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West Court cleanup: Comment deadline is Sunday

The deadline for public comment on the coal tar cleanup at the NYSEG Ithaca Court Street site is this Sunday, Sept. 30.

Little time remains for residents to read the plan and submit their thoughts on the cleanup and remediation process that could occur as early as January 2008.

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CORTLAND FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Contact Sandra Swierczek
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The plan is to tear down most buildings and remove contaminated soil on the east side of the site in Ithaca, which is bordered by Esty, West Court and North Plain streets. And at the controversial Markles Flats site, owned by the Ithaca City School District, NYSEG will attempt to pump out contamination, install metal sheet piling under the building to contain remaining contamination and finally install remediation equipment to pump vapors out.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation, the Ithaca City School District and NYSEG all wanted to tear the Markles Flats building down. But the City of Ithaca eventually won in a court battle to determine the building's fate (the building was tagged with a historical designation). The city could still change its mind at the last minute, but so far there has been no indication it will.

Without the city reversing course, it is wasted energy to debate the worthiness of keeping Markles Flats standing because nothing can be done at this point. We do share the views of Walter Hang, of Toxics Targeting, who is pleased with

the DEC cleanup of the site but wants further remediation efforts done by having NYSEG remove all of the identified pollution on the entire site, including Markles Flats. Under the current plan, NYSEG will probably have to return to the site in 50 years for future work.

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If you want your opinions heard on the cleanup, you must e-mail comments to Bill Ottaway, project manager, at wsottawa@gw.dec.state.ny.us, or mail to New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Environmental Remediation, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY, 12233-7017. The deadline is Sunday. The documents related to the cleanup are available at the following places:

- * Tompkins County Public Library, 101 E. Green St., Ithaca; 272-4557.
- * NYSDEC Central Office, 625 Broadway, Albany; (518) 402-9686.
- * NYSEG, Ithaca-Dryden Road, Ithaca; 347-2550.
- * Coal Tar Advisory Committee, 106 Washington St., Ithaca; 272-1239.
- * City of Ithaca, Office of the Mayor, East Green Street, Ithaca; 274-6501.

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