

**CITY OF ALEXANDRIA  
NORFOLK SOUTHERN COMMUNITY MONITORING GROUP (NSCMG)**

**Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library  
July 30, 2008  
7:00 p.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**NSCMG Attendees:** Vice-Mayor Redella S. “Del” Pepper, Chair; Councilman Ludwig Gaines, John Sullivan, President, Cameron Station Homeowners Association; Ingrid Sanden, President, Cameron Station Civic Association; John Pecic, President, Summers Grove Homeowners Association; Charniele Herring, President, West End Business Association; Andres Domeyko, President, Eisenhower Partnership; Mark Krause, Director of Facilities, Alexandria City Public Schools.

**Other Invited Guests:** City Attorney Ignacio Pessoa, Fire Chief Adam Thiel, Director of Communications Tony Castrilli, Emergency Management Coordinator Mark Penn, and Police Department Captain Al Tierney.

**City Staff:** Steve Mason, Special Assistant to the City Manager / Project Manager

**1. Opening Remarks / Introductions**

- Mayor William Euille and City Manager Jim Hartmann provided opening remarks after NSCMG members introduced themselves.
- NSCMG Chair Del Pepper invited community attendees to introduce themselves, state where they were from, and their interest in attending the meeting.

**2. Mission Statement**

*The mission of the Norfolk Southern Community Monitoring Group (NSCMG), as established by City Council, is to support the City’s actions to shut down the ethanol transloading facility located in the City’s West End; to track the progress of ongoing regulatory, legal, and permit activities; and to keep the wider stakeholder community informed about its work.*

- The group reviewed the Mission Statement and expressed concern regarding its meaning.
- Chair Del Pepper advised that the language does not preclude the group from extending the scope of discussion.
- Ingrid Sanden stated the statement lacked language indicating the City’s commitment to the health and safety of the residents.
- Ignacio Pessoa reviewed the statement and revised as follows:

*The mission of the Norfolk Southern Community Monitoring Group (NSCMG), as established by City Council, is to support the City’s actions to: (1) shut down the ethanol transloading facility located in the City’s West End; (2) in the interim, to protect the health and safety of the City’s residents and school children from ant dangers posed by the facility; (3) to track the progress of ongoing regulatory, legal, and permit activities; and (4) to keep the wider stakeholder community informed about its work.*

### 3. Activity Updates

- **Legal** – City Attorney Ignacio Pessoa gave an update on the City’s pending actions against Norfolk Southern (NS) and the testimony provided by the City at the July 22 Surface Transportation Board (STB).
  - Vice-Mayor Pepper delivered the City’s testimony at the July 22 STB hearing. She feels the Board understands the City’s plight, and that other locales dealing with ethanol operations should be contacted.
  - In its petition to the STB, the City believes NS is subject to local zoning laws regarding its operation. The hearing should be conducted within the next two months. If there is no local control, then the federal government should have control.
  - Discussion - Regulatory Initiative; a formal administrative procedure regarding the start of an (ethanol) operation in a community.
  - Haul Route Permit Lawsuit: The City has responded to the Haul Route Permit lawsuit filed by NS. The case is in discovery, which provides the City the right to depose Norfolk Southern officials.
  - Legislative: There is an ongoing Homeland Security review of the Norfolk Southern facility, sparked by numerous inquiries to the offices of Senator John Warner, Senator James Webb, and Congressman James Moran.
  - Charniele Herring asked about discretionary discovery and Ignacio Pessoa explained.
  - John Pecic asked about the characteristics of other ethanol facilities. Tony Castrilli explored the City’s ethanol related web page and displayed the information for the group to see.
  - Andres Domeyko asked about the current regulatory requirements for gasoline and other petroleum products. Ignacio Pessoa addressed the issue.
  - Councilman Gaines stated that the ethanol issue needs to be brought before other jurisdictions, and that he would do so via the National League of Cities. He also feels that national lobby organizations should be engaged in the ethanol discussion.
- **Norfolk Southern Facility and City Preparedness** - Fire Chief Adam Thiel provided an update regarding his department’s readiness to fight an ethanol fire incident at the facility.
  - The Fire Department has received the foam trailer and foam and is awaiting the arrival of the dedicated tow vehicle (due to a production delay).
  - Training for Fire personnel is complete.
  - Fire is planning a command level drill with Fairfax and Arlington counties.
  - A thorough evaluation of the NS site has been conducted and recommendations made about fire safety.

- Chief Thiel advised that Fire personnel conducted training with NS personnel, and that NS has offered Fire the opportunity to train on their equipment.
  - John Pecic inquired regarding Fire's readiness to fight an ethanol fire, citing the PA chain reaction derailment situation. Chief Thiel advised there are varying factors that could affect a fire fighting operation; weather conditions, number of cars on fire, for example.
  - Chief Thiel does see lightning strike incidents across the country. Most rail cars are grounded.
  - Ingrid Sanden inquired as to the effectiveness of the grounding. According to Chief Thiel, NS has represented that it has field-tested the grounding of its tank cars.
  - John Sullivan inquired about a requirement for continued ground testing. Chief Thiel responded there is none.
  - Andres Domeyko inquired as to the level of safety of transloading since it occurs numerous times on a daily basis. Chief Thiel advised that an incident could range from a couple of drops onto a containment pad to a large fire, and that his department's ability to handle a situation at the NS facility depends on a wide range of variables; there are some potential situations they would not be able handle.
  - Councilman Gaines wanted to know, from a practical standpoint, what should people expect. Chief Thiel advised that the greatest impact would be on the site itself, but depending on the situation, care would have to be taken for individuals with medical sensitivities. Ethanol is not a Toxic Inhalation Hazard (TIH), but things that burn may emit a "witch's brew" of fumes.
- **Website Update** – Director of Communications Anthony Castrilli used his laptop to connect to the City's Web site and the ethanol transloading facility page to describe how the City has documented its ethanol-related activities.
  - **Emergency Evacuation Plans** – Emergency Management Coordinator Mark Penn provided an overview of the development of draft emergency evacuation plans for Cameron Station and Summers Grove. He also advised that his office would be planning a charrette with Cameron Station and Summers Grove residents in the fall.
    - Captain Al Tierney, the coordinator of the police department's Office of Homeland Security and Operations Preparedness provided information regarding the threat assessment that was conducted by the City and the threat assessment being conducted by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and Homeland Security.
    - John Pecic asked how the reverse 911 system works. Mark Penn explained, but stated that calls will not go to pagers or cell phones. Tony Castrilli, using the City's Web site, explained the eNews sign-up procedures. Through eNews, the public can receive regular and emergency messages by pager, cell phone, PDA, or any other device that will accept a text message.
    - Councilman Gaines asked if there is a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) active in Cameron Station and Summers Grove. Mark Penn advised

there are individuals in both communities that have received CERT training, and that he would be willing to set up training to get teams started.

- Councilman Gaines inquired about NS's commitment to providing the City all of the equipment it has requested to be prepared in case of an ethanol emergency. Chief Thiel advised that he submitted a list of equipment felt necessary to address an ethanol fire at the facility, but that NS would not agree to the purchase of all of the equipment listed. The City has submitted a letter to NS requesting they purchase all of the equipment recommended.
  
- John Pecic asked about the status of the Eisenhower Avenue Fire Station and stated that his association's focus is the building of the station. City Manager Jim Hartmann advised that the station is a primary focus in the 2010 budget with delivery set for 2012.
  
- Councilman Gaines asked about the status of 24/7 security for the NS facility and said that we should continue to insist on that level of coverage. Captain Tierney advised there are three tier levels of security NS is considering; off-duty Alexandria Police Officers, armed private security officers, and unarmed private security officers, with cost being the major consideration. The City will follow-up with a letter to NS asking for a decision to be made.
  
- John Sullivan commented that Cameron Station does not have traditional landline telephone service, and that when Comcast service is interrupted so is telephone service. He feels that since the City controls the franchise agreement an alternative back-up telephone solution should be sought.

#### **4. Public Comment**

- Bo Schnurr inquired as to whether there has been any consideration given to build blast shields to protect the community. Chief Thiel responded that ethanol is not an explosive, but when ignited, will create a large fire.
  
- Annabelle Fisher stated that since a Special Use Permit (SUP) process is involved in this situation, the City has no standing or power to do anything. She feels the City needs to lobby other states and that federal enforcement is the issue. She also stated there is no ethanol facility in Baltimore and that the web site should be more specific about ethanol facilities.
  
- Julie Crenshaw asked Chief Thiel that if he lived in Cameron Station or Summers Grove is there anything he would do to better protect himself. Chief Thiel responded that he would do things that would assist in making his house more airtight, such as using weather stripping or door sweeps.
  
- Maria Berliner stated that security is vital and her concern regards terrorism and the disruption of infrastructure. In response, Ludwig Gaines stated that he is not satisfied with the chain link fence and there is a need for more surveillance, etc.
  
- Lisa Couture stated there is nothing that prevents the public from entering the NS facility from VA Paving. She thanked Chief Thiel for all that is being done, but still expressed concern about the readiness of other agencies (Arlington and Fairfax) to assist in an emergency situation.

- Joe Bennett expressed concern about the storage of ethanol in the many rail cars parked inside and outside the NS facility. He also stated that Internet stories about ethanol incidents describe evacuations occurring.

## **5. Outstanding Issues / Action Items**

- The Group wants an invitation extended to Norfolk Southern officials to participate in the meetings. Steve Mason will write a letter extending the invitation.
- The Group wants to know the status of any threat assessments being conducted. According to TSA, they should be ready to provide a report to the City in approximately 60 days. The City will be able to discuss aspects of the findings, but will not be able to make the report public.
- The Group wants an invitation extended to the City's Congressional representatives to attend the next meeting. Steve Mason will talk to City Legislative Director Bernard Caton about the invitation.
- Approval for the design of an ADA compliant landing and walkway for the emergency evacuation gate, along with a project description letter, must be presented to the Cameron Station Homeowners Association before further activities occur. Steve Mason will coordinate this effort.

## **6. Meeting Schedule**

- A regular meeting schedule has not been developed, but the Group feels the next meeting should be scheduled for late September.

## **7. Adjournment**

- The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:45 p.m.