

Edgewater officials may pull Waterside Construction off Veterans Field cleanup

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[EDGEWATER](#) - Borough officials hope to meet next week with the contractor suspected of introducing more contaminants while cleaning up Veterans Field and may call a special council meeting to discuss whether to keep Waterside Construction LLC on the project.

Soil remediation of [Edgewater](#)'s premier park came to a halt nearly a month ago when the borough's engineering consultant detected "extremely elevated" levels of polychlorinated biphenyls.

Waterside had transported crushed concrete from another site for use on the sidewalks before the material had been tested as required, TERMS Environmental Services Inc., the borough's engineering consultant, told officials. The material was trucked in during a weekend when TERMS was not aware that the contractor would be working, the consulting firm wrote in an Oct. 3 letter.

A spokesman for local developer Fred Daibes, the owner of Waterside, maintains that the material Waterside imported was not the source of the new PCBs - chemicals once used as fire retardants that are now linked to cancer.

Waterside had imported crushed concrete from the old Alcoa site, an aluminum plant on River Road that closed in 1967. The site was cleaned up in the 1990s after investigators found traces of PCBs, but the state Department of Environmental Protection said materials from the site could be reused.

"I believe the only material brought to the site by Waterside was the concrete, which had come from an approved site," said Alan Marcus, the Daibes spokesman. He suggested that PCBs from the Hudson River flowed onto the site during Superstorm Sandy. "Whatever pollutants are there ... didn't come from us," he said.

But results of soil samples taken by TERMS suggest it may have come from concrete, said Borough Administrator Greg Franz.

“It looks as though the material in question was ... [an] aggregate, which essentially is concrete, and that would explain the material that Waterside said they utilized,” he said.

Most of the PCBs were found in two parking lot areas - one at the south end of the park, the other at the north end, Franz said. Contaminants also may have traveled through different areas of the park, he said. In all, “a few thousand cubic yards” of material must be excavated, he said.

Some community members have called on borough officials to fire Waterside.

“Even if ... this [material] was approved by DEP, they still weren’t supposed to dump it until TERMS had tested it,” Mary Hogan said. “That’s a violation of the agreement they have with the borough.”

That Waterside did work on a weekend when TERMS was not around also didn’t sit well with Hogan.

Borough officials haven’t decided if they’ll terminate Waterside’s contract. While it said it’s not responsible for introducing the latest PCBs, Waterside has agreed to bear the cost of any cleanup.

Mayor James Delaney said Thursday that firing Waterside remained on the table, but he also wants to reopen Veterans Park as quickly as possible. Finding a new contractor might delay the process, he said. Delaney said he may call a special council meeting next week to decide what action, if any, to take.

Veterans Field closed two years ago after officials learned that polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in the park's historic fill were generally two to seven times greater than government standards and that PCBs were slightly above acceptable levels.

“It’s a terrible, terrible situation,” Delaney said of the latest PCB discovery. “I don’t understand how we ended up with a contaminated field.”

This is not the first time that a Daibes’ businesses has found itself in the hot seat. In 2011, the DEP fined Daibes \$1.9 million for alleged violations made during improvements at his restaurant, Le Jardin, and surrounding property in [Edgewater](#). Daibes is appealing the fine.

Marcus defended Daibes’ record. The developer is credited for building a number of residential projects and helping to turn [Edgewater](#) from an industrial hub to a sought-after bedroom community.

“Fred Daibes is in the news because Fred Daibes built over half of the housing in [Edgewater](#),” Marcus said. “He’s not a serial polluter. If he was, he wouldn’t be getting all of these approvals to build things.”

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- See more at:

http://www.northjersey.com/edgewater/Edgewater_officials_to_meet_with_Veterans_Field_contractor_may_pull_Waterside_Construction_off_cleanup.html?page=all#sthash.zh9tCKsT.dpuf