

Connolly, Mike - Rep. (HOU)

From: Gianetti, Lee <lgianetti@cambridgema.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 06, 2019 12:02 PM
To: Connolly, Mike - Rep. (HOU)
Cc: DePasquale, Louie; Carvello, Maryellen; Cooper, Stacey; Lipson, Sam
Subject: [External]: Fwd: Update on Sullivan Courthouse building

Representative Connolly,

The City Manager asked me to share the following communication with you.

Best regards,

Lee Gianetti

Director of Communications

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From: Gianetti, Lee <lgianetti@cambridgema.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 6, 2019 11:00
To: City Council
Cc: DePasquale, Louie; Peterson, Lisa; Carvello, Maryellen; Cooper, Stacey; Glowa, Nancy; Mahoney, Gerard E; O'Riordan, Owen; Lipson, Sam
Subject: Update on Sullivan Courthouse building

Councillors,

The City Manager asked me to share with you the following communication from Gerard Mahoney, Owen O' Riordan, and Sam Lipson regarding the former Sullivan Courthouse building.

Best regards,
Lee Gianetti
Director of Communications

Councillors:

We are writing to update you on the status of our review concerning suspected asbestos containing material (ACM) at the former Sullivan Courthouse in East Cambridge.

A meeting was held on Wednesday morning, September 4th at the Department of Public Works (DPW) with Owen O'Riordan, Gerard Mahoney, Sam Lipson, other DPW staff, and Parrish Rossi, Senior Operations Manager at the State Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) about the reported existence of asbestos containing material at the Courthouse building. Mr. Rossi was the most senior member of DCAMM staff available this week to discuss the present situation at the former Courthouse and has been involved since last week in assisting with the response presently in place at the Courthouse building.

Recent Background Information

Under Massachusetts law, the responsibility for oversight of the proper removal and disposal of asbestos and asbestos-containing materials and products falls to the MA Department of Environmental Protection (MA DEP). Under state regulations, most hazardous materials regulations are exclusively enforced by MA DEP. MA DEP also addresses requests for emergency response through its Environmental Emergency Response Program.

The City was made aware of a communication to the neighborhood late last week that a neighbor had stated that he had identified alleged Asbestos Containing Material, likely insulation, in a sample that the neighbor had taken from material he found immediately inside the Courthouse building. MA DEP was asked to respond to the situation at the former Courthouse, and MA DEP staff responded last Friday, August 30th. By 9pm that evening, MA DEP had its contractor NRC Environmental on site to begin cleanup and to ensure that the Courthouse building was properly secured.

A three-person team (including a technician qualified to handle ACM) from NRC Environmental began the cleanup and securing of the Courthouse building at 10:30 pm. that same evening (Aug 30th). Using a HEPA vacuum, they removed approximately one handful of suspected ACM from beside one of the bays/gates in the lower level of the Courthouse building after spraying it down with water in advance. The contractor apparently presumed that the material was ACM and disposed of it on that basis in accordance with state regulations.

NRC Environmental also vacuumed up other small amounts of dirt and dust around the perimeter of the Courthouse building, although they indicated that they were not overly concerned about this small amount of dirt and dust material. NRC Environmental then proceeded to further secure that bay to the Courthouse building with plywood, plastic and some framing. Finally, they closed two windows that were open into the Courthouse building as well. NRC Environmental finished its work at 2 a.m. on Saturday morning, August 31st.

Meeting with DCAMM on September 4th

Mr. Rossi indicated that all utilities associated with the Courthouse building have been cut off at this time, including electricity, gas, steam, water and communications. He also indicated that there are approximately 500,000 gallons of water in the bottom of the building which is approximately 15-20 feet below grade. DCAMM has a contract out to bid associated with the planned dewatering of the Courthouse building. This dewatering activity will require review and approval from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), MA DEP and the City of Cambridge DPW. The water will need to be pretreated before it can be discharged into the municipal sewer system and then conveyed to the MWRA treatment plant at Deer Island. At this time no schedule / timeframe has yet been provided for this work.

Currently, it is unclear as to what contamination there is in the water. Once the regulatory agencies have reviewed water quality information, more decisions will then be made as to the required treatment that will be necessary before it is disposed of into the sewer system. The rate of discharge will be set by the City to ensure that City's sewer systems are not overwhelmed.

Senior management from MA DEP who are very experienced in site and building remediation visited the Courthouse building on Wednesday afternoon, September 4th. They wanted to ensure that the Courthouse building was appropriately sealed, and that any friable asbestos would not escape the building. They found the Courthouse building to be significantly humid and well-sealed, and they informed us that they were not concerned about any need for containment at this time. They again repeated that approximately "one pound" of material suspected to be ACM had been collected by MA DEP's contractor last Friday from a location adjacent to the south easterly bay of the Courthouse building, that it had been properly disposed of in accordance with state regulations, and that they had found no other locations outside the Courthouse building where they had concerns about any hazardous material.

MA DEP also indicated that they would be involved in monitoring the dewatering of the Courthouse building and that there would be containment requirements for the dewatering process in accordance with Massachusetts asbestos removal codes (310 CMR 7.15). These requirements would include the use of an internal shroud (within the building) and the maintenance of negative air flow that would only be released after passing the interior air through HEPA filtration. The City will remain in contact with the MA DEP about this process and its compliance status under state asbestos laws and regulations and any other applicable environmental regulations.

Once the Courthouse building has been dewatered and is ready for full asbestos removal, MA DEP will again be involved in permitting the asbestos removal (shrouding in work areas within the Courthouse building where active removal will be taking place together with negative air and exhaust passing through HEPA filtration and water/wetting as needed).

We have asked DCAMM to provide City officials with a detailed update concerning the additional steps they expect to take in relation to the dewatering process and overall building security at the Courthouse building. When this, and any additional information become available to the City, we will further update you as to the situation.

Gerard Mahoney, Acting Fire Chief, Cambridge Fire Department

Owen O' Riordan, Commissioner, Cambridge Department of Public Works

Sam Lipson, Director of Environmental Health, Cambridge Public Health Dept.