

Residents help choose EIR consultant

Several East Palo Alto residents provided input to help decide which firm will perform an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on Romic Environmental Technologies. We would very much like to thank the following for their time and advice: Paula Alloro, Lois Frontino, Aretha Lawrence, Maisha Mouton, Michelle Murname,

consultant was suggested at a community meeting last year. Since it had apparently never been done before, coming up with a way to accommodate this suggestion was a challenge. Two difficulties were figuring out how to 1) identify people who represented "the public," and 2) enable nontechnical people to help make a decision

that is usually based on technical factors.

In addition to the standard criteria, they emphasized that it was important for the consultant to:

- provide information in easy-to-understand, nontechnical terms to the extent possible,

- communicate effectively with diverse audiences whose primary language may not be English,
- have a history of producing competent and successful EIRs,

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Chester Palesoo, Beverly Scott, Tom Vanden Bosch, and Tracy Warner.

This was another unique step in Romic's operating permit renewal. The first was when Romic asked the state to conduct a comprehensive EIR on our operations, even though one was not required by law. The second was to develop a way to get the public involved in deciding which consultant should do the EIR for the state.

Allowing the public to help choose the EIR

Romic went to our Community Advisory Panel for ideas. They asked to see the criteria that is usually used to choose a consultant. An EIR consultant and an EIR "watchdog" group provided sample criteria to the panel.

Then some members met as a subcommittee with other residents who represented various segments of the community and the city. The group came up with additional criteria they felt would be important in addressing community concerns.

Passing with flying colors

More than a dozen federal, state, regional and local agencies regulate, inspect, and permit Romic Environmental. But just how closely is the company monitored? To give you an idea, the following list shows how many inspections/audits were done during the month of May alone. No violations were found during any of these inspections.

- On May 1 the **Regional Water Quality Control Plant** inspected the water treatment and sewer discharge system and procedures at Romic. They recommended we do additional documentation and labeling.

- **Cal-OSHA** (California Occupational Safety and Health Administration) paid us a surprise visit

on May 7, and came back again on May 20.

- Romic was inspected by the **San Mateo County Division of Environmental Health** on May 10. Our Health and Safety Manager received a glowing inspection report regarding his preparation of our Hazardous Material Management Plan. Additionally, they said our chemical inventory is "well done" and our employee training program provides "excellent training."

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Community Advisory Panel Profile

Aretha Lawrence

Aretha Lawrence has been part of the Community Advisory Panel since the beginning. She is active in many community organizations and activities, and Romi considers itself fortunate that she made time for yet another commitment in her busy schedule.

A 23-year resident of East Palo Alto, Ms. Lawrence lives on Illinois Street and is one of Romi's nearest residential neighbors. As President of the Board of Directors of the East Palo Alto Historical and Agricultural Society, she also brings to the group her perspective as an environmentalist committed to a sustainable East Palo Alto. That means a community that exists in balance with itself and nature, rather than just consuming resources, she explained.

Ms. Lawrence is also a volunteer for EPA CAN DO (a community development organization), a 1995 graduate of Leadership Palo Alto (now Leader-

ship Midpeninsula), and a member of Freedom Arts.

Her reason for joining the advisory panel: "I was concerned because I live close by and I had questions about whether we were endangered by Romi. I wanted to find out what was fact and what was rumor. I think it's very important for the community to have a process by which they can find out what the risks are or aren't.

"Romi is here," she continued, "so we need to make sure it's as safe as it can be." She notes this is also true of other chemical companies in East Palo Alto.

"I also thought that Romi needed to see the faces of East Palo Alto, and that we needed to see Romi."

The panel has benefitted from Ms. Lawrence's insights about the community and her willingness to speak frankly on sensitive issues.



Aretha Lawrence

Información en Español

Para información en Español, favor de llamar a Romi, teléfono 462-2312. Deje su nombre, número de teléfono y dirección en la máquina de mensajes.



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