



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD
JONATHAN F. MITCHELL, MAYOR

March 29, 2019

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
Attention: MEPA Office
Paige Czepiga: EEA No. 15990
100 Cambridge St, Suite 900
Boston MA 02114

RE: EEA 15990: Parallel Products

Dear Ms. Czepiga,

I write to present the response of the City of New Bedford regarding Parallel Products of New England's (PPNE) proposed facility expansion project at 100 Duchaine Blvd. in our business park.

Given the facility's proximity to a densely populated residential neighborhood, I am troubled by the paucity of PPNE's outreach to public, and particularly to the abutting Pine Hill neighborhood. I believe strongly that there needs to be a much more robust public engagement effort that has been undertaken to date.

Moreover, I am not convinced that the preliminary impact analysis regarding potential noise, odor, and traffic is adequate given the stakes, and I would encourage MEPA to exercise its oversight authority to ensure that further study is pursued so that the decision-makers and the public alike can have greater confidence in the findings. In sum, unless and until PPNE is able to satisfactorily address reasonable neighborhood concerns in the areas of noise, odor, and traffic, I am not prepared to lend my support to the project.

In addition to my concerns regarding public engagement and neighborhood impacts, municipal departments have identified a number of specific operational/environmental issues with the proposed facility. These are enumerated below, and are based upon departmental reviews of the EENF submitted to the City of New Bedford in February 2019.

1) *Land Use Impacts*

The project site is in the City's Business Park, a location established to accommodate most industrial uses. As such, the project site is meant to be buffered from the surrounding neighborhood which is residential to the east. If MEPA should allow the project to proceed, PPNE must be required to ensure that all impacts to this neighborhood are satisfactorily mitigated. This would include all potential noise, odor, or additional traffic impacts. It should be noted that the Land Section of the ENF Form was not completed. As the project is a redevelopment of a previously used industrial site, the responses in this section are not likely to have revealed any otherwise unidentified potential impacts.

However, responses would have quantified the amount of land occupied for certain uses (buildings, parking areas, etc.) and would have identified the project's consistency with current City Master Plan and the current Regional Policy Plan of the Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District (the regional planning agency whose territory includes New Bedford). Previous environmental studies at the site included a Phase 1 Environmental Assessment and a Limited Subsurface Investigation, by SAGE Environmental. These reports are not included in the EENF, but a table of reported releases to the environment from the Phase 1 Environmental Assessment is provided, showing three releases reported to MassDEP between 1994 and 2008. All three were assigned Release Tracking Numbers (RTNs), and all three either had the RTN retracted or had audits completed. Six previous spills or releases were also identified, between 1978 and 1994, with minimal information on remedial actions.

2) Economic Development

It is recognized that this project would entail a significant economic investment, which would bring a positive return to the City in increased tax revenue and water usage fees.

3) Rail Infrastructure, Waste, and Energy Efficiency

- a) **Rail Infrastructure:** PPNE is proposing to add a rail stub in order to utilize rail as an option for shipping out waste materials after processing. This is an important component of the project and is seen as a benefit as it mitigates truck traffic which is already increased significantly.

This rail siding requires the crossing of a Bordering Vegetated Wetland (BVW) and a perennial stream with associated Riverfront area. The ENF states that less than 5000 s.f. of BVW will be impacted by the rail crossing. The plans show that retaining walls will be utilized to minimize wetland impacts from the rail crossing. The wetland boundaries in the vicinity of the crossings have not yet been verified by the Conservation Commission and therefore the square footage of Resource Area impacts cannot be confirmed. This should be provided.

Rail transport of outgoing material is identified as beneficial for many aspects of the project, including greenhouse gas emissions, other air pollutant emissions, efficient energy usage, and traffic considerations. However, rail transport is faced with uncertainties: The owner of the rail line is not identified; no mention is made of discussions with the railroad owner about installing the proposed rail spur; and MSW is proposed to be baled, wrapped, and shipped in gondola (open-topped) rail cars. At present, CSX, the largest railroad network in the eastern US, will only haul MSW in sealed intermodal containers on flat-bed rail cars. If this policy does not change, the facility must either pack MSW in sealed intermodal containers or ship it off site in trucks.

The project will be supported by a grant of \$500,000 from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's Industrial Rail Access Program. There is no mention of contingency if this financing does not come through.

- b) **Waste:** The EENF states (erroneously) that the Crapo Hill Landfill is located in New Bedford, and that District member communities "*are not expected to utilize the proposed facility for MSW disposal.*" However, there may be an advantage to some dialog between the District (and/or its member communities) and the project's proponent, to consider some use of the proposed facility to prolong the life of Crapo Hill, and/or to address long range planning for when the Crapo Hill Landfill does close.

The proposed facility consists of three primary components: A glass bottle processing facility, to accept 200 tons per day (tpd) of glass bottles for crushing and shipment to end-users; A municipal

solid waste (MSW) processing facility, that will accept 1,500 tpd for processing and transfer. The proponents expect to extract up to 20%, or 300 tpd, of material for recycling, and ship 1,200 tpd of waste for out-of-state disposal; A wastewater biosolids (sludge) processing facility that will accept 50 tpd dry weight (or up to 600 tpd wet weight), and ship dried product for end use or disposal. Inbound material will arrive by truck. Outbound material will be transported by rail, with some truck shipment as necessary. The waste shed area and waste sources are not identified, although District member communities are specifically noted as “not expected to use the proposed facility for MSW disposal” (Draft Site Suitability Application, pg 58).

- i) Glass Facility: The glass processing facility is alternately described as replacing the proponent’s existing glass “beneficiation” operation from their facility at 969 Shawmut Ave, New Bedford, but is also identified as “the relocation and upgrade of the glass recycling operation that Strategic Materials previously operated in Franklin, MA to the 100 Duchaine Boulevard site. The new glass recycling facility will be owned by PPNE and will be operated in conjunction with Strategic Materials” (Draft Site Suitability Application Narrative, p. 10.). The facility is proposed to receive 200 tpd of glass bottles collected through the Massachusetts bottle deposit system for crushing, sizing and separation by color, and shipment off site for re-use or disposal. The proponent’s parent company is experienced in various aspects of product destruction and container processing.
- ii) MSW Facility: As described in the EENF, the MSW facility is essentially a “Dirty Material Recovery Facility (MRF)”, or a mixed waste processing facility, with a goal of extracting 20% of incoming material for recycling from raw waste. Such facilities are labor-intensive and face substantial worker safety challenges. They do not require any consumer or waste hauler separation of recyclable materials from waste and have largely fallen out of favor within the waste industry, displaced by single-stream recyclables collection and processing in a “Clean MRF”. Massachusetts has devoted considerable effort into educating consumers and the waste industry about recycling and has for many years tried to encourage separation and recycling at all stages of the waste generation-collection-handling-disposal processes. Waste entering a “Dirty MRF” that has already been stripped of recyclable material will likely have a very low recyclables recovery rate. Operation of the MSW facility as described does not appear consistent with the general consensus of what the future of waste handling in Massachusetts should be. The MSW tipping (or receiving) building is 50,000 square feet, which appears adequate for the proposed tonnage; the tipping floor appears best configured for direct load of waste into intermodal rail cars. It appears likely the operation will target loads specific for processing and then move those loads into the processing facility, which appears to be insufficient at 103,000 square feet, for handling 1,500 tpd of mixed waste. For comparison, the E. L. Harvey Materials Recycling Facility in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, which is permitted for 600 tpd of single-stream recyclables or mixed waste, is 80,000 square feet in size.
- iii) Biosolids Processing Facility: The biosolids processing facility is expected to receive and process 50 tpd dry weight of biosolids. At the low end of the range of solids content presented in the EENF, this will actually be 600 tpd of raw material. The proposed receiving and storage facilities for the thickened and dewatered biosolids appear to be adequately sized with appropriate redundancy. The building size of 30,000 square feet may be insufficient, unless an additional upper level is included. Very little detail is provided on the design for the railcar loadout system. Additionally, there is no mention of combustion and explosion mitigation measures associated with the dried biosolids. Dried biosolids are a known explosion hazard, especially during storage. Also, the dryer does not have a standby unit, and there is no mention of the impacts to the process if one or more driers become unavailable.

- c) **Energy Efficiency:** PPNE is proposing to add an additional 1.9 MW of solar power in the form of PV panels to the already 1.5 MW generated onsite. This is a net Greenhouse Gas mitigation for the project and is a good use of the sites non-programmable rooftops.

The solar power component will need to be supported through the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) Program, and the requested Phase 1 MEPA waiver is “*imperative*” for SMART Program support. There is no mention of contingency if SMART program support does not come through.

4) **Traffic and Trip Generation**

- a) **Traffic/Trip Generation:** PPNE has included a traffic impact study which states that the facility will generate 418 new truck trips per day (209 in/out) and 150 employee trips per day (75 in/out). This is a significant increase over the existing conditions of 76 vehicle trips per day. To be conservative, this includes the contingency that all outgoing material will be by truck instead of by rail. Truck traffic in tons per load and in distribution throughout the day is estimated based on data from the SEMASS facility in Rochester, Massachusetts. Traffic from the existing NWD Trucking facility on the site is deducted, as this facility is expected to relocate.

Truck estimates appear to be accurate, except that the fraction from the biosolids component appears to be somewhat low (at the low range of solids content of the incoming material, each truck as presented would carry 30 tons, which is high). Facility traffic will be present from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm Mondays through Saturdays, with the biosolids component also creating traffic on Sundays. Only a small portion of the traffic is expected to occur during peak hours (7:30 am – 8:30 am, and 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm). Seven local intersections were studied, including Philips Road, Braley Road, the Route 140 exit ramps, and intersections within the Business Park. A 2025 “Build” scenario was projected to result in only two minor reductions in Level of Service at intersections.

It is recommended that PPNE describe Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies in effort to reduce the impacts associated with these trips, such as carpool and vanpool preferential parking designation, working with SRTA to locate transit service accommodations, shuttle services, bicycle parking accommodations, and other options. It would further be recommended that along with a traffic analysis the proponent should provide a report on how the added vehicle traffic would impact the road conditions and add to their maintenance.

5) **Emissions, Odor, Sound**

- a) **Emissions, Odor:** PPNE analyzed emissions associated with stationary onsite combustion sources, mobile diesel equipment, dust from materials handling, and potential odor sources (biosolids, MSW). Their plan proposes to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to air quality and smell through the use of best industry practices, wet scrubbing and ionization. It goes on to state that National and State Ambient Air quality standards and standards for Air Toxics will not be exceeded ‘in residential areas.’

As this project is located in an industrial area, we ask that PPNE clarify air quality impacts at the facility itself, particularly for the benefit of employees of PPNE who will be exposed to this air every day as well as the nearby neighborhood. The City should be able to peer review the air quality report at the time when PPNE returns to the planning board for a Site Plan modification in order to ensure the plant employees and residential neighborhood to the east of the site is

protected from any toxics in the air.

- b) **Sound:** PPNE analyzed sound levels associated with the proposed plant operations, taking into account sounds generated from tipping activities, fans and exhaust towers, and both indoor and outdoor activities. The project will be subject to Massachusetts State laws as administered by the DEP, which regulate noise under air pollution. The controls/mitigation include using an electric yard engine for moving rail cars within the site, employing low-noise air quality control and ventilation mechanisms such as fans and stacks, and a noise barrier wall between the biosolids cooling towers and residential area to the south. It would be recommended that the City peer review the sound assessment report at the time when PPNE returns to the planning board for a Site Plan modification in order to ensure the residential neighborhood to the east of the site is protected from excessive decibels or pure tone sounds.

6) Wetlands, Water Resources

- a) **Wetlands:** Wetland replication has not been shown on the plans. The Conservation Commission has a policy of requesting a 1 ½ to 1 ratio of wetland mitigation to wetland impacts. The wetland replication area should be constructed in an area that is currently developed or grassland such that mature upland trees in the 100' Buffer Zone do not need to be cut to facilitate the replication area. The Conservation Commission also has a policy of maintaining a 25' setback of undisturbed land between wetland resource areas and proposed development (with the exception of wetland crossings). Incursions into the 25' setback have been noted in several locations and it is hoped the plans can be redesigned to maintain an undisturbed setback.
- b) **Water Resources:** It appears a portion of the new rail spur would cross through the high yield aquifer while the remaining rail siding, recycling, MSW and biosolids facilities would be within the medium yield aquifer. Long Term Pollution Prevention Plans shall be requested for each component of the facility. Spill control plans shall also be requested with respect to the diesel fuel for the rail cars and other on-site fuel facilities. The proponent should prepare a Pollution Prevention and Emergency Response plan for both the construction phase and normal operations that identifies potential contamination sources, threats of Hazardous Material and Hazardous Waste releases to the environment, describes material storage and handling details, containment and contingency plans for spill response, and documents regular inspection and employee education opportunities. Areas used for vehicle maintenance and loading docks should install a mechanical shut-off valve or other flow-arresting device between the catch basin or other stormwater-capture structure draining this area and the leaching structures.

7) Wastewater and Stormwater

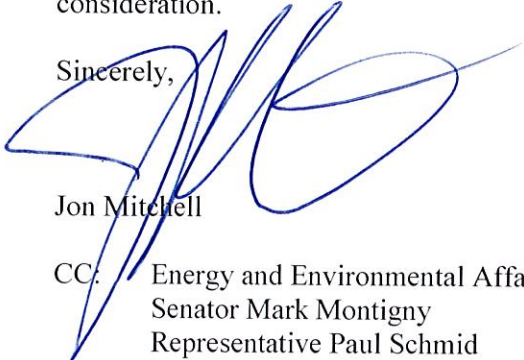
- a) **Wastewater:** PPNE is expected to use 13,150 GPD of water and will generate 83,125 Gallons Per Day (GPD) of wastewater (biosolids drying will be extracting water from the product). It is recommended that the proponent demonstrate through a groundwater study that the project will not have adverse impacts on groundwater levels or adjacent surface waters and wetlands. It has also recommended an infrastructure analysis be done that the proponent demonstrate the current piping and pump station is sufficient to handle the proposed new water and wastewater use. This would include the new loads impact to the wastewater treatment facility. This would determine if a pre treatment facility would be needed either on site or at the Industrial Park Pump station. The plant loadings should include nitrogen loads.
- b) **Stormwater:** The rail siding also crosses a stormwater detention facility which was constructed under SE49-0738 to capture runoff from a construction stockpiling facility. This Order of

Conditions has expired and does not have a Certificate of Compliance. The applicant/owner shall be required to obtain a Certificate of Compliance prior to any other work commencing on site. Following this, the Notice of Intent for Phase I will have to modify the design of the stormwater facilities and stockpile area to accommodate the rail siding. Additionally, runoff from the idling MSW trucks and recycling trucks may contain trash which will enter into the stormwater system.

A plan for keeping the pavement clean and preventing the clogging of the stormwater facilities is needed. It is also of concern to the city that the plans seem to show removal of existing catch basins as well as serious increase in impervious areas. Also noted would be an explanation of how any contaminated run off from the waste areas will be dealt with.

In conclusion, in the course of the City's review it has become evident that many environmental considerations should be understood much better than they are at present and will require significant attention going forward. It is in this context that I encourage MEPA to require the proponent to issue an Environmental Impact Report. Only a continued robust program of impact analysis will put MEPA, the public, and state and local officials, in a position to decide if this particular project, at this particular location, makes sense for New Bedford, our region, and the Commonwealth. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jon Mitchell

CC: Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton
Senator Mark Montigny
Representative Paul Schmid
Representative Christopher Hendricks
New Bedford Planning Board