

CSX/City of Portsmouth/Islington Creek Neighborhood Meeting
July 17th 4:00pm Meeting at City Hall Conference Rm A

Meeting Notes

Purpose of the meeting:

Review goals for Islington Creek Neighborhood (ICN) and to give CSX an opportunity to update the City and the neighborhood on mitigating efforts to date.

Attendance:

The meeting began on schedule. Attending were: Maurice O'Connell, CSX Regional Vice President, Robert Rohaur, CSX Regional Manager - Northeast, Karen Conard, City Manager, Jane Farrine, Assistant City Attorney, Peter Britz, Planning Director – Conservation, Beth Moreau, City Council and resident of ICN, John Tabor, City Council, and ICN residents, Tom Hiney, the neighborhood CSX issue coordinator, Nicole Lapierre, Abby Kirschner Schnaars, Geri Gaeta, Karina Quintans, ICN Association coordinator and Liz Braddar (non-resident property owner).

Status Review:

Tom Hiney reviewed the status of activity in rail yard and discussed opportunities to mitigate impact on neighborhood. He suggested the ICN, the City and CSX create mutually agreed action items list and set timelines and exceptions. He further stated that ICN's objective is not to negatively impact any CSX operation servicing its customer base in Portsmouth/Newington. It is, instead, to seek ways to reduce the negative impacts of CSX's current operational practices on the neighborhood.

He began by mentioning late night/early morning train operations. They would arrive to the Portsmouth Yard, sometimes idling for hours, before moving to their customers. Then, discussing the idling problem. In a recent example, the diesels hauling propane cars would return to yard from the Sea 3 terminal in Newington late in the afternoon, then idle for hours before moving down tracks to Rockingham Junction and beyond. Next, he cited the long term storage of Subcon railway cars, some of which have been there for months. Often, local youngsters have been frequently seen climbing on the cars as well as marking them with graffiti.

VP Maurice O'Connell responded with a review of improvements CSX has done in the Portsmouth Yard since the merger. The company removed rusted out construction cars, reduced idling as much as possible. He stated that train crews are aware of the concerns from the community and remain committed to minimize idling time whenever possible. He characterized idling has been substantially reduced.

Bob Rohaur went further to state that policy/practice is 15-20 minutes at a maximum. Residents were surprised. Tom actually asked him to explain further, which he did.

Councilor Tabor, here at the Mayor's request, asked clarifying questions around this practice and other issues.

Liz Bratter then spoke about the noise and fumes which have been plagued the neighborhood for years. Nicole LaPierre seriously questioned O'Connell's evaluation that the situation is substantially improved. She spoke about the recent idling which has been going on for months. Other neighborhood residents also spoke about the noise and fumes including Abby Kirschner Schnaers.

At some point in the meeting, there was general agreement among the participants that the idling, noise and fumes were still a very active issue.

A new issue raised:

Residents observed that CSX has been using an aggressive defoliant on the tracks to remove brush and grass in portions of the Yard. Maurice O'Connell expressed surprise by this and said that it was a safety measure to keep the tracks clear. He promised to look into this and provide information on the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) and Product Information Sheet (PIS) on the defoliant(s) used near the North Mill Pond.

Closing: Tom Hiney rapped up the meeting by stating the goals of this neighborhood action to have CSX:

1. Eliminate late night/early morning arrival of trains into the Portsmouth yard,
2. Reduce the long term idling of trains in Portsmouth yard, and
3. Eliminate long-term storage of rail cars in the yard.

Prepared by:

Tom Hiney
101 Langdon Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Lawrence Cataldo
133 Islington Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801