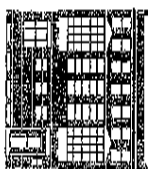


Bush, Kerry trade barbs in televised debate — Page 10



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Winchester Street PCB cleanup following timeline

By DOUGLAS A. MOSER
News Staff Writer

TEMPLETON — Cleanup of contaminated lawns on Winchester Street surrounding a former furniture factory is following the Environmental Protection Agency's time line.

Mike Barry, the EPA's on-site coordinator from Boston, described a process that has been running smoothly and sees work continuing until November.

Barry's crew began work in August to clean up high levels of PCBs, a suspected carcinogen, that were left behind when the

Temple-Stuart furniture factory burned oils and varnishes containing the compound.

Bulldozers were seen on Winchester Road, behind the deserted building formerly occupied by Temple-Stuart. Flattening piles of fresh topsoil, shipped in from Billerica, across residents' lawns.

"The first two lawns we excavated, we're putting the surface loam on that came this week," he said.

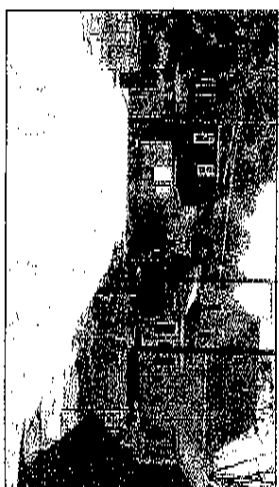
"We've done 10 of 28 yards. As an estimate, we've probably removed between 2,000 and 2,500 cubic yards of soil," he said.

'As an estimate, we've probably removed between 2,000 and 2,500 cubic yards of soil.'

— Mike Barry

"That works out to 3,000 to 3,700 tons." Most residents have been very "pragmatic about the entire situation," he said.

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News staff photo by DOUGLAS A. MOSER

Orange netting surrounds excavated yards on Winchester Street in Templeton.

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All replaced sand from local sources

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"Of course, they're concerned because we're digging up their lawns."

Barry said that the only batch had been logistical problems bringing in the topsoil. All of the sand that has been replaced came from local sources, he said.

The excavated soil, now piled near the EPA's trailers, will be treated by ESMI, said Barry. ESMI, a company specializing in chemical cleanups, is located in London, N.H., about 8 miles northeast of Concord.

Barry said that his crews used a geoprobe late this summer to test the sand 3 feet below the surface. The tests concluded that all the contamination was superficial.

"PCBs tend to cling to soil," he said. "They don't bind to sand, which snakes up much of what's below the layer of topsoil."

He said the topsoil ran anywhere from 6 to 18 inches in the yards his crew have excavated.

Either this fall or next spring, Barry wants to test 28 other properties behind the plant that are near the yards currently being replaced.

Though no clean links have been established between PCBs, which stands for polychlorinated biphenyls, and cancer, the EPA suspects that the chemical contributes to skin irritations and very heavy, long-term

exposure can lead to chronic skin problems.

"The soil was above the state limit" of 2 parts per million, Barry said. He added that though he works for the federal EPA, he follows state guidelines for PCB levels because it is more clearly defined than the federal guidelines.

Barry said that the average level of PCBs his crew found in the yards was around 30 ppm, with the highest just over 60 ppm, levels he described as moderate. The soil with the highest concentration, on the factory's land, was "several hundred ppm," he said, adding that too was moderate.

"This isn't an emergency situation where people will get sick, but we take the con-

tinuation of people's yards very seriously."

Through Barry and his staff have been working "hand-in-hand" with the state Department of Environmental Protection, the EPA has been coordinating the entire project. The funding, which will total nearly \$4 million, came out of the EPA's regional New England allowance, Barry said. All the money for the cleanup came from Washington, through their regional allowance and into their excavation division. No money was contributed by Massachusetts.

The project wasn't large enough to qualify for a Superfund cleanup," Barry said, which would have taken years of geo-

logical, technical and legal evaluation before the first work could begin.

Barry said he planned to be finished replacing the soil for the original 28 properties by November.

"We really can't do much when the ground is frozen," he said.

"The dirt is that much heavier and it's harder on our workers and harder on our equipment."

Once the topsoil is replaced, he said, his crew will cover the yards with a green textile until spring, when they will hydroseed each of the yards. Other landscaping, such as planting trees and shrubs, will also have to wait until spring.