

WEBSTER PLANNING BOARD
WORK SESSION, JULY 13, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. Planning Board members present included Chairperson Rauth; Members Roman and Buckley; Selectman representative Becker and Alternate Ilacqua. Ms. Ilacqua would be asked to vote in the place of absent member Lehmann. Also present were Nikki Roy and Heidi Lemieux from Sanborn Head. The purpose of the meeting was to review and discuss the draft report of the groundwater quality study prepared by Sanborn Head.

Member Becker asked about an apparent discrepancy between information presented at the Sanborn Head site visit about the Copart auto fluids. Fluids are not actively drained at the Copart site. However, Fred Archambaux, the Copart representative, told them that 90% of the vehicles do have their fluids. Some Board members expressed concern of a greater potential risk for spillage if the majority of vehicles have their fluids intact.

Ms. Roy indicated most of the stains observed were in the vehicle receiving area inside the fenced area. She considers this the “higher risk area” since vehicles are transferred from the trucks in this area. A general discussion was held about Copart operations and the types of liquids that may be spilled. No drip pans were observed in use during the Sanborn Head visit although they did not walk the entire lot.

Member Rauth asked in regard to the report, what is the impact of the vehicles being stored there 8-10 weeks in the context of it being a “low risk site”? Ms. Roy said when they look at risk, they consider a site that transfers liquids to be a higher risk site; for example, a traditional junk yard where vehicles could be sitting for a much longer time.

Member Roman asked about the phrase, “the relative risk of groundwater contamination appears to be low.” She reviewed the other risk factors stated and asked, how much does it take to contaminate an aquifer? Ms. Roy explained it is a volume and velocity calculation. In a highly permeable material, there would likely be a strong groundwater flow with a lot of volume and velocity. Spills travel linearly very well. Pollutants would move more quickly and dilute over a larger area than in a lower permeable soil.

The other component involved in risk is receptors. She felt the groundwater is likely flowing in the direction towards the lowest portion of the site topographically. But looking at the topographic map, Pond Brook is north of the site and the water is flowing towards the brook (the receptor). Regardless of the direction, there is a lot of opportunity for small volumes of contaminants to mix in the groundwater and it would be hard to detect. Ms. Roy felt the aquifer maps aren’t that helpful with this type of information.

Ms. Roman said she is concerned there is potential for contamination but she doesn’t know if there is enough information to make a determination. Considering the site factors – the number of cars; the potential of fluids; and a highly permeable soil with groundwater only five feet below – we are trying to make a decision about the need for

monitoring wells. She questioned the language of the report: “monitoring wells may be useful” doesn’t sound like a recommendation.

Ms. Roy said it is not a “black and white” science and there are no easy answers. The ultimate answer depends on the client’s risk perspective. If the risk of contamination is low, that doesn’t mean there is no risk. They are putting it in context. She agrees there is some risk of contamination in the groundwater. Her professional recommendation is based on what they have seen in other sites. It is also a cost-benefit analysis.

Member Becker attended the Sanborn Head site visit and feels it is a clean operation. Member Roman indicated she still has a concern about leaks over time. Ms. Roy noted there are stains on the ground in the receiving area. Copart has a spill response procedure and they conduct training for their staff. The report recommends they use drip pans.

Member Buckley said we asked for the study so that our site plan review requirements for Copart are backed up by a professional opinion. Sanborn Head identified the options but didn’t make a recommendation. Ms. Roy said if they saw practices that were very alarming it would be easier to make a stronger recommendation. The members still have concern about the high water table and the risk over time. Ms. Roy indicated contamination in an aquifer isn’t cumulative because it is discharged over time into Pond Brook. It is a relatively complex process. The biodegradation depends upon the thickness of the soil over the bedrock and the groundwater above and below the bedrock.

Ms. Rauth wondered why Copart didn’t do more testing when they purchased the site. Ms. Roman observed that the junkyard was a higher risk activity but it was on a much smaller scale than Copart. Ms. Roy agreed but surmised that Copart was comfortable with a higher level of risk when they purchased the site.

Ms. Roman said we need more information and the language of the recommendation, “it may be useful,” wasn’t enough information for us to make a decision. Ms. Roman said maybe we didn’t order enough of a study in the first place to give us further direction. Ms. Roy said the Planning Board’s decision may be based on other than a technical call.

The Board reviewed Copart’s inventory process again and discussed whether or not the entire site is inspected for leaks on a regular basis. Ms. Roy said we could go back and ask that question. We know they have a spill response process but we don’t know how frequently the lot is monitored. She also indicated the intake area is the higher risk area because of the observations of staining in that area of the lot. Mr. Becker pointed out the cars are moved on the lot with large forklift trucks which could also be a potential risk. Ms. Roman said we don’t have evidence that they are implementing the best management procedures. Mr. Buckley said that is why we could implement unannounced inspections.

Ms. Roy indicated that a minimum of three wells are required for triangulation to measure the flow. The flow is deduced from the relative height of the water in the wells. A next study would be one day’s worth of drilling with 3-4 monitoring wells installed in the higher risk area; a survey and sample of the water; and an analysis report. It would

provide baseline data in the higher risk areas and information about the gradient (direction of flow). The study would cost about \$7500.

Ms. Roy explained in detail where the four proposed testing wells would be located. She would target areas that are accessible within the intake area. The results would confirm the gradient; we would know if there is contamination now; we would have the ability in the future to sample. The well can have a pipe that stands up above the ground or a flush mount. Ms. Roy said a baseline investigation is useful to confirm that there hasn't been impact to date. It will give us a snapshot of current conditions.

NHDES requires monitoring wells every 500 feet along the property boundaries of a landfill site. Ms. Roy said it would take 15-20 wells to monitor the entire site boundary. This smaller study would give us a picture of what is going on in the higher risk area of the site and where to target a next step if that was required. But it won't tell us if there's contamination in another location on the site outside the higher risk area.

Select Board Member Becker said, if we want to go ahead with the investigation we can write up a further explanation and justification. The Board discussed the overall risk involved to the Town. Member Rauth said, if Copart leaves the site and another junkyard moves in, the wells may be a benefit to us. Member Roman suggested we need to legally understand what happens if a "real" junkyard comes to Town. Copart is not a junkyard under the licensing statute or the DES regulations.

The timeframe for drilling and testing could occur in October and it could take a month prior to get the approval from Copart. Ms. Roy said baseline groundwater monitoring would generate data to monitor future conditions at the site. The Board voted to request a proposal from Sanborn Head to do an interim study to install 3-4 monitoring wells in the high-risk area to provide a baseline study as to the impact of the operation. Ms. Roy pointed out it wouldn't yield data for the larger parking lot area. The proposal will be provided by the end of July. The discussion with Sanborn Head staff was concluded.

Ms. Roman presented the Board with a hypothetical question about a parcel of land with two potential lot line adjustments and discussion ensued. The resulting lots would be less than five acres but would be deeded as "unbuildable." She will review the zoning regulations and the owner would come to the Board for a conceptual discussion.

Chairperson Rauth reminded the Board that Nick Sanders of VHB will be coming to the July meeting to review the results of the Truck Routing Study. The members thanks Tricia Ilacqua for her time spent formatting the Subdivision Regulations.

The Board discussed recent incidents regarding large trucks and Copart car carriers. Member Becker indicated the Select Board is going to discuss closing Bashan Hollow and Gerrish Roads to through trucks with the Police Chief. The road engineer is doing the land survey that is required to determine the right of way for the culvert replacement project. The Board discussed the proposal to straighten the road.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.