

Saint-Gobain Merrimack Community Advisory Council

Final Meeting Notes

November 10, 2020 - Via Zoom

Prepared jointly by Lia LoBello of Saint-Gobain and Sandra Liburd of Leadership Strategies

Attendance

Community Advisory Council Members Present

- Mike Apfelberg, United Way
- Rosemarie Rung, State Representative
- Wolfram von Schoen, Merrimack Village District
- Ron Miner, Superintendent, Merrimack Village District
- John Henderson, Saint-Gobain
- Sharon Connary, Saint-Gobain
- Laurene Allen, Merrimack Citizens for Clean Water
- Mike Wimsatt, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
- Matt Gage, Merrimack Resident
- Mark Smith, Leadership Strategies
- Sandra Liburd, Leadership Strategies

Other Guests:

- Mark Rayfield, Saint-Gobain
- Chris Angier, Saint-Gobain
- Brett Slensky, Saint-Gobain
- Lia LoBello, Saint-Gobain
- Patrick Carroll, Director of Outreach/Constituent Services, Office of U.S. Representative Chris Pappas
- Peter Clark, Special Assistant for Projects & Policy, Office of U.S. Senator Shaheen
- Justin Troiano, Outreach Coordinator & Veterans Liason, Office of U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan

Declined:

- Wendy Thomas, State Representative
- Dick Hinch, State Representative

Zoom Functionality Overview

Mark Smith: Overview of participant, chat and raise hand functionality. Overview of chat function and appropriate use. Instruction on how to toggle between gallery and speaker view.

Introduction of CAC Members and Key Saint-Gobain Players

Mark Smith: Requested each person present at the meeting to introduce themselves and share a) their expectations for the CAC moving forward and b) how the group can be effective heading into 2021.

Mike Wimsatt:

- Director of Waste Management at DES and Commissioner's Designee to the CAC
- Clark Friese held this role prior to his retirement
- Views his role as secondary. Sees the CAC as a direct liaison between citizens of community and company
- DES hopes for the next year is that the CAC can serve that role and the citizens get that direct engagement they deserve. Hopes DES can provide the info and assistance in achieving the goals.

Lia LoBello:

- Senior Manager of Business Communications for Saint-Gobain
- Wants to engage and have a proactive, engaging dialog with the CAC
- Understand what you need as both citizens and stakeholders in the community
- Understand all points of view and make sure the citizens of Merrimack have what they need from SG

Mike Apfelberg:

- The United Way serves the communities impacted by this issue including Merrimack and Litchfield
- Help assure that the community is heard and engaged in a meaningful way in solving these water related issues; become a true partner
- Find a true partnership with Saint-Gobain - lower the temperature and increase the dialog

Rosemarie Rung:

- State representative from Merrimack; just re-elected
- Also serves on PFAS Commission which was established as part of HB 737
- Wants information to update constituents on how SG is reducing and eliminating PFAS from soil and groundwater; how SG is reducing PFAS discharge in Merrimack River and wastewater system
- Understand how SG is assisting global or scientific efforts to degrade PFAS

Chris Angier:

- Environmental engineer and project manager focused on SG response to PFAS
- Role on committee providing all info Rosemarie is looking for – plans for emission controls, wastewater treatment plans, groundwater sampling plans
- Provide regular updates on these fronts and more

John Henderson:

- Family moved to Merrimack at the age of 6 and now works for Saint-Gobain
- Wants positive results from these meetings - live/work in Merrimack so many reasons to want positive results from these meetings

- Real answers to real problems

Laurene Allen:

- Co-founder of Merrimack Citizens for Clean Water, a local citizen's advocacy group
- Open and transparent communications are very important
- Wants to give some time to figuring out who we are to each other and the process before opening up, but do eventually want the community to know what's happening at the CAC
- Goals for next year: formulate a comprehensive and collaborative listing of impacts to Merrimack; also concerned that areas of investigation go beyond Merrimack
- Initiated as a group with Wendy Thomas – would also like to have representation from Londonderry, Litchfield and Bedford
- Needs an accounting of all impacts, a “comprehensive and collaborative listing of impacts” and for citizens to lead and do this right

Wolfram von Schoen:

- Automation engineer and VP for an automation company; also commissioner of MVD in third year
- MVD faced with a contamination problem to remedy across town
- Had gotten hopes up when we met Tom Kinisky in January and he showed willingness to contribute to costs MVD incurred as a result of settlement agreement and cost overruns from building a treatment plan
 - o Not successful – SG paid \$100k of \$1.8M, MVD had hoped for more so in light of this not sure what to expect – not sure we have achieved anything of value so far
- MVD commissioners stated last night (November 9) in a meeting they need to see some changes in council in order to continue to contribute more time
- Normally upbeat but not on this group, at this time

Matthew Gage:

- Citizen of Merrimack; that's why I joined committee
- Live on opposite side of town from plant – private well owner
- Issues don't directly affect me but as a biochemist, have the scientific interest in trying to find a way of communicating; to find a good open dialog to the issues that are affecting the city and especially those living closer to the plant

Ron Miner:

- Superintendent with MVD
- Echo Wolf's comments
- Really hoping that going forward we can get some questions answered and this will turn into more of a positive experience

(Mark Smith note – forward and backward looking perspective important for future agenda)

Brett Slensky:

- Environmental counsel from Saint-Gobain
- Support on regulatory side
- Goals and outcomes: continued dialog always a good thing, engage in a continued conversation; help bridge the understanding gap between both sides

Justin Troiano:

- Attending from Sen. Maggie Hassan's office
- Filling in for Kerry Holmes who is on maternity leave
- Is an observer but feel free to message on the chat function

Sharon Connary:

- HR Manger in Merrimack
- Would like to see good collaboration between the group; rebuild the relationship between the plant and the citizens
 - o For example, have worked with Mike Apfelberg to get different things like masks during the pandemic
- Wants to see us build back good relationships with the Town – and have them view us as a good community member
- Want to rebuild relationships and trust

Peter Clark:

- Attending from Sen. Shaheen's office, who is a big advocate for standing up the CAC and having direct contact
- Acting as a spectator on her behalf to learn of federal issues where the office can be of assistance

Patrick Carroll:

- Attending from the office of Congressman Pappas
- The health and safety of constituents is a priority; Make sure the Congressman has the info to build better, healthy communities in the district
- Keep the positive relationship

Mark Rayfield:

- CEO of Saint-Gobain
- Big advocate for in-person for meetings – pushed for this but COVID prevented
- Expectations that resonate for me:
 - o Open and collaborative discussion
 - o Positive progress going forward
 - o Assume positive intent in all interactions
 - o Won't agree on everything but can have respectful dialog but try to move forward with positive intention

Ensuring our Effectiveness

Mark Smith: Asked participants to take a few moments to write down what was effective in the prior construct and what would need to change for increased efficacy. Asked the group to start with the positives.

Laurene Allen:

- Appreciate that the decision makers and people of importance continue to join. Both in February meeting and tonight – have people at the top involved in this

Wolf von Schoen:

- Echo gratitude for Mark joining
- Appreciate the heartfelt tenor of the meeting
- At the first 1 or 2 meetings, wanted some tangible bullet points on the Town Council letter and MVDs expectations for cost overrun
- What didn't work so well was 3 meetings on recreating the task list over and over again w/o tangible action items
- Put things forward to talk about and be sure we aren't just appreciating each other and recreating task lists

Mark Smith: Asked what are the things we need to be highly effective in the future. What do we need to improve and be better at? What we've heard so far:

- Have tangible points that move conversation forward
- Create accountability for progress
- CAC owns the actions; don't just recreate the discussion points

Mike Apfelberg:

- One things that struck me in early meetings as not helpful is that many conversations seemed to shut down very quickly when they went into realm of litigation
- As much as possible be willing to talk about things even with pending litigation; can litigation be a doorway for a discussion within boundaries

Rosemarie Rung:

- Overriding priority is to help get PFAS out of our water and environment; any other topic is just not going to be of importance
- Talk about a lot of little things we can do and address the elephant in the room:
 - a. PFAS from SG operations is in soil, groundwater, threatening wastewater treatment plant
- Citizens of Merrimack spending a lot of money on home filtration and worried about health; want more acknowledgment of SG on this; acknowledge this is an emergency; referenced MN study on birth weight
- Could CAC be first informed on information before the public – for example, permit application, variance requests
- Would like for us to truly be partners and accountable
- Retired as public affairs for Dow; knows these groups should be among first to know; if we are reps for the community we need to be informed first

- Summary: PFAS out of water (must always be on the agenda going forward); partners in information – partners in accountability

Laurene Allen:

- Mom and social worker
- About more than PFOA. Want to expand on Rosemarie's elephant in the room – states and communities left on their own; federal and regulatory are cumbersome; regulations are not efficient
- The community has become educated and connected with experts, scientists, the CDC; the people of Merrimack need more
- We have learned a lot and learned effectively; but need to look at real world solutions – stopping source now and understand what's in the water; not necessarily just air
- Understand what's in the current industry specs
- Understand the work plan and noting that currently 4 years into this investigation
- Need to talk as a community about the plan to deal with what is unregulated

Wolf von Schoen:

- Would be extremely helpful to see Mark attend when he can; or acknowledge decisions and communications by his team when not present
- From past meetings with MVD and SG, wasn't clear if Tom Kinisky was in the loop in certain positions SG had taken and if he backed those commitments
- Can Mark occasionally take a position with the statements being sent out by SG team

Update from Mark Rayfield

- Provided brief bio of upbringing in/around upstate New York, Vermont and Southern Massachusetts; provided brief overview of career within Saint-Gobain leading to current job as CEO of the North American region
- Will attend whenever possible; and know he blesses everything that comes from the team
- Will be measured to what I commit to and how I follow up on it
- Need to develop and rebuild that dialog of trust and collaboration; this is a very complicated subject with a lot info out there; it's also a complicated subject because of current litigation and the use of PFAS from various industries
- Will address issues honestly and forthrightly
- When I look at requests being made and information being shared I hear two things - how do we make sure we have the best available control technology on the stacks and how do we have non-detect at junction box
- Going forward, will address major points within the 9 points

Mark Smith: Opened up Q&A for Mark Rayfield and/or SG Team Members from members of the CAC

Rosemarie Rung:

Q: There were a lot of details discussed about when the RTO will go into service; the town had also made some requests around that project including the roof and other areas on the building. Is that part of the project? We have not received an update on the installation.

Chris Angier:

A:

- We have cleaned the roof and are installing the necessary equipment at the plant; the RTO is the outstanding item
- All of the prep work for the RTO will be done by January
- The roof and some other items are secondary steps in the process once the RTO is up
- Plans are in place with contractors to get the foundation in place, infrastructure, electrical lines, etc.

Rosemarie Rung:

Q: These are the things my constituents want to know.

Mark Rayfield:

A:

- Want to have the same outcome; goal is to not have PFOA coming off the property
- Step 1: RTO. What we do for the second step following is what will ensure Step 3 gets done properly, etc.

Chris Angier:

A:

- How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time, and that's how we want to approach this project.

Wolfram von Schoen:

Q: What I'd like to see is all parties involved spend more time on solutions, even those in litigation. Can we see a project plan so that the CAC can actually buy in? Can we sit down and talk through issues?

Mark Rayfield:

A:

- Excellent question and that's what we aspire to do. You can't not take litigation into account – that does add risk and complexity going forward.
- However, we do want to have that dialog and build the trust. We will do a better job of sharing.
- Want to find a way to be as open as possible

Brett Slensky:

A:

- Regarding wanting to meet first and try to work out some of the issues – we share that approach. It is something we've tried to implement on all aspects of this project
- Sometimes that's worked out and sometimes it's escalated to litigation but have tried to talk first

Rosemarie Rung:

Q: What is SG's commitment regarding PFAS in Merrimack? What is your philosophy regarding the situation we are experiencing?

Mark Rayfield:

A:

- Committing to putting BACT on the stacks and addressing the sewer junction box
 - a. Ensuring we are compliant in those key locations
- Working with DES and others organizations to ensure we address sampling across the community and provide potable water to the people of Merrimack
- Continue providing great jobs to the 200 employees that are citizens of the community that work at our plant; who do good work – continuing to respect what they do as we manage through this
- Committing to continued dialog with the community

Next Steps

Mark Smith: Asked if anyone would volunteer to work on agendas with us going forward. (No hands at this time.) Recapped key items heard in the meeting for standing items including:

- Update on RTO project and related activities that go into reducing PFAS on site
- Have standing agenda items that provide updates on testing results going on at site

Mark Smith:

- Will use email to seek specific topics to create time for in next meeting
- This is a CAC agenda and not an SG agenda – we will share draft agendas in advance of the meeting to shape the final agenda
- Not yet able to address the topic of recordings but can revisit down the line

Mark Smith:

- Also need to address continuity of membership. Asked the group if they would continue to serve on the CAC given that the terms were supposed to be one year but the group was not able to fulfill the full schedule due to COVID.
 - a. Some people raised hand in terms of continuing but not all

Wolfram von Schoen:

- Ron Miner will attend going forward for MVD; was not planning to attend going forward but liked the demeanor tonight so committing to at least one more
- Offered MVD notetaker to help with minutes
 - a. Lia would appreciate some back up and can talk to team

Rosemarie Rung:

- Continued participation contingent upon continued updates on remediation
- HB 737 PFAS commission – will be sure to share their minutes as well to walk the talk

Mark Smith:

- Next steps are as follows:

1. Document meeting notes and distribute: Lia LoBello
2. Develop draft agenda for December meeting and gain input from the CAC: Mark Smith
3. Identify key questions with the CAC to address on next agenda for a deeper dive: Mark Smith