



Many Voices Working for the Community

Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board

Approved May 13, 2015 Meeting Minutes

The Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB) held a work session on Wednesday, May 13, at Shoney's Restaurant, 204 South Illinois Ave., Oak Ridge, Tenn., beginning at 6 p.m.

Members Present

Leon Baker
Alfreda Cook
Lisa Hagy, Secretary
Bob Hatcher
David Hemelright, Chair

Howard Holmes
Terri Likens
Jan Lyons, Vice Chair
Fay Martin
Donald Mei

Greg Paulus
Belinda Price
Coralie Staley
Ed Trujillo

Members Absent

Jimmy Bell¹
Jennifer Kasten¹
Mary Smalling¹
Scott Stout¹
Wanfang Zhou¹

¹Second consecutive absence

Liaisons, Deputy Designated Federal Officer, and Federal Coordinator Present

Dave Adler, ORSSAB Alternate Deputy Designated Federal Officer
Susan Cange, Manager for Environmental Management (EM) and ORSSAB Deputy Designated Federal Officer
Melyssa Noe, ORSSAB Federal Coordinator, Department of Energy – Oak Ridge Office (DOE-ORO)
Connie Jones, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4.

Others Present

Robert Benefield, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC)
Mike Ford
David Foster, TDEC
Spencer Gross, ORSSAB Support Office
Alana Joldersma, Oak Ridge High School
Harry McNabb
Pete Osborne, ORSSAB Support Office
Ellen Smith, Oak Ridge City Council
Mark Watson, Oak Ridge City Manager
Dennis Wilson
Ray Wymer

City of Oak Ridge Perspectives on the Oak Ridge EM Program

ORSSAB invited Oak Ridge City Manager Mark Watson to talk to the board about the city's perspectives on the DOE Oak Ridge EM program. He said the city had concerns about some issues, but there were positive aspects and things to consider.

He has had discussions with Ms. Cange and Mr. Adler about the proposed additional low-level waste disposal facility. There have been discussions about a new national park commemorating the Manhattan Project at three sites across the country including Oak Ridge.

Mr. Watson said there is not a lot of city money available to have the kind of community citizens are accustomed if DOE no longer operated Clark Center Park or the American Museum of Science and Energy. Development of City Center (former Oak Ridge Mall) will help generate additional income, but perhaps not enough. He said Oak Ridge City Schools is trying to make ends meet and Roane County has budget problems as well (part of Oak Ridge is in Roane County).

Values of homes in Anderson County have declined about 2 percent, and Mr. Watson said the city can't raise additional money without raising taxes. Oak Ridge has about 5,000 older homes that date to the Manhattan Project. There are huge fluctuations of property values depending on the condition of those structures. Elimination of the Hall Income Tax on investments will cost the city about \$600,000 annually.

Mr. Watson discussed the proposed second waste disposal facility on the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR). DOE proposes to build a second facility, known as the EM Disposal Facility (EMDF), adjacent to the current EM Waste Management Facility in Bear Creek Valley near Y-12 National Security Complex.

The city is interested in a number of issues related to EMDF:

- What will be the impact on the community especially nearby residential areas?
- What are the long-term costs?
- What are the long-term benefits, such as employees to monitor the site for decades?
- What are the cost comparisons of on-site disposal opposed to shipping waste off-site?

Mr. Watson said in looking at community impact the city wants to make sure it wasn't focusing solely on DOE's needs but the community interest as well. An independent study was done that posed some questions about the geology of the site, the effects on nearby residents, and property values. "How do we address this so it's a win-win for everyone and not a detriment to the community," he said. "People outside of Oak Ridge don't understand the kind and amounts of contamination."

Mr. Watson said there is a fear that if DOE work stops, jobs would go elsewhere. The city wants DOE missions to continue and it also wants people to live in the community and spend time here. A study has shown that about 70 percent of workers commute into Oak Ridge.

He said the city needs a lot of information about the landfill and Ms. Cange and Mr. Adler have provided a lot of information. He noted that the ORR is a Superfund site that has regulations spelled out in the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). If the ORR were a Nuclear Regulatory Commission site it would have different regulations. The city is comparing those differences. Mr. Watson said CERCLA tends to focus more on environmental impacts than community impacts.

Mr. Watson said he experienced a similar issue where the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport needed land for runways. A determination had to be made whether concerns were real or perceived.

He concluded his remarks saying city council has a number of questions to be answered and it will make comments to DOE on the landfill. He said now is the time for prudent decisions.

Ms. Likens asked for additional information about the older homes. Mr. Watson said many of them have deteriorated and it's difficult to sustain value. While some have been improved, others continue to depreciate. He said each year a house sits without improvement it loses about \$1,000 in value. With about 5,000 of such homes in the city that trend must be reversed. Mr. Watson said when those house values go down, the tax base must be shifted to new or more expensive homes, and there were only a handful of new housing starts in Oak Ridge last year.

Ms. Likens asked about the company CVMR moving to Oak Ridge. Mr. Watson said that will help the tax base. While CVMR management will live in Oak Ridge, there is no guarantee that most of its workers will.

Ms. Cook asked about the redevelopment of the Oak Ridge Mall. Mr. Watson said there would be two sources of income from sales and property taxes. The City Center Main Street project is about an \$80 million investment that includes 200,000 square feet of retail space, a 200-unit apartment complex (that he said might be attractive to ORR or CVMR employees), and a 140-room hotel. Gross sales are estimated to be about \$100,000 million annually yielding about \$250,000 in tax revenues. The Oak Ridge Mall, with the exception of Penney's and Belk, will be demolished beginning about the end of June. The area is about 65 acres.

Ms. Staley asked about plans for the older homes. Mr. Watson said there will be no government money available to acquire them. For homes that are not being maintained the city will declare them substandard. Many of them are rented and about 3 percent are in the federal voucher program that allows low-income families to live in Oak Ridge and send children to Oak Ridge schools.

Ms. Staley asked if the goal is to get them in good condition or eliminate them. Mr. Watson said the goal is get them in good condition, but many are smaller than what is desired. About 20 houses have been bought for less than \$20,000 for renovation.

Regarding the landfill, Mr. Hatcher asked why concerns are more than just a perceived issue. Mr. Watson said protections need to be looked at. Mr. Hatcher asked why it is any different than the existing facility. With the existing facility, Mr. Watson said a stream had to be rerouted and there is a stream at the proposed site that needs rerouting. He said there is a responsibility that everything is done to make sure protections are addressed. He noted that the nearest population is .8 of a mile away. Mr. Hatcher said there is no scientific evidence of any real concern and he'd like to see the independent report that was done.

Ms. Cook said she thinks it's reasonable to expand the disposal capacity and continue to clean up areas that will be attractive for businesses. She said the proposed site is next to the existing site that has worked well over the years and she doesn't see it as a problem.

Ms. Cook asked if the city had an alternate idea for what to do with cleanup waste. Mr. Watson said when the existing facility was built studies identified several potential locations. He wants to see if those locations would pose any impact on nearby communities. He said he didn't have an answer for that at this time.

Ms. Staley said she would rather have a new facility in an area that is already being monitored and safety precautions are in place such as near the existing facility.

Mr. Trujillo asked if a final report had been made to the city. Mr. Watson said it had not received a final report. Mr. Trujillo said he thought the only drawback was perceived stigma to the city. Mr. Watson said the Ferguson Group doing the report looked at long-term impacts, reviewed the DOE remedial investigation/feasibility study, looked lifecycle costs and opportunity costs, and if the public would accept another landfill. He said there is also the potential for rock fracturing in the area. Mr. Hatcher said rock fracturing is present in every rock formation in the world.

Ms. Cange reminded the group that the process is still in the remedial investigation/feasibility study phase. Alternatives are being evaluated for both on-site and off-site disposal. She said DOE is working with EPA and TDEC to come to an agreement before finalizing the RIFS. When that is done a proposed plan that recommends a preferred alternative will be submitted for public comments. The proposed plan is expected to be issued later this year. DOE will ask for community input as well as input from ORSSAB. Ms. Cange said community acceptance is one of nine criteria that must be considered before making a final decision. She said the study the city commissioned could be useful in helping DOE evaluate community acceptance.

Mr. Mei asked what the city was building on Emory Valley Road (a large holding tank). Mr. Watson said it was an equalization tank that prevents the city from having to rebuild a sewer system. During times of heavy storm water runoff, the storm water is captured in the tank and stored until conditions allow it to be discharged. It keeps storm water from overwhelming the sewer system during times of heavy rainfall. Two other similar tanks are being built in different parts of the city.

Mr. Hatcher asked if neighborhoods were consulted about building the tanks and if not why. Mr. Watson said neighborhoods had not been consulted because there was a problem in those communities that needed addressing. Ms. Smith said the city did hear from citizens who had sewage in their yards after storm events.

Ms. Smith thanked the board for allowing Mr. Watson to discuss the unique challenges facing the city. She said the industrial and commercial tax base is smaller than some of the surrounding areas. She Oak Ridge has a bit of an image problem with laboratories and Y-12 and there is negative publicity associated with radioactive waste.

Mr. Hatcher said he has lived in several communities and Oak Ridge provides the best services of all the places he has resided.

Public Comment

None.

Announcements and Other Board Business

ORSSAB's next scheduled meeting will be Wednesday, June 10, 2015, at the DOE Information Center, 1 Science.gov Way, Oak Ridge, Tenn. Oak Ridge Reservation Groundwater Strategic Plan will be the main topic of discussion.

Additions to the Agenda

Mr. Paulus asked when the board needed to provide a recommendation to DOE on its FY 2017 EM budget request. Mr. Adler said board members were asked to rank a list of projects that DOE Oak Ridge would like to accomplish for FY 2017. That ranking (Attachment 1) was provided by Mr. Hemelright at the April 29 public workshop on the DOE EM budget. Mr. Adler sent that ranking to EM Headquarters as a precursor to a more formal recommendation from the board. The EM & Stewardship Committee and Budget & Process Committee will have a combined meeting on May 20 to discuss a formal recommendation on the budget.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Action items

None.

Attachments (1) to these minutes are available on request from the ORSSAB support office.

I certify that these minutes are an accurate account of the May 13, 2015, meeting of the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board.

Dave Hemelright

Dave Hemelright, Chair
Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board
DH/rsg

June 11, 2015