



Buffalo Environmental Management Commission

MINUTES

Meeting of Wednesday, August 20, 2014

The meeting started at 8:15 AM and was held in Room 901 City Hall.

Commissioners: J. Gardella, J. Hackney, A. Robinson, D. Hahn-Baker, F. Armento, C. Grieco

Not Attending: J. Bauda

Others Attending: D. Sutton (COB support staff), Natasha Soto (Clean Air Coalition), Tony Mecca, Jill Terreri (Buffalo News), S. Attridge (COB), S. Stepniak (COB), Art Giacalone, Terrance Robinson, Linda Detine, Carole Perla (Columbus Park Association/Prospect Hill)

Minutes – July 2014 Minutes were approved.

SEQRA/Sustainable Development

- J. Gardella indicated that there appeared to be no soil or residual chemical/radiological concerns regarding the Gates Circle redevelopment project. Review of the traffic study should be done. The submitted SEQRA information was available for review on CD and the item was slated to be included on the Common Council agenda for their first meeting in September. He requested that any comments on the documentation be compiled by F. Armento for submission to the Common Council.
- Common Council had requested that the BEMC comment on the 24 Rhode Island Street Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) that indicated no significant effect for the property. BEMC had invited the public to attend the meeting to also provide comments. Representatives from the Clean Air Coalition, Columbus Park Association and neighborhood residents and private citizens were in attendance. Comments would be accepted by the BEMC until Sept 1, 2014.

L. Detine spoke on the concern that the area around the Episcopal Home was being represented as being commercial in nature when it is located in a residential area. She also indicated that Busti is a residential street near the Home, not to be confused with the on ramp to the I-190 near the Peace Bridge.

A. Giacalone questioned why only the former Home buildings were being considered in the SEQRA process. He indicated that any transfer of City property would require a TYPE 1 action under SEQRA, in which case a Neg Dec would not be appropriate. He indicated that SEQRA requires that alternatives other than demolition be considered for the buildings and that he believes the SEQRA had been segmented for the project. He further commented that he was concerned about the potential for noise levels from the Peace Bridge traffic to increase in the adjacent neighborhood if the buildings were removed and recommended that a noise study be conducted. He further commented about the potential effects on the aesthetics and neighborhood views.

T. Robinson stated that he considers the demolition project is related to the Gateway project and the expansion and reconfiguration of the Peace Bridge plaza. He felt that the Episcopal Home property was purposefully neglected and that Olmsted design guidelines need to be considered on properties that are adjacent to Olmsted designed properties. He indicated that the Home property was designated as historic and that that designation applied to the buildings and grounds of the Home. He further commented that there were potential environmental justice issues related to the closing of the Home through the loss of jobs and the poor air quality adjacent to the Peace Bridge. He was concerned that there was no public record of easements or takings for acquisition of the property by the State or the way the agreement for the repair to the Porter Street bridge was generated, there was a potential alienation of parkland due to the rerouting of the Shoreline Trail adjacent to the on ramps to the Peace Bridge and wondered why 4th Street had recently been designated one-way. He felt that the SEQRA process had not been transparent.

Other

- The recycling ordinance drafted by the Recycling Alliance to will be submitted to the Common Council for consideration in September. Public Works will be submitting comments before submission to the Common Council and D. Hahn-Baker will finalize the BEMC's comments for submission to the Common Council. He pointed out that the City should emphasize the success stories and good work that has been done so far.
- Commissioner Stepniak was present to provide information on the City's policies and procedures regarding the handling of Universal Waste. He indicated that a consultant had been hired conduct audits of the City's buildings and to generate a Universal Waste Management Plan. He anticipated that the plan will improve material handling, storage and monitoring and provide an opportunity to educate staff, making the system more efficient. Related to the improved universal waste handling will be a series of waste drop off events, one for each Council District.

A general discussion regarding recycling ensued and centered on TV recycling and improved recycling in schools. S. Attridge and D. Hahn-Baker discussed a coordinated effort to improve school recycling rates.

Commissioner Stepniak requested assistance from the BEMC with regards to the availability of any student interns that would be interested in helping out in the City's recycling program. He also requested that his department be included to receive meeting agendas on a regular basis.

Adjournment - Meeting adjourned at 9:40 AM. Next scheduled meeting is to be September 17, 2014.