

Monday, November 14, 2011

GREENWICH HIGH SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTAL TESTING UPDATE

Work Around Fields 3 & 4 Nearing Completion

Site Status Recap:

Fields 6 & 7 (Turf) – Fields 6 & 7 are now open without restrictions. Small areas around field 7 are fenced off to protect the topsoil and seed that has been placed.

Fields 3 & 4 (Turf) – Fencing has been installed around fields 3 & 4. Plans outlining the interim remediation efforts for these fields were submitted to the EPA, DEEP and DPH for approval and work is nearing completion. When complete, this work will allow the opening of fields 3 & 4 including bleacher access.

Fields 2 & 5 (Grass) – Remediation on field 2 is nearing completion. This will allow for fall field maintenance before winter. At field 5, the results of testing of shallow soil show no PCBs present in the field area and low levels of PCBs (less than 1ppm) in the grass covered outfield. Therefore, a request was submitted to the regulators to open field 5 for use. DEEP and DPH have informally approved the use of Field 5 by the public, as well as allowing maintenance of the field. Formal approval of the request is anticipated in the very near future.

Environmental Study Status Recap:

Immediate Next Steps: The Town and its consultant, AECOM are developing an overall project scope of work, schedule, and budget for the environmental study, remediation, and post-remediation maintenance and monitoring. These project estimates are preliminary and will need to be revised as site understanding is improved, but will give the Town a good sense of potential project costs and schedule. This information will also be shared with site stakeholders and the community, so that these groups may stay actively engaged in the process, provide comment, and have their questions answered as the overall remediation project is being designed.

Significant Environmental Hazard Notification – The Town recently submitted a notice of Significant Environmental Hazard to the DEEP. This notice is required to be submitted when certain environmental conditions are identified during site investigations. In the case of the High School Site, the condition that required reporting is the identification of contaminated soil within two feet of the surface. This DEEP required document formally summarized the identified environmental impacts at the site and the measures taken to date to address the impacts. In accordance with DEEP requirements, signs will be posted on the site identifying the presence of contaminated soils.

MISA Investigation: The initial phase of the environmental study being performed to support the MISA construction effort has been completed and the draft findings of this study are being reviewed with the MISA Building Committee. Additional soil borings were performed at the site on November 13, 2011 to further evaluate soil impacts within the construction area, and these data will be available the week of November 21, 2011. This work was delayed due to the recent storm. Information gathered during this study is being used to develop construction procedures for the MISA project to ensure that work is performed in a manner protective of site users, the community, and the environment.

Public Health: As described by the DPH at our public meeting, to be exposed to health risks associated with PCBs, one must come into contact with the material (i.e., directly touching it, breathing it, or ingesting it). The potential risks will also vary by individual depending on how often the contact is made, the general health of the individual, age, etc. Areas of potential environmental concern will be removed or fenced (thus isolating people from contacting the materials). All facilities will remain closed until they are “cleared” for use by EPA, DEEP and DPH.

Ongoing Communications:

Public Updates will continue on a monthly basis at a minimum, and more frequently as needed. The Public Updates are posted on the GPS Web Site, and are sent via email and/or Parentlink to GPS families, GHS neighbors, community officials, and the local media.

Also, the Town of Greenwich and its contractor AECOM will develop a Public Participation Plan (PPP) available in mid-November. This plan will outline our communications and outreach program for the project, which will include the schedule for full-scale environmental remediation.

Site Investigation Phases

The environmental study will be performed in several phases. All phases are performed in accordance with State and Federal regulations; these authorities may also review information, provide comment, and help guide the process towards completion.

Phase I Site Assessment – This phase involves collecting historic and current data concerning site history, development and use. The data are evaluated to determine potential Areas of Concern and Chemicals of Concern for a site. This assessment report was completed for the GHS environmental project in August 2011, and identified the likely source of contamination as PCB-containing fill material that was used during construction of GHS in 1970.

Phase II Site Investigation – This phase typically involves collecting data from environmental media (e.g., soil, groundwater) in the identified Areas of Concern from the Phase I Assessment. For the GHS Site, significant characterization of surface soils has been performed already. This characterization identified pockets of PCB contamination or “hot spots” beneath some areas of the GHS property, including around the grass athletic fields 2 & 5, synthetic turf athletic fields 3, 4, 6, & 7, and the west parking lot. Additional environmental studies are planned to evaluate deeper soil, groundwater, surface water and sediment.

Phase III Site Investigation – This phase typically involves collecting soil and groundwater data to fill data gaps identified in the Phase II investigation to refine site understanding and to aid in designing the cleanup program for a site. For the GHS Site, the Phase II and III investigations will be designed and implemented in a dynamic and interactive fashion so that they may be implemented in a timely and efficient manner.

Site Remediation Phases

The environmental remediation phase is also completed in three phases.

Remediation Selection and Design – This phase includes identifying and evaluating various options for cleaning up the Site. Once the final option is determined, this phase also includes engineering design of the remediation, and preparation of Remedial Action Plans for review and approval by state and federal regulatory authorities.

Remediation Implementation – This phase is the Implementation of the cleanup plan (i.e., the remedial measures) typically involves preparing bid documents and technical specifications for the work to be completed. Following selection of the contractor for the work, the work is performed. Remediation oversight will be performed by the Town through an experienced consultant so that performance of the work in accordance with the bid documents and specifications may be recorded.

Post-Remediation Efforts – The final phase of the remediation is to document the completion of the work in a report or reports for review and approval by state and federal regulatory authorities. Post-remediation work will most likely be necessary, and will likely involve maintenance and monitoring of the selected cleanup remedy to ensure its effectiveness in protecting site users, the community and the environment.

**For all information requests, please contact:
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Acronyms:

DEEP = CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
DPH = CT Department of Public Health
DPW = Town of Greenwich Department of Public Works
EPA = US Environmental Protection Agency
MISA = Music Instructional Space and Auditorium
PCB = polychlorinated biphenyls