

Decontamination work resumes at Edgewater field

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EDGEWATER — Remediation work has resumed with a new contractor at Veterans Field, a year after activity halted when borough officials discovered new contaminants on the site.

A crew is setting up a fence around the perimeter of the site and next week will begin marking off sections of the soil that must be taken away while also removing some asphalt, said Borough Administrator Greg Franz.

In a letter to nearby residents last week, the borough announced that trucks and equipment will soon be entering and leaving the site. The borough's environmental consulting firm will also monitor the air quality and take steps to suppress dust levels, the letter stated.

Enterprise Network Resolutions Contracting LLC, the new contractor, began work within two weeks of receiving the contract, as initially scheduled, but there was a period when borough officials weren't sure if work would be delayed.

After the council named Enterprise the contractor, another company that had sought the contract, Creamer Environmental Inc., and Edgewater resident Evan Johnson, sued the borough, the mayor, the council and Enterprise, claiming the borough failed to award the contract to the lowest responsive bidder as required by the state's public contracts laws.

The plaintiffs claimed in the suit that Enterprise omitted information in its application, which made the company's cost estimates appear lower than the amount it could end up billing the borough. And allowing Enterprise to provide the information after other applications were made public would taint the bidding process, the plaintiffs challenged.

On Sept. 30, a Superior Court judge in Hackensack denied the plaintiffs' request for a temporary injunction to stop Enterprise from moving forward with work, Franz said. The next day, the plaintiffs withdrew their complaint, according to Franz and the plaintiffs' attorney.

John Schepisi, who represented the plaintiffs, said Creamer weighed the amount of time and money required to pursue the case and decided to drop the suit.

"It was strictly a business decision, not conceding or admitting whether the bidding process was correct or incorrect," Schepisi said Thursday.

Franz, meanwhile, said the \$4.98 million contract awarded to Enterprise did include the cost of disposing of contaminated materials at a licensed facility — the question raised by Creamer. Though the successful bidder ultimately must identify the facility, that information does not have to be supplied until a contract is executed, he said.

"That's typical in any bidding," Franz said. "There are half a dozen documents that are required but not necessarily needed in the bid."

Enterprise is tasked with removing 56,650 tons of contaminated material, including additional pollutants that a previous contractor imported onto the field.

Veterans Field closed in 2011 after soil on the site tested positive for contaminants, and Waterside Construction LLC was hired to remediate and renovate the park.

Last fall, Waterside imported crushed concrete containing polychlorinated biphenyls, a cancer-causing substance, from another site, leading to a full work stoppage. The company has said it was not aware at the time that the material was tainted. The borough officially terminated Waterside's contract last month.