

April 24, 2015

Robert Stegemann, Regional Director  
Department of Environmental Conservation - Region 5  
1115 NYS Route 86  
P.O. Box 296  
Ray Brook, NY 12977-0296

RECEIVED

APR 27 2015

NYSDEC - REGION 5  
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**Re: Former Homestead Infirmary, Town of Providence, New York**

Dear Regional Director Stegemann:

I represent Saratoga County with respect to the environmental conditions at the former Saratoga County Homestead Infirmary, located on Bakersville Road, Town of Providence, New York ("Homestead Site"). We write because the Homestead Site now contains an abandoned, deteriorating building, easily accessible to the public, which we believe is releasing hazardous asbestos containing materials directly into the environment.

Some background on the Homestead Site may be helpful. In 1914, the Homestead Tuberculosis Sanitarium was opened for the treatment of tuberculosis patients. The facility operated as a tuberculosis sanitarium until 1960. In 1961, the facility was reopened and operated as the Saratoga County Infirmary until 1972-73, when the infirmary was closed down. The property was maintained in good condition by the County until it was sold in 1982 to Bruce G. Houran and Robert Chapman who planned to redevelop the site.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, since the time of the sale by the County, the owner was unsuccessful in his efforts to redevelop the property. The main facility building fell into significant disrepair and was vandalized repeatedly over many years. and The building is presently in a very deteriorated condition.

Though a fence was installed around the former facility building many years ago, sections of the fence are easily breached. Many of the windows have been destroyed and many doors to the building have been removed, making access to the structure very simple. In fact, in the recent past, vandals entered the building and removed metal piping and other salvageable materials. In so doing, many internal walls and internal ceilings were disturbed or pulled down, resulting in the release of friable asbestos containing materials (ACM) both within the building and through open windows and doors. Additionally, portions of the building roof, believed to contain ACM, have collapsed into the structure. None of these conditions existed at the time the County transferred ownership of the site to Houran.

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<sup>1</sup> After several title transfers, the current owner is Conifer Construction Group, Inc. Its owner and president, Bruce G. Houran, moved to Florida several years ago and filed for bankruptcy in 2014.

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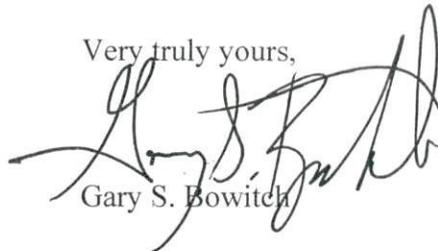
A November 2012 YouTube video ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=Io\\_qtVqnbdM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Io_qtVqnbdM)) shows the very seriously deteriorated condition of the building in 2012. There has been no improvement of these conditions since that time. The building is frequented by teenagers as a place to hang out. In fact, on September 8, 2014, a fire was started within the building necessitating immediate response by the Providence Fire Department. We enclose numerous recent photos of the Homestead Site, which show the dilapidated condition of the structure, both inside and out, the grounds immediately surrounding the structure, the existence of drummed materials, as well as the inadequacy of the current fencing.

Because the County is not the owner of the property, it has not obtained any environmental samples around the outside of the building. However, as a result of the above history of vandalism and the extensive deterioration of the structure, we believe that it is highly likely that hazardous asbestos has been released directly into the environment at the Homestead Site. Moreover, given that friable asbestos exists within this dilapidated structure, there remains a very real on-going threat of continued releases to the environment. In short, the Homestead Site represents a significant threat to the public health and the environment.

Unfortunately, given that the County does not own the Homestead Site, it has no ability to either prevent the public's access to it or to stop the on-going releases of asbestos. Given the environmental dangers present at the site and the County's inability to address them, we want to bring this important matter to your attention. Our sincere hope is that with the immediate involvement of the Department and, as appropriate, the USEPA, the process of addressing the past and on-going releases and the threat of further releases of hazardous materials into the environment can begin in earnest.

The County is, of course, prepared to assist the Department in any way possible. Once you have discussed this with your staff, please contact me to discuss future steps to bring this on-going significant threat under control.

Very truly yours,



Gary S. Bowitch

Encls.

cc: Steven Dorsey, Saratoga County Attorney  
John M. Collyer, Supervisor, Town of Providence  
Russell Huyck, Regional Engineer, NYSDEC, Region 5  
Daniel J. Eaton, Engineering Geologist, NYSDEC,  
Division of Environmental Remediation









