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Draft plan on South Hill cleanup available to public

By Krisy Gashler

Journal Staff

A draft work plan for cleanup at the South Hill Business Campus brownfield site is open for public comment from now until Jan. 24.

The news was announced in a fact sheet sent by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation late last week.

The draft plan calls for:

- \* Removing the remaining two 9,000-gallon underground storage tanks, and the soil surrounding them.
- \* Treating groundwater “to reduce contaminant levels and prevent off-site migration of on-site groundwater contamination,” according to the fact sheet.
- \* Instituting controls to restrict future site use.
- \* Engineering controls to prevent intrusion of contaminated soil vapor into buildings and future buildings.

South Hill Business Campus, at 950 Danby Road across from Ithaca College, is currently used as a commercial business park. Two office buildings have been added to the original two-story manufacturing building, formerly used by National Cash Register Company to manufacture adding machines and cash registers.

Like many manufacturers in the middle of the 20th century, NCR used degreasing solvents that contained trichloroethene (TCE) and other volatile organic compounds, now known to be health hazards and potentially carcinogenic.

A total of nine underground storage tanks were used on site by NCR during its roughly 30 years of operation, according to the fact sheet.

Seven of them were removed in 1986. The proposed remediation would remove the last two.

S&W Redevelopment, environmental consultants for South Hill Business Campus, will use “In-Situ Chemical Oxidation (ISCO)” to remediate groundwater contaminants such as TCE, dichloroethene (DCE) and vinyl chloride (VC).

They will inject potassium permanganate in a series of injection points. The location, amount and number of injections will be determined by field and laboratory tests, with final approval by DEC.

The draft work plan calls for restricting future site use to commercial and light manufacturing and prohibiting use of site groundwater “without proper treatment.”

South Hill Business Campus has already installed a “sub-slab depressurization system (SSDS)” and an air exchange system to mitigate contaminated soil vapor intrusion in the southern part of the building near the storage tanks.

New buildings on the property “may also be fitted” with these systems “if required to prevent future [soil vapor intrusion],” according to the fact sheet.

Walter Hang, an environmental activist and president of Ithaca-based Toxics Targeting, said he was “disappointed” that the current remedial plan calls for mitigation of contaminated groundwater and not removal.

“You need to remove the groundwater and recover the plume; otherwise the pollution just keeps going and going and going,” he said. “Source removal applies to groundwater, just as it applies to contaminated dirt.”

Andrew Sciarabba, president of South Hill Business Campus, referred the Journal to Robert Petrovich, executive vice president of S&W Redevelopment. Petrovich did not return a phone message Sunday afternoon.

The full draft work plan is available at the Tompkins County Public Library. Sent comments to Karen Cahill, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 615 Erie Boulevard West, Syracuse, NY, 13204.

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