

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
District Department of the Environment



Office of the Director

October 14, 2008

Ms. Muriel Bowser
Councilmember, Ward 4
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Suite 406
Washington, D.C. 20004

Re: Riggs Park/Chevron Underground Storage Tank Leak

Dear Councilmember Bowser:

This letter is to ask your assistance with regard to three procedural items.

First, the District Department of the Environment (“DDOE”) and Department of Health (“DOH”) staff comprising the “Riggs Park Team” will participate in the next monthly Riggs Park Advisory Committee Meeting on October 18, 2008. At that meeting, the Team members will attempt to answer:

- 1) the 7 questions posed by Cleo Holmes via e-mail dated October 10, 2008;
- 2) the 10 questions posed by Delores Ford via e-mail dated October 9, 2008; and
- 3) the 3 questions posed by Cleo Holmes via e-mail dated October 9, 2008,

all of which were received since the October 2, 2008 public meeting you hosted. I am instructing my staff to provide answers they can readily provide at the October 18th meeting, but importantly, I am instructing them also at that meeting to ask that any additional questions they may have with regard to the remedy EPA has selected, and that the District will select, be posed when the District has presented its remedy selection decision to the public. I am asking that you support me in encouraging the residents to hold their questions for a short while, as my staff must literally work around the clock to answer their constant questions, many of which have been posed several times before. Unfortunately, especially in light of the fact that the Riggs Park Team now has two less members (with the departures of Dr. Sreenivas and Mrs. Johnson), and has an enormously increased volume of work as the District prepares to select a remedy to address for the Riggs Park community, my staff cannot simultaneously provide adequately responses to the numerous requests the residents make in the timeframes they expect, and continue the important work they are doing that will allow the District to select a remedy in December.



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Second, I have instructed the Riggs Park Team members to change the way the District is disseminating information in its possession to the community. Because the Riggs Park Advisory Committee does not represent the whole community, I have decided that it makes more sense for the District to provide information in its possession to all the community members at the same time. Specifically, I have instructed my staff to create a website it will periodically update with an index of documents the District possesses, and to place hard copies of the documents, at regular intervals, in the Library. I hope you will agree that such system will be more orderly, and more fair. Accordingly, I hope you will support me in encouraging the residents to refrain from propounding multiple copies of document requests to my office, knowing that we will of course inform all the residents of all the documents that have been generated with regard to the site.

Finally, I am hoping you will agree to move the December meeting from the 4th to the 18th. I am asking this for two reasons. Most importantly, we are still having difficulty renewing the contract with our expert toxicologist, and are losing weeks of his valuable time, every moment of which is essential for him to complete his review of the voluminous historic data pertaining to this site, as well as the forthcoming Papadopoulos data. I am very fearful that six weeks will be insufficient to allow the Office of Contracts and Procurement to finalize the contract; for him to complete his work; and for the District to perform all the tasks it must, so as to be able to announce a remedy selection decision. These include tasks as varied as briefing appropriate persons within the District government; preparing a record identifying all the documents considered; and drafting decision documents, in addition to analyzing and interpreting all the data. Second, certain folks were scheduled to be out of the office the first few days in December. Their absences, combined with the Thanksgiving holiday the prior week, will make it exceedingly difficult for the District to be able to complete the above-outlined tasks, so as to be able to present a remedy at the December 4th meeting. So as to lessen any inconvenience to your office this scheduling change could cause, we would be pleased to assume responsibility for reserving a space for a meeting on the 18th.

Please let me know at your earliest possible convenience whether you are amenable to the three procedural changes I am proposing herein. If so, my staff can start getting the word out in its meeting with the RPAC this Thursday.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



George S. Hawkins
Director