



Technical Assistance Services for Communities
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Newtown Creek Community Advisory Group (CAG) Formation Meeting
Meeting Summary

January 19, 2012

Arts@Renaissance, St. Nicks Alliance

Attendees

Leah Archibald, EWVIDCO
Erik Baard, HarborLAB, LIC Community Boathouse
Ed Babor, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney
Tanya Bley
Brian Coleman, GMDC
Sarah Durand, LaGuardia-CUNY
Lillit Genovesi, CUNY
Michael Heimbinder
Laura Hofmann, Barge Park Pals, NCA, NCMC
Christine Holowacz, GWAPP, NCMC
Ed Kelly, Maritime Association of the Port of NY/NJ
Louis Kleinman, Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance
Ryan Kuonen, BK, CB#1 Enviro Chair, NAG
Steve Lang, LaGuardia-CUNY
Ron Lee, St. Nicks
Michael Leete, Resident
James Maleady, Greenpoint Business Alliance
Rich Mazur, NBDC, GWAPP, Greenpoint Business Alliance
Tyler McLeete, Resident
Deb Mesloh, LIC Partnership
Rick Muller, New York City DEP
Phillip Musegaas, Riverkeeper
Paul Pullo, Metro Terminals
Lori Raphael, Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce
Jean Tanler, Queens Business Outreach Center, Maspeth, B2
Dewey Thompson, GWAPP, North Brooklyn Boat Club
Chris Tomasello, Environmental Consultant
Teresa Toro, Resident
Kate Zidar, Newtown Creek Alliance
Mike Hancox, Skeo Solutions
Walker Holmes, Skeo Solutions

Meeting Notes

Introduction

- The Newtown Creek Community Advisory Group (CAG) is designed to serve as an ongoing vehicle for information-sharing, discussion, and, where possible, consensus-building regarding decision-making related to the Newtown Creek Superfund Site (the Site). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) asked Skeo Solutions to act as facilitators in order to help this community set up a CAG. EPA Region 2 has three primary concerns: 1) that the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens be equally represented; 2) that the CAG process engage minority groups and a diversity of incomes; and 3) that many people may be interested in the Newtown Creek CAG, and it may be larger than normal (most CAGs are 20-30 people, and members are usually representatives of groups). The Skeo Solutions facilitator summarized the process of interviewing Newtown Creek stakeholders and coming up with key findings. There will be ample opportunity for people to join the CAG and understand what is happening at the Site.
- The facilitator's goal is to help set up a CAG that will work for this community, so that the CAG can be self-sufficient and productive. CAGs do not qualify for special treatment, monetary assistance, etc. A CAG should be a conduit: two way communication between EPA and the CAG, such that the CAG can get information from EPA and also voice concerns and give feedback. If the CAG is cohesive, it will be stronger, will be able to communicate the community's best interests to EPA, and will have more effect. The CAG's ability to influence the process increases drastically if the group is cohesive and organized.
- Regarding technical advice: if the CAG needs more assistance with technical information, EPA can also help with that.
 - Two people in attendance are on the Gowanus CAG; EPA has been quite forthcoming with information.
 - If the CAG wants information on how to get more technical assistance, Skeo can answer questions and direct the CAG to the right people. Wanda Ayala should be the CAG's first point of contact at EPA.
 - For EPA Technical Assistance Grants (TAGs), a 501c3 must receive the money and then use it for something. For a CAG, the facilitator can spend time with the community helping them figure out what they really need.
- In the beginning of this CAG process, Skeo Solutions will handle routine administration of the CAG. Moving forward, members of the CAG will handle these tasks. The group will decide when to start being self-sufficient.
- Proposed operating procedures for the CAG are laid out in the draft Operating Procedures and Mutual Commitments document. CAG members are encouraged to provide comments and feedback on this document.

Scope of the CAG

- Should this group be narrowly focused on Superfund cleanup process, or should group address other opportunities? There may be many things that are related to the Newtown Creek Superfund Site but only tangentially related to EPA, such as

issues associated with maritime traffic and recreational users. EPA will have some interest in these because the Agency will need feedback for the remedy. There are likely other big issues within the community that are tangentially related – is this the right forum to address those? If this group wants to address larger concerns, it might necessitate more structure and process.

- The list of issues related to Newtown Creek, as compiled the Key Findings, is a living document and should be updated as people get involved and bring up more concerns.
- Discussion regarding scope:
 - Newtown Creek Alliance is an organization that addresses Newtown Creek but is broader than the Superfund issue, such as balancing recreation and economic development. Is this CAG going to be a “one stop shop” for all environmental issues in neighborhood? If so, this will affect participation. There is a bit of meeting fatigue in the area. The CAG should not reinvent the wheel.
 - Is there an existing effort that is already comparable to the CAG and should assume the CAG’s role? The group considered Newtown Creek Alliance, but this group is broader in focus and is not as balanced/prevalent in Queen as in Brooklyn.
 - The group discussed that “just do the assignment” might be the best approach. It is not yet known what the Superfund process will demand of the community.
 - The CAG wants EPA to address the health issues of cleaning up the creek and help the community understand what can proceed on the creek while cleanup is going on.
 - The group agreed that the CAG should start simply because things tend to get more complicated over time. The group will keep the focus on Superfund, and as additional topics come up and overlaps with other interested parties emerge, the CAG will deal with these either as a whole or in subgroups; tangential issues may be sidebarred to other interested parties. The group achieved consensus on this matter.

Structure of the CAG

- Public meetings: The group agreed that the CAG meetings are public; anyone can attend. The draft Operating Procedures lay out a structure for CAG membership. The group noted the dismay of other potentially responsible parties but agreed that the NYC DEP representative present at the meeting should be able to stay.
- CAG membership: EPA usually suggests that each interested organization should have one representative on the CAG. The group discussed this and agreed that they should make sure all types of groups are represented and that participation is fairly balanced. CAG members should have a stake in the community. The group probably does not need a highly structured process; the group will design a process that works for the level of engagement needed at this site.
 - The group discussed the reality that many individuals are members of multiple groups/organizations and asked whether a person could represent

more than one of these on the CAG. After discussion, the group agreed that individuals should “choose a horse.”

- Attendance: The group agreed CAG members should attend as many meetings as possible; failure to attend a majority of meetings may jeopardize a member’s status. This is discussed in further detail in the operating procedures.
- Voting: the group discussed voting procedures and ultimately returned to the CAG’s role as an advisory group. The goal is to reach consensus; if consensus cannot be reached, the CAG may articulate all dissenting opinions and communicate all opinions to EPA.
- Information sharing: the group would like to get information about the Superfund process and lessons learned from other sites. The group would like EPA to come to the third meeting to present and answer questions. The group may try to submit questions in advance. Topics could include: Superfund process, funding availability, etc.
- Community outreach:
 - The group discussed ways that the CAG can conduct outreach and how the facilitators can help to set up infrastructure for outreach work. Websites, blogs, and email were all discussed. Eventually, the CAG will be community led and communication efforts will be conducted by CAG members. A free Wordpress site was proposed. The group also discussed whether electronic media as a means of communication is appropriate and inclusive enough.
 - Regarding communication, the group requested that the facilitators circulate an attendance/affiliation list as a pdf document along with next email.
 - Email communication will have subject lines that begin with “Newtown Creek CAG.”
 - In order to reach out to as many people as possible, meeting attendees should share names and contact information for people and organizations not present and not on the contact list. Please send this information to Skeo staff.
 - Translation needs: Outreach information and documents may need to be translated into Spanish and Polish. Is a translator needed at the CAG meetings?
- Steering Committee: Because this CAG is large, the group decided on a steering committee, which itself will have co-chairs.
 - The group agreed that the CAG procedures need to allow for the long duration of the Superfund process, which will inevitably include ebbs and flows in attendance, plus changes in population over 15 years. In this context, the steering committee is a device to keep things moving.
 - Rather than nominations, the group asked for volunteers willing to put in the work. Twelve people volunteered and signed up on the steering committee list circulated around the room. The steering committee will likely nominate co-chairs and bring this back to the larger group; the larger group can ratify the choices.

- Meetings:
 - This CAG will likely meet monthly for a period of time, and then quarterly.
 - The next CAG meeting will cover what work this CAG wants to do.
 - Meetings should alternate meeting days/times so that potential CAG members are not barred from participating due to schedules. The steering committee will determine a long-term schedule.

NEXT MEETING: MONDAY FEBRUARY 13, 6-8PM. LOCATION: TBD