EL DORADO HILLS COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

MEETING NOVEMBER 17, 2004

The following report seeks to describe the purpose of a Community Advisory Group, and summarizes the proceedings of the meeting of the El Dorado Hills Community Advisory Group that was held on Wednesday, November 17, 2002, at the Bass Lake Road Fire Station. The authors are CAG members Kathy Prevost and John Thomson.

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) wants the public to participate in decision-making at Superfund and other sites with environmental problems. The EPA believes that early and direct public involvement results in better decisions on how to deal with environmental problems at these sites.

Forming a Community Advisory Group (CAG) is one of the most effective ways a community can participate in environmental decisions. A CAG is a committee, task force, or board made up of residents of a community with Superfund or other environmental problems. The CAG enhances public participation in the cleanup process and other environmental decision-making by providing a public forum where community representatives can discuss their diverse interests, needs, and concerns.

As the federal regulatory agency responsible for hazardous waste remediation, U.S. EPA can work closely with CAGs. EPA Regional Office staff can attend CAG meetings to provide information about cleanup plans and activities and to discuss community questions and concerns. EPA also provides information and other tools to assist communities in establishing CAGs and actively participating in the decision-making process.

In addition to the community itself, a number of other groups are involved in making decisions about site cleanup and other environmental issues. These include the U.S. EPA and other federal agencies; state, tribal, and local government organizations; and facility owners and others who are potentially responsible for the contamination at the site. These groups work closely with the Community Advisory Group. In some cases, communities may choose to include representatives of local governments and potentially responsible parties as Community Advisory Group members.

A number of people from the El Dorado Hills community have come together to form the El Dorado Hills Community Advisory Group (EDHCAG) to address the problem of Naturally Occurring Asbestos (NOA) in the El Dorado Hills area. The second meeting of the EDHCAG was held on Wednesday evening, November 17, 2004, at the Bass Lake Road Fire Station.

NOVEMBER EDH CAG MEETING

The EDHCAG meeting on Wednesday was attended by quite a few high powered individuals with the California Air Resources Board (CARB), US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), California Environmental Protection Agency (CALEPA) (Schools) and El Dorado County Air Quality Maintenance Department (AQMD). Attending as well were representatives of Christopherson Homes (developers of Promontory Village Four), Youngdahl and Associates, and Network Environmental Services.

Sharon Farr, Branch Chief, School Property and Cleanup Division (CALEPA) gave a presentation on the development of the Promontory School site, including air monitoring results. Several members of BLAC attended the CALEPA hearing held several months ago where the Promontory School mitigation plans were discussed. At that time, mention was made that more on-site air monitoring should take place.

Those air sampling numbers were for both personal air monitors (where the monitors are attached to one's clothing) and stationary air monitors (where air sampling machines are set up at various points on the ground depending on prevailing winds and the location of worksite activity) to perform ambient air sampling. Personal air monitors were worn by a number of the workers at the site. The workers were instructed how to use the personal air monitors. There were a few early days when no results were obtained because workers put the monitors on upside down, or took them off to work, but these problems were soon corrected. The site had four stationary air monitors: two downwind monitors, one upwind monitor, and one area monitor that sampled the air at the perimeter between the work site and the nearby residences, which were both upwind or downwind of the site, depending on the prevailing winds. The monitoring was performed by the consulting geologist hired by the contractor and the CALEPA. They concluded that fence line (site perimeter) monitoring did not identify asbestos or dust moving offsite of the school property. They did have two days when stationary monitors exceeded asbestos site action levels, and 13 days when personal monitors exceeded asbestos action levels. They stated when action levels were exceeded, additional watering activities effectively suppressed the dust.

Regarding Promontory Village 4, housing developer Christopherson Homes had initially been following county ordinances for this site, which included visual observation by trained and registered geologists and enhanced use of dust suppression during grading activities with water trucks. However, during the initial grading process, a localized pocket of white, slightly fibrous material mixed with talc was observed at the base of the cut slope on a lot at the site. Christopherson said they immediately implemented Fugitive Dust Mitigation Controls and submitted a sample of the suspect material to Forensic Analytical Laboratories in Hayward for analysis. That sample contained 12% actinolite asbestos. An Asbestos Dust Mitigation Plan was prepared and sent to EDC AQMD for review and approval.

Christopherson Homes retained Network Environmental Systems, Inc. to perform screening-level air sampling for NOA during the earthwork activities at the site. Air monitoring both upwind and downwind have been performed since July 8 to the present. The Network Environmental Systems geologist gave a lengthy presentation (an Interim Report) to the CAG on the results of the air monitoring at the site. He said that NOA that has been detected on the site to

date has come from hydrothermal alteration veins at deep bedrock contact boundaries, and soils overlying these veins, along the eastern north-south trending ridge in the development site. He reported that out of 330 air monitoring samples collected, 222 indicated some level of NOA. He further asserted that they had followed the detection protocols and an approved County Asbestos Dust Mitigation Plan, which they considered adequate and in line with regulatory requirements (this was despite having some air monitoring asbestos detection spikes). Interestingly, the data he presented showed higher upwind air monitoring numbers than downwind numbers, which he felt might indicate that dust was coming from off their site. A representative from Christopher Homes stated that they have spent over 2 million dollars on NOA mitigation, and that air monitoring is voluntary in El Dorado County. There was, of course, animated discussion during this presentation.

DISCUSSION

The resident of a house above the Promontory who was previously featured on Channel 13 News expressed her concerns and dissatisfaction with the whole process. She stated that she and her neighbors were never notified of the possibility of asbestos exposure, and were not told when air monitoring detected higher levels of naturally occurring asbestos.

A resident of Camerado Oaks bordering on Hollow Oak development expressed the same concern about dust at his house, as the result of construction activity at the nearby Hollow Oak development.

A number of officials spoke about the issue of standards, and each agency seemed to have a different idea about what the standard is, or should be. It appears that there is no uniform standard that would quantify what amount of NOA has to be present in the air to trigger a warning to the nearby neighbors of any danger from NOA fibers blowing over and into their homes and property. This provoked a sometimes-heated discussion among the members of the CAG and the agency representatives.

Channel 13 news was in attendance and filmed most of the meeting.

NEXT CAG MEETING

The next CG meeting will take place on January 19, 2005. The meeting place will be announced later. CAG members are encouraged to submit agenda items for that next meeting.