

**EPA Brownfields Award  
Asbestos Removal from the Baltic Mills Site  
Notes from Public Informational Meeting**

August 7, 2007, 7PM

Town Hall Courtroom

Dennison Allen, Facilitator

The meeting was attended by approximately 15 Sprague citizens, some of whom were Town employees and commission members, as well as Paul Burgess, engineer who assisted with the EPA Brownfields application for Baltic Mills.

D. Allen reviewed the grant application and proposed cleanup plan for the Mill property. He also reviewed an additional TBA Assessment application that the Town had recently filed which asked for testing to be conducted at the peninsula area, which had been the site of a coal-fired gas producing plant for the mill and which was not part of the Phase II analysis.

Questions were addressed from the audience regarding the necessity of removing asbestos from Mill #10 regardless of its final disposition (restoration or demolition) and it was clarified that this procedure was necessary in any case.

Members of the SEDC (Kevin Generous, Hugh Schnip, Mike Smith) raised the following questions regarding the greenspace component of the application:

1. How was the greenspace component decided
2. If greenspace was created with EPA funding and in the future a developer wanted to build something on the greenspace, was there now a deed restriction that prohibited this
3. Was it possible to revisit the application to change the greenspace component from excavation/cleaning up of the headrace/augmentation of the River Park to creating a park on the peninsula section of the Mill complex

The audience was told that the greenspace component was decided based on previous interest by SCC and SHS in cleaning the headrace, interest by other state departments such as DEP and the CT Commission on Culture and Tourism, and by all relevant commissions (SCC, SHS, SEDC), who were involved in the review and editing of the application since its inception in September 2006.

P. Newbury was asked to research the answers to the other two questions and advise the public.

There being no further questions or comments, the meeting was closed at 8PM

The post-meeting comment period ended on August 23, 2007 with one written comment being submitted by Glenn Cheney. Comment attached. No further comments received.

**Post-Meeting Findings from requested research (numbers correspond to questions raised in meeting)**

2. A call to Kathleen Castagna, Sprague's Project officer at EPA, was made on August 8; her response is that no deed restrictions by EPA apply; they are interested in cleaning property of toxic materials. The Town, she advised, might have such restrictions, but the EPA does not, and a developer could, if other permitting conditions were met, develop greenspace created under the grant.

3. Ms. Castagna reported that the green space component of the application was reviewed by a national panel of reviewers who made the award based on the content of the application, and the creative use of funding to restore a historic artifact was part of the Town's high score. She did not believe that this portion of the award could be changed substantially. Additionally, the match funding from DEP was feasible due to the cost of excavation and clearing, which would be substantially less on the peninsula, for which we had requested funds for trail clearing and signage only. She also indicated that the simultaneous creation of greenspace and testing for hazards on the peninsula was not a viable option.

As of August 23, the request to EPA for TBA funds has not been answered.

Respectfully Recorded,  
Penny Newbury, Grant Writer

**ADDITIONAL (Written) Public Comment**

MEMO TO: Dennison Allen, First Selectman  
FROM: Glenn Cheney, Selectman  
cc: P. Newbury, P. Burgess, E. Meadows  
DATE: August 8, 2007

I would like to comment on a suggestion that was made at the August 7 hearing on the EPA decontamination of part of the Baltic Mills site. The suggestion was to change the reserved green space from the head race area to the peninsula area.

I appreciate the concern that designating the head race area across Route 97 from the mill site could conceivably hamper commercial development of the mill site. There is some possibility that a developer would have use of the head race area even though it is rather small and within a flood plain.

At the same time, however, there are several reasons why reserving that area as green space would benefit the town, including the promotion of commercial development on the mill site proper.

1. Public space attracts certain kinds of commerce. In that public space attracts the public, certain kinds of commerce find it beneficial to be near that space. While

certain kinds of commerce may need that head race area for reasons as yet unknown, businesses as yet unknown may appreciate, if not depend on, a public space visited by people from town and from out of town.

2. The head race is an historical site. Sprague Historical Society has designated the head race an historical site that should be preserved. It is possibly the only mill head race in America that is above water. It is very much intact from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In that Baltic village retains the architecture and landscape of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century mill town, preservation of the head race is an important component of the village's historical integrity. Baltic is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Leaving open the possibility of sacrificing this historical site to commercial development will detract from the historic preservation that keeps Baltic on the national list of historic sites. The SHS is already working on plans to make the head race into an outdoor museum that will enhance the local sense of community and history even as it attracts visitors from other town. The grant writer has already applied for grants to support this project. The head race is therefore of historic, cultural, and economic value, all of which could contribute to commercial development of the mill site.
3. The designation of the head race as green space is already part of a broader plan. Sprague has already applied for a grant from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection to clean up, prepare, and preserve the head race as part of a project to establish recreational trails up and down the Shetucket River. The funding from that grant is being used as part of the matching funds for the EPA clean-up. For a town that is considered economically distressed, turning down the DEP grant and matching the EPA grant at taxpayer expense would only aggravate a difficult situation. While the Sprague Economic Development Commission claims that rejecting the DEP grant and the green space designation would enhance the commercial attractiveness of the site, it is arguable that preserving the site as green space is also commercially attractive.
4. The head race is contiguous to a park and senior housing. Preservation of the area as green space enhances both. An outdoor head race museum is a natural extension of River Park, and it is more compatible with senior housing than commercial development would be.
5. Commercial development isn't the only kind of economic development. The Baltic Mill site should do more than generate revenues for the town. If developed properly, it can not only generate such revenues but enhance property values and improve the quality of life, effectively attracting even more business. Green space between a park and senior housing, the creation of an outdoor museum, and the preservation of a rare historic site will help support to property values and the quality of life in the village of Baltic. The support of property values in the village will help minimize the mill rate and thus relieve property taxes in other parts of town.

6. The grant has already been approved. To try to change the conditions of the grant now will only inconvenience the EPA and imperil future grant applications. It will also imperil the DEP grant for recreational trails, resulting in the loss of an opportunity to support property values and improve the quality of life in Baltic while at the same time increasing the burden on taxpayers.
7. Sprague's Strategic Plan calls for the town to become a tourist destination. This is a key part of the strategic plan because it is central to other aspects of the plan. An outdoor historical museum as an expanded part of a park and key site on recreation trails will do much to establish Sprague as a destination, which in turn will help develop the local economy. Plans for the use of the Baltic Mill site should not obstruct the plan to develop the local economy by making Sprague a destination.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the grant application was well conceived and adroitly coordinated with other grants. Green space is increasingly valuable in urban areas. The Baltic Mills site should be seen as not only an opportunity for commercial development but also improvement in the quality of life and property values. Sprague is grateful for the EPA Brownfields grant, and I appreciate the thought that went into the overall program supported by the grant. The head race should remain designated as green space.