OSWEGO CSD

LEIGHTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL/HS - WILBER FIELD
PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. WHEN WAS THIS ISSUE DISCOVERED BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND ITS CONSULTANTS?

- In June 2020, visibly stained soils were uncovered in an area known as the former Wilber Field. The field elevation was being lowered to create a stormwater management floodplain in accordance with stormwater permits approved by the City of Oswego. The area in question is identified in the map annexed hereto - Figure 1
- The school district consultants have worked since June to date in determining the appropriate remedial action that must be completed, working with the oversight agencies to seek the necessary approvals and will bid the work to ensure the remedial work is performed by a highly qualified contractor at the lowest responsive and responsible price.

2. WHAT ARE THE MATERIALS FOUND IN THE GROUND?

- The District's environmental consultant investigated and sampled the stained soils, which identified elevated levels of metals and semi-volatile compounds in the soil. The metals include Lead, Barium, Mercury and Arsenic. The stained area also contained areas of ash and slag, and it is speculated that coal ash and building demolition debris was deposited in the area in the past.

3. WHERE ARE THE MATERIALS LOCATED?

- The stained soils were initially limited to the northern end of the former Wilber Field site. The materials were discovered at an elevation 3 to 4 feet below the field surface. The staining was visible in roughly a 50' x 200' area. See Figure 1 – Hatched Area. The stained soils reside at an elevation approximately 6-inches below the proposed finished design elevation for the new floodplain surface (which is designed to be a practice field).
- The school district directed their consultants to perform additional soil screening to determine the extent of stained soils on the site. As a result of this additional testing, the area impacted by contaminants was determined to extend across the field – see Figure 1.

4. WHO HAS THE SCHOOL DISTRICT REPORTED THIS ISSUE TO AND WHAT AGENCY OVERSEES THE REMOVAL AND PROPER DISPOSAL OF THE MATERIALS?

- The environmental engineers have been consulting the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) regarding this issue. The Regional Environmental Remediation Engineer has advised the Engineers that the materials and the levels of concentration do not fall within the jurisdiction and program for NYSDEC action. Nonetheless, the process designed to remediate the site will be in accordance with NYSDEC remedial program guidance.
- The New York State Education Department (NYSED), which oversees school district construction, has been notified of the issue and will be the agency to oversee the remediation of the site.
- The school officials have notified the City of Oswego Engineer of the discovery and shall work to ensure the work performed complies with the requirements of the Floodplain Development Permit issued by the City.

5. WHAT ARE THE HEALTH RISKS, IF ANY, ASSOCIATED WITH THESE MATERIALS?

- The environmental engineers advised the school board that since the contaminants were discovered 3 to 4 feet below the ground surface, they would not have presented a health risk for those using the former field, since no contact with the soil contaminants was possible. Figure 2 presents an illustrative soil profile.

- Now that the excavation has occurred, the contaminants which have been exposed (in order to re-establish the floodplain), do exceed soil concentrations allowed by the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for public schools and athletic fields (Restricted-Residential level), but are within the levels identified for commercial and industrial sites. As such, the materials must be removed from the site prior to the completion of the construction project and prior to student and staff access.
- The metals could be toxic if ingested/inhaled over time.
- The site and any of the uncovered materials have been secured and there is no risk to students or staff. The site will be managed during construction to control unauthorized site access, to control soil erosion, and dust generation will be suppressed and monitored during active remedial construction.

6. HAS THE RUNOFF FROM THE SITE BEEN TESTED?

- A stormwater sample was collected from subsurface drains associated with the site's stormwater drainage basins. Elevated contaminants were not observed in the sample. A third round of sampling of the stormwater system has been scheduled for the site. The school district has directed the engineers to continue to monitor the water until the remediation work has been completed.

7. WHAT ASSURANCES ARE THERE THAT THE SURROUNDING GROUNDWATER HAS NOT BEEN AFFECTED?

- The environmental engineers have advised that the discovered metals and semi-volatile compounds are tightly soil bound, and exposures, if any, are typically associated with contact with the soils, rather than water runoff with the soil. Which means that the materials typically remain attached to the soil and will not leach into the groundwater.
- The construction project was designed by the engineers such that the stormwater from the construction site is controlled under the site's stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) which is required by NYSDEC, and requires best management practices to limit the erosion of the site soils.

8. ARE ANY OF THESE MATERIALS UNDER THE TURF FIELD?

- No. During construction of the turf field, the design team and contractor did not encounter similar stained soil areas.

9. WHY WERE THE CONTAMINATED SOILS NOT FOUND BEFORE THE CONSTRUCTION?

- The school field was built in the 1960s and has been in use for over 60 years. The placement of the contaminated soils at the site was not known to the school district. Geotechnical borings conducted as part of the pre-design investigations for the stormwater control and athletic field modifications, did not identify the presence of contaminated materials.

10. COULD THE FLOODPLAIN BE RELOCATED TO AN AREA NOT AFFECTED BY THE CONTAMINATED SOILS?

- Stormwater floodplain areas must be contiguous to the source of the flooding, in order to address the flood hazard. Unlike a wetland system, that can provide ecosystem benefits if relocated elsewhere in the area, the flood happens where the water flows. Therefore there is no other school property available and that works with the topography to allow drainage from the entire school property, other than the Wilber field area. Off-site areas would have to be contiguous also, but the costs, time and permitting to acquire and establish an off-site floodplain is not feasible to address the existing needs for the school.

REMEDIATION

11. WHAT IS THE PLAN TO REMEDIATE THE SITE?

- The remedial option being pursued is the placement of a two-foot soil cover above contaminated soils remaining on the site. This remedy is consistent with NYSDEC remedial guidance documents, which prescribes a 2-foot soil cover for sites meeting the restricted-residential criteria, such as a school athletic field.
- To place the soil cover and meet the final design elevations for both the field and stormwater control, contaminated soils will be required to be removed from the site and disposed of at a landfill, prior to placement of the 2-foot soil cover.
- Some of the contaminated areas exhibit metals (primarily Lead) exceeding hazardous levels, and will required soil treatment prior to disposal at the landfill.

12. WHAT IS THE COST FOR THE REMEDIATION?

- The total project cost (including design, oversight and all incidental costs) authorized by the Board of Education is not to exceed $5.6 million. The school district consultants are preparing bid documents to obtain the lowest cost to complete the remedial work.

13. WHO IS GOING TO PAY FOR THE REMEDIATION COSTS?

- The district is the owner of the field and the officials are working with the NYSED to use existing approved project funds to complete the remedial work.

14. WILL THE SCHOOL DISTRICT WAIVE THE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM FOR THE EMERGENCY REMEDIAL WORK PROJECT?

- Although OCSD and its Board of Education are very supportive of the apprenticeship program, the district is going to waive the apprenticeship requirement in an effort to promote competition for bidders, to reduce the costs of the emergency remedial work project and thereby lessen the impact on the school district capital project.

15. WHEN WILL THE WORK BE COMPLETED?

- Once the approval from NYSED has been obtained, remedial construction will commence as soon as possible to mitigate expected spring flooding. The estimation is that it will take approximately eight weeks to complete the work once it begins.

16. IS THE AREA SAFE IN THE MEANTIME?

- Yes, the school district has directed the contractors to fence off the site to restrict access to the area. The site control, site access limitations, and the NYSDEC required Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) best management methods will prevent contact with the impacted soils prior to the completion of the remediation.

17. WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON THE SCHOOL DISTRICT CAPITAL PROJECT?

- The funding source for the project will be from the proceeds from the Bond Resolution approved by the Board of Education on October 16, 2018 and approved by the voters on December 18, 2018 and/or unassigned General Fund balance and/or New York State building aid. The use of these funds may have an impact on the scope of work planned in phases 4 and 5 of the capital project. The District and Board of Education will evaluate the project to minimize the impact on programmatic/educational phases of the project.

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

18. SINCE SVOC'S WERE DETECTED IN THE SOILS, WILL THERE BE ANY INDOOR AIR OR SUB SLAB VAPOR SAMPLES COLLECTED INSIDE LEIGHTON?

- Soil Vapor Intrusion assessments are not planned for the Leighton School. The detection of SVOC compounds is sporadic across the field, and where detected, low level. Volatile compounds have not been identified during remedial project screening, and field screening for volatiles during the soil sampling in the fields north of the Leighton School were non-detect for volatile vapors.

19. WERE THE INCOMING SOILS FOR THE NEW FOOTBALL FIELD TESTED FOR CONTAMINATION AND WILL ANY NEW SOILS (BACK FILL) BE TESTED FOR CONTAMINATION?

- The new football field was not tested for contamination. There was no indication during construction that the material was suspect. We were not discovering soils similar to the Wilber Field discovery.
- All new soils were not tested as they came from off-site and were primarily stone based from a quarry.
- New soils brought on site as part of the Wilber field remediation soil cover will be sampled in accordance with NYSDEC Imported Fill testing protocols.

20. WILL ANY MONITORING WELLS BE INSTALLED ON SITE?

- Impacted soils that will be remediated to accommodate the final field construction and stormwater management design are situated above the existing groundwater table. Monitoring wells are not planned as part of the remedial project. Testing of stormwater collected from subsurface drains near the impacted soils did not exhibit contaminant impacts.

21. WHEN THE CONTAMINATED SOILS ARE REMOVED WILL THERE BE DUST SUPPRESSION METHODS IN PLACE?

- Yes, the remedial construction will require the use of particulate dust monitoring stations during active soil disturbance, and the mitigation of dust through water misting, as needed.

22. SINCE THERE ARE ELEVATED LEVELS OF MERCURY, WILL THE WASTE BE CLASSIFIED AS HAZARDOUS?

- The soils have been tested for Hazardous Characteristic for mercury and are classified as non-hazardous for disposal handling.