

Minutes

Environmental Advisory Board

24 January 2018

Ogden Dunes Town Hall

The Environmental Board met for a special session on 24 January 2018 at 7:00 pm at Town Hall. Attendees were, Susan MiHalo, Kristine Sandrick, Sue Adams, Jim Biancotti, John Morris, and Scott Lehmann.

The meeting concerned what action the Town should take with regard to the Surfrider Foundation lawsuit that was filed last week against the USS Midwest facility, through the University of Chicago Law School. The City of Chicago filed one separately today. Sue, who had participated in a conference call on Friday with the U of C, Save the Dunes, and others, read from the Chicago complaint, which listed 90 violations of the Clean Water Act over the past 5 years, and 4 violations under narrative water quality. There was also a note that IDEM did not inspect after the 26 October 2017 discharge of chromium until 3 weeks later. The limit of 5 years was due to the statute of limitations. The facility is cited for improper maintenance, release of stormwater discharge, and other NPDES violations. There will be a problem with proof of harm. Many of the rashes and other health issues claimed by the Surfrider plaintiffs are not specific to any particular discharge from USS. Our townspeople would have a similar problem if we were to sue. Jim said that when he was working at USS Midwest plant 9 years ago, there were no or few violations, but the environmental staff is half of what it was then. He speculated that the training had suffered, too. We need to find out where the consent decree stands. Susan can liaise with Natalie Johnson of Save the Dunes to get up to date information on progress of the consent decree.

We speculated that Mark Templeton of U of C would welcome participation of some sort by local parties. Letter writing or petition by members of the community could help. An announcement of such a campaign on the OD web site would be one way to get participation. A town meeting may be held if a petition is used. Kristine suggested a letter to the Post-Tribune and NWI Times under the signature of the Town Council after the consent decree is available. In any case, another meeting will be needed when it comes out. We need information about where the other parties in this case stand, such as Portage and NPS. Natalie Johnson can help us there. Scott can contact Sue Lynch of Portage City Council. Once we know what our response is, Kristine will help with the communication plan. The public must know we are commenting on the consent decree.

Kristine moved to adjourn and Jim seconded. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Submitted by John Morris.