

# Residents object to disposal site

## Coffin Avenue stirs lively debate

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The battle over where to put polluted materials dredged from New Bedford Harbor is still brewing, as EPA officials found out when they met with residents and harbor forum members to discuss their options in the superfund site clean-up project.

The number one point of contention was the proposed CDF (confined disposal facility) to be located in a filled lagoon north of Coffin Avenue. Some of the 100 residents complained loudly about that location.

"The most important thing we picked up from the meeting was that some environmental justice issues are a little more important to people than we understood," said David Dickerson, EPA project manager. "Some people in the crowd didn't listen to anything we had to say. It was kind of disappointing."

Fellow EPA manager Frank Ciavattieri said the meeting suffered from mixed reviews.

"I wouldn't say it was fully well received, but not rejected either," he said. "Some people don't want CDFs, period."

Among those giving mixed reviews were Fairhaven Selectman John Haaland, Claudia Kirk of Concerned Parents of Fairhaven and President Jim Simmons and Vice President Barry Starr of Hands Across the River Coalition (HARC).

"To me, it seemed to be a little orchestrated," Haaland said. "They were passing around a mailing list and I saw one person from Sawyer Street and one person from Coffin Avenue on it." The other residents, he said, were from other neighborhoods or other towns.

Kirk also noticed the list.

"I don't know if it was truly representative of the people that live there," she said, adding she was disappointed people did not show interest in the information the EPA and DEP were there to present.

"As a forum member, I felt very frustrated there was no real dialogue. They were there to argue, that's it," Kirk said.

On the other hand, Simmons said he thought the meeting was a success.

"I think the general public is upset the EPA would make a decision like this for a residential area," Simmons said. "There were a lot of boos and negative comments made about the lagoon."

HARC members handed out a newsletter at the meeting which blatantly attacked the government agencies.

Incendiary comments such as "The cove that the Environmental destruction agency wants to fill in won't even have one of these leaking liners."

"All we want from those bone heads is to clean the dirt ..." and "What if HARC had been seduced and duped into going along with (the EPA) as others have?"

Haaland said the meeting seemed to be run by an intermediary group rather than by the residents themselves.

"It isn't being driven from the people up. If (the project) stands

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on logic and merits, they don't stand a chance," Haaland said.

While Haaland has been trying to safeguard Fairhaven from potential CDFs, Ciavattieri said alternatives exist for the eastern shore but are not currently being considered.

"No one is looking to have them on that side," Ciavattieri said.

Although it's on the west side of the river, the Coffin Avenue site is close to Fairhaven. Ultimately, the

fate of that CDF and of CDFs in general will depend on the cooperation of everyone involved.

"The stakes are too high in this project for people to be stubborn and close minded," Dickerson said. "No one wants to hear it's a very difficult site with no easy answers."

Ciavattieri agreed.

"The key is are they going to be able to agree amongst themselves," he said.