Message

Sent: 3/27/2019 1:27:35 PM
To: Daryl Reed (dreed@mt.gov) [dreed@mt.gov]
Subject: FW: Reflections on Last Evening's "Public" Meeting or at least what passed as a public meeting.

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Some thoughts on Last Evening's Health Study "Public" Meeting

Dr. John W. Ray

As a recently reinstated member of the Health Study Working Group, a board member of CTEC and Vice Chairperson of Citizens for Labor and Environmental Justice, I thought I would share some observations about last evening's "public" meeting on the Health Study. (Disclaimer: The views I express are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Health Study Working Group, CTEC, or CLEJ.)

1. Thanks to Nikia for helping to bring some much needed clarity to the question of what is going on regarding the focus and goal of the Health Study. (One of my complaints has been that nobody seemed to know what they were trying to do.) If I understood Nikia correctly the following could be said:

a. The current Health Study will focus on biomonitoring of the existing blood lead levels in children data. There will also be some literature review.
b. Going forward, i.e. for the next five year study, other issues related to the risk/threat of exposure to the COCs in Butte will, if the data and methodology exists to do such a study, be considered.
c. Going forward, some issues will not be considered. (It has not as yet been determined what falls within the purview of b and c. In other words, to some extent the health study process will go beyond what is strictly mandated for the health study and some issues will be considered that are not required under Superfund.)

2. I put the word public in quotation marks deliberately. There were at best 4-6 members of the general public in attendance. The rest were pretty much the people who always attend. Is the Working Group serious about wanting public involvement? If one attempted to judge this on the basis of deeds, the answer would be no. Why was there no announcement of the meeting in the local newspaper? Why were there no announcements on local radio or TV? Such publicity is not novel to the leadership of the working group, so why was a public meeting that took much time, energy and money to organize and conduct not publicized to the community? How can the public attend a meeting when they don't know it is happening? Why wasn't the local media informed of the event in a timely manner so to insure coverage? To be blunt the working group has not really embraced public involvement. It seems at every one of these meetings I hear the refrain that we have to do a better job of "getting the word out." But this time not even the basics were done. The fault is not with EPA or BSB but with the Working Group. Now, at least for the present, that I am back on as a member of the group, I intend to never let this happen again. Last night was embarrassing. Of course, we need to get beyond public meetings. The McGregor and Nagissety study indicated that public meetings are the worst way of involving the public. Yet, what does the working group do but put effort into another public meeting. Insanity is doing the same thing over again and expecting different results. When this decision was made, I was exiled from the board but I am determined that we look at other more effective ways of promoting community involvement. I think that the EPA's Chris Wardell and Jacqui Barker will be invaluable in this regard

3. What happened to MDEQ? They are intimately involved in Superfund. They are lead on one of Butte's sites. They are EPA's "partner." But they were AWOL last evening. Are they boycotting? What happened to their community involvement mandate?

Don't get me wrong, I think that progress was achieved last evening. The goal of clarity was advanced. Thanks again to the EPA's Nikia, Jacqui, Charles and Chris. ARCO has certainly been very accommodating. After all, given the strict requirements of Superfund they don't have to support anything beyond the Superfund requirement. The BSB Health Department is very

proactive and genuinely interested in community involvement. With that said, I would pose this question: ***How long will the leadership of the Health Study Working Group, some of whom are paid consultants, bemoan the lack of public involvement and do virtually nothing to promote it?***