will be necessary to rid the homes of lead based paint and other contaminants.



President Pam Kocman passed out sheets of paper requesting that all attendees fill out their top five concerns regarding the impending Superfund designation. Once everyone had filled out their sheets, President Pam Kocman, Treasurer Joe Kocman, and Council Representative Sandy Daff, collected the sheets and tallied the results.

While Mr. Kocman, Ms. Kocman, and Ms. Daff tallied the top five concerns of neighborhood residents, President and Founder of the Bessemer Association for Neighborhood Development (BAND), Dave Balsic spoke about his concerns regarding commercial lending within a Superfund designated neighborhood. Mr. Balsic stated his concerns that once designated, lenders would no longer provide loans for commercial businesses within Bessemer because of the Superfund status. He stated that with no commercial loans, businesses owners would not be able to sell their thriving businesses to a new generation and retire. Mr. Balsic also stated that any good business plan has a scope of work and without the scope of work the business will not do well. Mr. Balsic pointed out that the EPA does not have a scope of work or plan of action for the impending Superfund nomination. He stated that “we need expectations set up front.” He expressed his misgivings that a boundary for the Superfund area has not been set and a clear plan of action has not been presented to the property owners of Bessemer. Mr. Balsic asked everyone in attendance to ask the governor for a scope of work and to look at this problem like a business plan.

David Webb, Remax Realtor, and new neighborhood resident, informed the group that in his personal research has found that the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Veterans Administration will not insure loans within a Superfund Site or within 3,000 feet of a Superfund site. He went on to state that without a clear-cut boundary for the Superfund nomination the boundary could grow based on soil testing, which would in turn increase the area in which there is no federal assistance for first time home buyers. The Superfund designation could ultimately begin to affect mortgages in the Grove and Mesa Junction. Mr. Webb also expressed his concern about the nomination possibly leading to blight conditions within our neighborhood. If homes cannot be sold, they will become rental properties, which can lead to overall neighborhood degradation.

President Kocman and Council Woman Sandy Daff presented the concerns of the neighborhood; the most cited concerns were:

1. Decrease in Home Values,
2. If the EPA was going to conduct tests to identify the sources of lead,
3. A desire to get the Superfund clean-up done quickly, and
4. How the clean-up would be conducted.

All comments are attached to the minutes for record.



Treasurer Joe Kocman urged everyone in attendance to participate in the clean-up process. Mr. Kocman stated that the neighborhood would not be de-listed unless all properties are tested and the contaminated sites are cleaned.

President Pam Kocman stated that a Citizen's Advisory group would be established to work with the EPA through the Superfund clean-up to ensure that our needs are being met.

Council Woman Sandy Daff addressed concern about the possible timeframe for designation and clean-up, stating that a five-year time limit would not be realistic. Ms. Daff stated that there are approximately 140-150 houses that will be involved in the clean-up, a more realistic time-frame would be 10-12 years. Ms. Daff stated that the Citizens Advisory group should request the EPA to provide a scope of work.

Chris Wardell, Community Involvement Coordinator for the EPA, addressed the timeframe question from the audience. Mr. Wardell stated that Copper Gulch experienced a similar lead and arsenic situation, they were designated in 1983 and the clean-up is still on-going after 30 years. Mr. Wardell says that some of the positive benefits communities have received from Superfund clean-up are trails and parks built over contaminated sites. He also stated that the community has a lot of say in the clean-up process. Sabrina Forest, EPA representative, stated that it could take up to three years following clean-up for a site to be de-listed.

Councilwoman Daff stated that the ATSDR study must go through a peer review exercise prior to being published and released to the public. Ms. Daff stated that she would push Dr. Diawara to finish his study on blood lead levels.

EPA representatives stated that they would work closely with the Housing and Urban Development Department and Federal Housing Association to determine if FHA loans would be precluded because of designation.

Senator George Rivera stated that he did not have any answers for the residents, however he does question where all of the sick folks are residing. Senator Rivera stated that if there is a real problem with soil contamination he does not want to jeopardize future generations. He encouraged everyone to gather as a community and provide a united front through this clean-up process. Senator Rivera stated that he would take copies of all of our concerns directly to Governor Hickenlooper.

Merill Combs highlighted possible issues with the original soil testing that took place in 2010 by the State of Colorado Health Department. Mr. Combs stated that samples were taken too quickly to have followed the proper protocol for sampling. He also stated that he believed the samples were taken with shovels and not the required equipment.