

***** DRAFT *****

11-15 February 2002

Preliminary Proposal for Centralized WTC Public Information Task Force

As the City recovers from the WTC terrorist attacks and engages in rebuilding efforts and decision-making, many complicated and overlapping issues continue to arise. These include operational matters, planning issues, communication, and political considerations. The Mayor has asked that OEM spearhead a task force of agencies with expertise on these matters.

Broad Proposal

Appoint a task force of City Agencies involved with the various aspects of WTC recovery/rebuilding efforts, along the lines of the interagency task force that coordinated West Nile Virus prevention and control activities or the Rodent Control Task Force. The task force would regularly keep Deputy Mayors Doctoroff, Shaw, and Wolcott informed of its activities.

Mission

The mission of the task force would be to share information, coordinate monitoring and surveillance efforts, inform the deputy mayors of critical issues and decisions, serve as a liaison with state and federal agencies, and disseminate a consistent message in various forums to City agencies, other governmental entities, the press, and the public. Issues of concern reach across broad categories:

- environmental issues, public safety and health, air quality testing, street closures, etc.,
- economic development, business confidence, decision-making regarding the future of the WTC site
- communication with the public, businesses, community groups, elected officials
- liaison with EPA, Senator Clinton, council members, etc.

Possible activities

- Establish a hotline/website/storefront to provide information to residents, businesses, visitors, parents, etc. on issues listed above. Feature daily DEP asbestos update; provide links to other testing information. Five people each from DEP and DOH could serve as staff, and additional computer/database staff would be necessary as well.
- Hire an environmental/community outreach consultant to develop materials, staff hotline, etc.
- Involve CAU
- DEP has information on over 100,000 samples taken by contractors in private buildings. Organize, digitize, and share this info to reassure the public (check with DEP legal on this.)
- Develop database to provide information on how recently a given address had air testing and what were the results. Hotline operators could provide this information. Expected volume is approximately 100 calls per week, based on calls to DEP-HELP on the air quality issue.
- Focus Citywide or just on 255 affected buildings in lower Manhattan? Citywide focus may generate an overwhelming number of phone calls (e.g. folks in Brooklyn wanting their apartments tested)
- Establish guidance for residents and building owners for what to do about testing and cleaning dust (in addition to DOH's current info.)

- Decide upon enforcement efforts and document them. (Promotion of this must be balanced with desire not to discourage business and investment in the area.) (Discuss with HPD as well.)
- Determine who (OEM? A doctor? A press person?) should be the public face of the task force.
- Recommend legislative initiatives, if necessary.
- Hire consultant to act as an ombudsman/advocate for the public with the City, attend community board meetings, assist the community in interpreting data, etc. The City had Lehman Associates do this on the lead paint issue, and it worked well.
- Hire environmental consultant to go test people's homes/businesses, if landlords are not doing so properly.
- Make available a list of certified or approved cleaning contractors.
- Promote the efforts the City has already undertaken. There has been an extraordinary level of cooperation between many governmental entities throughout this process.
- Produce pamphlets, maps, graphics to showcase the City's efforts.
- Refute EPA scientist's assertion that air quality is a problem (see Current EPA Response on p.3). ~~Asking~~ Asking a blue ribbon panel of health experts (from NYU, Mount Sinai) to look at data and comment on it and on the City's efforts.
- Work (cautiously) with EPA on an indoor air quality task force.

Funding Options

- EPA sent Senator Clinton a memo indicating that \$_____ was available to assist with recovery/cleanup efforts (Bob Avaltroni has a copy – get more info)
- approach Virginia Fields, Jerry Nadler, Alan Gerson and other members of the "Ground Zero" Task Force to contribute funds to the retaining of an independent environmental consultant to address constituent concerns at Ground Zero. The City used this model for the lead paint abatement project, and it proved successful on several different levels:
 1. All elected officials had a stake - a real stake - in the initiative's success;
 2. Those who were simply interested in grandstanding frequently "dropped out of the race" once they learned they had to contribute hard funds;
 3. It enhanced the perception that this wasn't simply another outreach project by the Administration, but a bi-partisan effort to address a serious health concern;
 4. It saved the City money by tapping into funds that had already been allocated, but weren't being used by the Borough Presidents' offices, etc;
 5. OEM recalls that the City contributed 20% of the consultant's \$500,000 fee, with the BP's and other groups contributing 10% each.
- FEMA reimbursement?
- Lower Manhattan Development Corp funds?
- Available City funds?

Subgroups for specific issues

For specific issues, there could be task force subgroups to recommend approaches and develop procedures on issues of air quality/environmental/health, utilities/street closures, etc. as necessary

Expertise required, as necessary:

- Board of Ed (schools)
- DCAS (find space for drop-in center/storefront)
- DCP (plans for the site's future)
- DDC (worker safety, utilities, contractors)
- DEP (air and water quality, hazardous materials, infrastructure)
- DOH (air quality, public health)
- DOITT (mapping and electronic dissemination of info)
- DOS (Fresh Kills)
- DOT (transportation effects and changes)
- EDC (economic development issues, assistance to businesses)
- FDNY (?)
- HPD (residential buildings)
- Law Department (legal issues)
- Mayor's Office Community Assistance Unit (community outreach)
- Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination (environmental review, interagency support)
- Mayor's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (liaison to Sen. Clinton, EPA, City Council, etc.)
- Mayor's Office of Operations (?)
- Mayor's Press office (Press/public communication)
- NYPD (?)
- OMB (budget for task force activities)
- OEM (Overall coordination, FEMA reimbursement)

- Private utilities – (will be driving much of the reconstruction work)
- State DOT (control 9A/West Street)
- Port Authority
- MTA
- Battery Park City Authority

Background/Current Efforts

City's involvement in WTC recovery activities

The City remains in charge of many aspects of activities on the WTC site and the surrounding area and is expected by elected officials and the public to have information on current conditions and future plans. Various City agencies (Health, DEP, EDC, DDC, OEM) are asked for information on after-effects of the WTC attacks, air quality issues, and rebuilding endeavors, and presently there is no mechanism to ensure that each agency knows what others are doing and how they respond to inquiries. Agency responsibilities at present are as follows:

- DDC-contractor supervision, site health and safety, liaison with utilities
- DEP-air quality monitoring, maintains 718-DEP-HELP line to answer questions
- DOH-public health, guidance for residents
- DOT-street closures

- EDC-promote economic development, support local businesses
- FDNY-recovery efforts, incident command
- NYPD-evidence collection
- OEM-FEMA reimbursement,
- MOEC-support agencies, share information, coordinate environmental review of rebuilding projects

Coordination of air quality testimony

To prepare for the recent air quality hearing held by Senator Clinton and an anticipated one by the NYC Council's Environmental Protection and Health Committees, the Mayor's Office of City Legislative Affairs convened a group of City (DEP, DOH, FDNY, DDC, OEM), state (DEC), and federal (OSHA, EPA) agencies to coordinate testimony.

Current EPA response

In response to criticism, EPA may begin taking a more active role in indoor air quality issues. An EPA scientist in Washington, Cate Jenkins, has circulated a number of memos on EPA letterhead disputing EPA's air quality assurances. EPA has to date not refuted her allegations, and we understand they have no immediate plans to do so. Furthermore, the US Geological Survey released some data early on about the alkalinity of the dust after the towers' collapse; EPA apparently did not act or comment upon this information.

DOH proposal – Interagency Task Force

DOH is developing a proposal for a task force of City agencies to coordinate activities in lower Manhattan, relating to inspection of air/dust in buildings and enforcement of proper cleaning protocols. Complaints, findings, and response activities would be tracked. Agencies, in coordination with DEP, would establish procedures for each type of complaint. A major advertising campaign (TV/radio ads, press releases, lunchtime seminars for office workers, regular evening meetings for residents) would inform and educate the public about City response activities. A hotline would be established for residents, landlords, and commercial tenants, and a DOH effort would educate doctors and hospitals about symptoms of exposures.

DDC proposal – Community Liaison Office

DDC has drafted a brief scope of work for a FEMA-funded community liaison office to communicating work schedules and disseminate information about recovery/rebuilding activities in lower Manhattan. The scope is modeled on the Wall Street water main project, which involved a consultant coordinating activities around the replacement of water mains throughout the financial district and received positive feedback from the Downtown alliance and area businesses. Non-technical personal would be available 24-hours to receive complaints/inquiries; disseminate information over the internet, a daily-updated listserv message, and community meetings; and be in the field to assess conditions and monitor work sites.

DOT proposal – OEM Hotline

Andy Salkin of DOT is compiling a list of resource information for an OEM hotline. The idea is to use a contract DOT already has with a PR firm to get the hotline up quickly and would involve creation of a website and a call center. Resource information compiled includes info on visiting Ground Zero, public health concerns, donations/volunteering, transportation information,

utility/construction concerns, family/victim services, unemployment and legal services, business assistance, resident concerns, and agency phone numbers. It is a good foundation for a list of resources for frequently asked questions and should be expanded further.

MOEC is co-chair of FEMA Environmental Review Subcommittee

FEMA has organized an environmental planning and review subcommittee of the Federal Task Force to rebuild NYC. Alessandra Sumowicz of MOEC serves as FEMA's co chair of the subcommittee, and MOEC has been coordinating participation of all City agencies. As the subcommittee considers environmental review at various levels of government, the question has arisen of how to ensure that the various lead agencies use consistent assumptions and environmental data and how to share this data among themselves and the public.

Council resolution calling for coordination

Council Members Gerson and Gennaro introduced Resolution # 43, on 2/6/02 ~~have drafted a resolution calling upon the Mayor to establish a new agency or delegate an existing one to coordinate WTC clean-up efforts for purposes of environmental safety. We do not know if it has been introduced.~~