



For Immediate Release:

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Delaware Riverkeeper Network Holds Public Meeting on Dangers of Bishop Tube Site

Malvern, PA – Approximately 60 people attended a public informational meeting held by the Delaware Riverkeeper Network (DRN) and East Whiteland Township community members on October 4 detailing the health, property, and environmental dangers associated with the Bishop Tube site located in East Whiteland Township, Chester County, PA.

East Whiteland township community members have opposed development of the site of Bishop Tube, a former heavy metals processing plant that is contaminated with chlorinated solvents, acids and heavy metals. One of these contaminants is trichloroethylene, or TCE, which is classified as a probable human carcinogen by the EPA. The state health standard for TCE is 5 parts per billion. TCE levels in parts of the contaminated area measure 1.9 million parts per billion. TCE has been linked to kidney cancer, liver cancer, Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, and Parkinson's Disease.

Developer Brian O'Neill is proposing a development of around 200 townhomes and a partial clean-up of the site, which is bordered by Little Valley Creek, a tributary to the Exceptional Value Valley Creek. O'Neill is seeking state funding for this proposed partial clean-up, which would not include clean-up of groundwater, saturated deep soils, and Little Valley Creek.

In April 2017 the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, a federal agency, sent a letter to Constitution Drive Partners recommending the site be considered for uses other than residential because of the contamination. Community members are concerned about the potential health hazards of the site, and they also support protecting the environment and the exceptional value waterways. DRN and the Bishop Tube Clean & Green community group propose full remediation and clean-up of the site, paid for by responsible parties, and then preserving the area as open space.

In addition to health concerns and the ongoing contamination that will continue at the site, community members and DRN support the site being preserved as open space because development would result in habitat loss for a variety of wildlife, including Brown Trout and the North American Red Fox. Woodlands and wetlands would also be lost, and the excavation of steep slopes and stream encroachment would further harm the environment.

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Property values were also discussed during the public presentation. Property values will suffer if the area is developed. Property values can increase by as much as \$11,000 if located within one mile of open space in Chester County. These properties not only have higher market values, but they contribute a greater amount in tax revenue to local government and school districts.

Developer Brian O’Neill and his corporate counterparts filed a SLAPP suit, or a strategic lawsuit against public participation, against DRN and some East Whiteland township community members. A Chester County judge dismissed the suit, saying DRN and the community activists were acting within their First Amendment rights. O’Neill has appealed the ruling.

“East Whiteland, Chester County, and downstream communities along Little Valley and Valley Creek are legitimately and rightly concerned. This forum was an important opportunity to share critical facts and information and to answer important questions,” said **Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper and leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network**. “While residents have received good support from Senator Dinniman, Senator Leach, and township officials, the County Commissioners and other state legislators aren’t yet stepping up in their defense. As a result it is up to the residents to join forces to share information and fight for the protections they need and deserve.”

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Delaware Riverkeeper Network (DRN) is a nonprofit membership organization working throughout the four states of the Delaware River Watershed including Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and New York. DRN provides effective environmental advocacy, volunteer monitoring programs, stream restoration projects, public education, and legal enforcement of environmental protection laws.