

Satya Rhodes-Conway
Alder, 12th District

May 28, 2009

Dear Alder Rhodes-Conway,

I am writing to inform you of the need for further urgent need for environmental **containment** and further assessment at two properties in your district. I was interested in buying this property for the purposes of an urban farm, and was given copies of the phase one and phase two environmental studies with subsequent evaluations by Mr. Tom Keller, in consideration of purchase. Mr. Keller has been very reasonable and forthcoming with the information, and I enclose copies of the reports that were given to me.

Upon carefully examining the studies, my personal assessment is that Mr. Keller either is under-informed about the contamination, or was minimizing the potential community hazard that this property poses. Given that these assessments were done in October 2005, prior to his purchase, and nothing has been done to further assess or remove the most severe types of contamination, his lack of diligence at protecting the public is notable. From my perspective this isn't just a failed attempt to site my farm: with an elementary school feet away, and a complete lack of fencing of the property, it's an environmental nightmare.

The property is collectively a 21 acre area, but they are divided into two parcels: 1902 Tennyson Lane (Parcel # 081030201016) and 3802 Packers Avenue (Parcel # 081030201024). Reviewing the environmental site assessments, the Tennyson property is contaminated with (at least) 8 types of contamination. Mr. Keller was unaware of my training as a scientist and doctor as I walked around the property extensively with the intent to evaluate for purchase. I was able to visually confirm all of the contaminants listed in the phase one report except the prion research and possible contamination. I did note a moderately sized pile of pipettes and half-filled inoculation bottles heaped behind "*building #3*"—*the building which held the prion research laboratories and is referenced in the report as "contain(ing) biological agents in containment areas that were not observed for safety and security reasons.... These agents are known to not degrade naturally and to require chemical treatment with sodium hydroxide to reduce infectivity to acceptable levels. The elements of the containment area and associated laboratory equipment that have been in contact with (the prions) will require decontamination following specific guidance."* (from Phase One Environmental Site Assessment, 2005, page ii).

Just to give you an idea, prions are little protein particles that **cannot** be destroyed by heat, wind, water, radiation nor bacterial degradation. Mr. Keller made an off-hand joke to me about "mad cow disease" which was in retrospect a) not a joke and b) not funny. This is not a situation where deer infected with CWD were walking across the land taking their prion-infected brains with them. This was a concentrated collection of prions for research purposes. Building "#3" wasn't even inspected in the phase one study (because the environmental agency was not contracted to do a hazmat inspection), nor was it financially assessed in the phase 2 study. One cannot simply go in and look, yet Mr. Keller has had this property listed for sale for more than 2 years.

Contamination also includes unspecified viral contamination of unknown type and extent. This site was a vaccine study site in the 1950's, and the dead chickens were buried "in multiple sites" across the

property, including a 10w x 15d x 40L burial site on the Packers property. No studies have been done to determine what type of virus was studied, nor whether residual contamination exists. They did determine that the carcasses have not been removed.

Finally, radiation contamination from medical waste is still present on this site. This site is a listed US Nuclear Regulatory Commission license holder, but no additional information was collected regarding the type of radiation emitter, nor the extent of contamination of "two" sites. I saw the radiation counter machines inside (I knew exactly what they were from my personal training as a scientist), and I saw the concrete-filled barrels up in the far northwest corner. One fills barrels with concrete to hold and control contamination, just in the same way they capped Chernobyl with massive dumps of cement. The environmental report cites two different sites of radiation contamination, so I don't know where the other one is. This is very likely to be "low level medical waste", but 'low level' to regulatory agencies (which rate "high level" as nuclear reactor cores) can be pretty hot for open, unfenced land.

My main concern is that this property be contained, responsibly evaluated and cleaned up in a fashion appropriate for all of the divergent types of contamination. From the information I forward to you, there is no way to accurately know how far the contamination extends. For example, petroleum spills were noted to extend 8 feet into the soil, with the ground water beginning at 9 feet.

Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



Myrtle Wilhite MD MS
Higher Ground Urban Farm