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Cc:	Stein, Greg
Subject:	Resident shares concerns over health study -- appears they are mixing sites and issues
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Resident shares concerns over health study

September 23, 2013

By JO ANN BOBBY-GILBERT - East Liverpool Reporter (jgilbert@reviewonline.com) , The Review

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EAST LIVERPOOL - Despite some assurances that no health issues were created by a July 13 release of ash from the Heritage-Thermal incinerator, some residents are not convinced and have asked the city health board to investigate further.

Orchard Grove resident Mike Walton, a longtime opponent of the East End incinerator, addressed the board last week, saying he believes the ash that "blanketed" East End that day does constitute a health issue for residents and the health board should have been involved in the investigation.

He said when there are residents complaining of stinging eyes and legs and extreme fatigue, that constitutes a health issue.

Health Commissioner Jelayne Dray and Mayor Jim Swoger, who heads the health board, both said there had been no complaints of illness made to the health department after the incident.

Referring to news articles written about the July 13 incident, Walton said he is uncertain if the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency ever investigated some aspects of the release and said when he asked the agency for a report, received two narratives on "WTI letterhead," referring to the former name of Heritage-Thermal.

Walton also received 63 pages of "nothing but numbers," telling the board, "I challenge anyone in this room to read and make sense of it," saying he was told that "things like this happen all the time all over the state and the EPA doesn't issue reports."

Walton told the board, "The EPA is reactive, not proactive," and asked both the board and Swoger to contact the state and federal EPA and Ohio Department of Health to ask for a public meeting where a report can be made and residents can ask questions.

"I doubt that they'll do it, so at least ask for a comprehensive report on their findings," Walton asked. "Those three agencies need to get in here and talk to this community. The residents deserve it."

Board members said they had no problem with calling and asking for a meeting.

The issue arose at about 1 p.m. July 13 when a large amount of ash fell from the interior walls of the incinerator during routine operations. The volume of the falling ash was greater than the ash removal system was able to handle, causing an undetermined amount of ash to be released outside the facility and into the air.

Several bags of vermiculite being stored nearby were also ignited by a falling ember, but that fire was quickly extinguished by the on-site fire crew.

Mike Settles of the OEPA said Friday he had already been contacted by Dray to ask about a possible meeting and report, but said no such report exists at this point.

Saying the incident is still open for review, Settles said air monitoring is still being conducted by Heritage Thermal, which he said takes a considerable amount of time and that the EPA is waiting for results of that.

"We're still gathering information. I know it's been awhile, but there is a lot of information being gathered," Settles said, adding that Heritage-Thermal has been asked to submit to the OEPA the calculations used to determine 761 pounds of ash had been released as well as monitoring data as well as the company's plan to ensure such a release won't happen again.

Meanwhile, the OEPA issued a notice of violation on Aug. 5, citing the company for a nuisance, although this notice did not carry any penalties. Whether additional notices of violation or penalties will be issued is unknown at this time, Settles said.

He emphasized the preferred outcome is that another incident doesn't occur.

As for a meeting with citizens, Settles said the OEPA is "happy to share anything we have; they're all public documents, but I don't know if there will be a report, per se."

He said once test results are compiled, they too will be available to the public and people could ask any questions they have at that time.

If after that questions remain, Settles said it is possible the agencies involved could discuss having a public meeting.

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