

## Meeting Minutes – October 1, 2020

### Community Forum RE: BFI/Republic Landfill Odor Issue

(This document is NOT a verbatim transcript)

- At approximately 5:30pm, Monroe Township Business Administrator Alan Weinberg welcomed all residents and speakers to this community forum, to provide an opportunity for representatives of Republic Services (“Republic”), who manages and operates the Landfill Site close to Inwood Estates, to present their plans for next steps to investigate and eliminate odor issues in part of Inwood Estates, and allow for resident questions to Republic and the oversight agencies, the Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (“NJDEP”). Attendees and speakers participated either in-person or via Zoom. Mr. Weinberg presented the agenda and the order of speakers for the evening:
  - Mayor Gerald Tamburro, Monroe Township
  - Peter Lopez, Region 2 Administrator, EPA
  - State Senator Linda Greenstein, 14<sup>th</sup> Legislative District<sup>1</sup>
  - Presentations/Updates from Republic and EPA
  - Question and Answer session with residents
  
- Mayor Tamburro thanked everyone in attendance for taking the time to gather and discuss this urgent matter. He explained that the primary objective is to protect residents. Therefore, he called on the oversight agencies (EPA and NJDEP) to work with Republic to identify the cause of the odor, to create and implement a plan to stop the odor, and to monitor to prevent this problem in the future. The Township is treating this as an emergency situation. Mayor Tamburro thanked EPA Region 2 Administrator Peter Lopez for his dedication to solving this problem, and for his regular communication with the Mayor.
  
- Mr. Lopez thanked Mayor Tamburro and his colleagues for bringing the relevant parties together to solve this problem. He also thanked Senator Greenstein, and his own staff from the EPA for taking this matter seriously.
  
- Mr. Weinberg reiterated the importance of this meeting. The issue began with reports from residents about an odor traveling through Michelle and Lori Streets in the vicinity of the Landfill. Republic is the responsible party for managing the Landfill site, with EPA and

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<sup>1</sup> There were some technical difficulties connecting to Senator Greenstein via Zoom, for which Mr. Weinberg offered his apologies.

the NJDEP as the oversight agencies. Mr. Weinberg thanked Council President Miriam Cohen, Council Vice President Elizabeth Schneider, and Councilman Charles Dipierro for their attendance and support. The Mayor and Council will be working closely with the responsible party and the oversight agencies to make sure there is transparency for the residents. Mr. Weinberg thanked all Township residents in attendance for their participation and patience. Mr. Weinberg reiterated that the format for the evening would be a forum with presentations by Republic and the EPA, followed by a question and answer session with the residents.

- Mr. John Osolin is the Project Manager for the EPA overseeing the Landfill in Monroe. Mr. Osolin provided a chronology of events for this particular odor problem:
  - August 2020: EPA received an e-mail from a resident on August 4 regarding an odor; on August 5 there were no odors present. EPA met with members of the public on August 13, and the odor problem appeared to be a sporadic type of event. EPA asked the neighbors to report any future occurrences. EPA asked the Monroe Township Utility Department (“MTUD”) to share any information about pumping events from the Landfill. At that time, things were fairly quiet.
  - September 2020: On September 16, Republic investigated the site after reports of odor from residents. EPA received information from MTUD about increased pumping from the Landfill site that seemed to coincide with resident complaints. The odor continued into September 17 until Republic reduced pumping levels to abate the odors. All relevant parties had a meeting with Township officials on September 23. There was another pumping event and odor event on the evening of September 23, which EPA Communications Coordinator Patricia Seppi was able to witness. EPA was told this was a 20-minute period during a maintenance event, and since that time there has been no pumping of leachate from the Landfill into the Township’s sewer collection system. On September 26, Republic began trucking the leachate to a site in Pennsylvania, and will continue to do so until the problem has been solved.
  - Mr. Osolin stated that the EPA will continue to work with Republic and the NJDEP, and the EPA does not expect that this odor issue will repeat again.
  
- Mr. Al Hemma explained that Republic is the organization that manages the Landfill site. He is Director of Operations for Republic’s North East operations, covering eight states including New Jersey. Mr. Hemma introduced and thanked his engineer Randy Deardoff, and their consultants from SCS Engineering and Taylor GeoServices. Mr. Hemma stated that Republic (and the predecessor company BFI) have had a relationship with the Township for 40 years, and they “aren’t going anywhere.”

Mr. Hemma stressed the urgency of this problem. He has at least seven consultants at the Landfill site every day. After the September 23 odor event, the decision was made to shut down all pumping, and haul leachate off-site. Republic is committed to do that until the issue is resolved.

Mr. Hemma stated that Republic's water quality testing has been in compliance. He has contracted with SCS and Taylor to investigate, at least for another 2 weeks. There will be continued water and air sampling and testing. Republic will continue hauling the leachate off-site until this problem is fully mitigated. The holding tanks at the site will be cleaned next week, as they are on a semi-annual basis. Republic plans to install Variable Frequency Drives ("VFDs") to better control the surges of flow that occur from the Landfill site.

- Residents were then invited to the podium to ask questions to Republic and/or EPA representatives.
  - Julie Joseph (16 Lori Street) thanked everyone at the town and the oversight agencies for responding so quickly. She stated that residents still do not have answers as to what exactly they were breathing. She and her children inhaled this smell for 24-48 hours. She expressed that no one from the EPA came out to her home on the day of the odor. She greatly appreciated the in-person response from Mark Rasimowicz and Shannon Cenci on behalf of the Township. Ms. Joseph also asked: Why wasn't something detected to alert anyone that pumps were running longer than usual? She had heard from Ms. Cenci that there were 10 times the amount of leachate exiting the Landfill on the day of the odor (which was later clarified as not being an exact figure). Ms. Joseph wanted to know exactly what happened.
    - Mr. Hemma stated that Republic does not yet know exactly what happened, but the investigation will get to the bottom of the issue. Republic's engineers were not familiar with a measurement of 10 times the normal leachate. Mike Marks from SCS engineering stated it was possible that a contractor reset a breaker causing excessive pumping, but they are investigating all possible causes.
  - Linus Joseph (16 Lori Street) expressed that this issue has been happening for a while. He wanted to know why exactly this occurred, and if there is any ongoing monitoring of the site.
    - Mr. Hemma explained that this is a closed landfill. It is typically unmanned consistent with most landfills. The system collects leachate from the site and sends it out through the sewer system, and Republic needs to continue its full investigation.

- Mr. Osolin also commented that EPA provides oversight. The EPA conducted community interviews and asked about community complaints as part of its Five-Year Report in 2019. Mr. Osolin expressed that EPA will do a better job of ensuring that the Five Year Report can be more easily accessed by the public. Mr. Osolin also disseminated EPA’s August 27, 2020 leachate report showing no volatile chemicals.
    - Mr. Weinberg reiterated that this is just of beginning of the investigation process and stressed that the parties need to figure out hoe best to monitor this landfill on a more regular basis.
  - David Cugini (4 Michelle Street) stated that this smell has been periodic for 3 years but has escalated in intensity. Mr. Cugini was very unhappy with the 9/17 response to this issue. He described a person telling him it was the homeowners’ problem, with the need to clean their traps, and improve their indoor plumbing, which was insulting to the homeowners’ intelligence as up to 16 houses are dealing with the same issue. Mr. Cugini thanked Councilman Dipierro, stating that the response initiated when the residents reached out to the Councilman. Mr. Cugini asked if it’s possible for each homeowner to hire their own plumber to clean sewer traps, at Republic’s expense, and whether any water sitting in the sewer traps is contaminated.
    - Mr. Hemma stated his consultants are bringing in a plumber to investigate all affected houses, at Republic’s expense, and would prefer to deal with one plumber instead of 16 different plumbers. But Mr. Hemma also stated that Mr. Cugini’s request sounded reasonable and Republic will consider that request very quickly.
    - Mr. Osolin also commented that the indoor plumbing is NOT the cause of the odor. But, the plumbing is a protection to the homeowner from anything protruding from the sewer system into the house. Therefore, the plumbing is still worth evaluating in addition to the cause of the problem.
  - Preston Jackson (3 Michelle Street) stated that this odor issue has been ongoing for a long time, but in August it was extremely offensive. The residents were told they could have sewer trap issues because of the age of their homes. This assessment was insulting because the odor occurred in at least 8 houses. Prior to August, the odor was noticeable every 6, 12, or 18 months. Mr. Jackson was glad the condition has been recognized. His kids are grown and out of the house, but he expresses sympathy for parents with children in the neighborhood. His main concern was whether any leachate was still running under the street. He also wants to know what exactly is buried in that site because oversight in the 1950s and 1960s would not have been able to limit dumping to only household waste.
  - A resident, who did not identify herself, stated that she is an original owner since 1978. She remembers “red stuff” coming down Lani street at that time. For a long time everything was fine, and she asked why this leachate is coming back now.

- Mr. Osolin speculated that the events this homeowner is referring to from 1978 is likely what made this site a Superfund site. The site was capped, but the leachate is still present. The leachate is collected into the sewer system. It is rainwater that infiltrated the cap and it has to flow out. This leachate has become less potent overtime.
  - Beth Dipierro asked if residents can be notified by letter when pump stations are checked. She expressed that if residents did not complain, this would not have been addressed. Ms. Dipierro asked if there could be some kind of emergency notification system
    - Mr. Osolin stated that the EPA will do a better job of disseminating the EPA's Five Year Reports and all its findings, and provided his e-mail address to anyone who wanted to contact him directly.
    - Mr. Hemma stated that additional equipment and/or improvements might be necessary and he has asked his consultants to make recommendations about investments at the site as they continue to investigate.
    - Mr. Weinberg stated that the Township will make all EPA letters and reports available on the Township website.
  - Paul Cerniglia (14 Lori Street) suggested that the Landfill stop putting leachate into the sewer collection system ever again, as the long-term solution.
    - Mr. Hemma commented that disposing leachate through a sanitary sewer system is very common, but Republic will refrain from doing so until this problem is identified and solved.
  - Ernie Salazar (21 Taylor Avenue) asked if the parties are conducting any indoor air sampling. He also asked how serious the dioxane is, which was cited in the 2019 EPA report.
    - Mr. Hemma responded that Republic has not yet discussed doing indoor air sampling yet.
    - Mr. Osolin commented that the dioxane is not volatile. Air sampling might be difficult because houses would have to be cleared to prevent any disturbance to the sampling. He stated that it makes more sense to test at the sewer level. The 2019 report shows there is constant groundwater monitoring. The groundwater runs off the landfill, and the EPA checks that runoff at certain points.
- Mr. Weinberg thanked EPA and Republic for their participation in this meeting, and thanked the residents who called this problem to everyone's attention.
- Mr. Lopez stated that he will be watching this investigation closely, and coordinating with Mayor Tamburro. He reiterated that this problem must not repeat. He provided his

contact information. Mr. Lopez also thanked NJDEP as a critical partner. He and Commissioner McCabe are very focused on addressing this issue. He plans to be at the Township's next meeting.

- Mayor Tamburro expressed his thanks to the EPA, NJDEP, Republic, Mr. Lopez, and Township personnel. The Mayor reiterated that the responsible party and oversight agencies must quickly determine why and how these odor events occurred, communicate transparently with the Township and the residents, and quickly solve the problem moving forward.