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WAYLAND

Town officials buoyed by Raytheon contribution, tests

By Scott W. Helman, Globe Staff Correspondent, 4/16/2002

Town officials are applauding two recent decisions by Raytheon Co. that they believe spell progress for the ongoing environmental cleanup of the company's former site on Boston Post Road.

Most significantly, they say, Raytheon agreed to conduct additional testing of the ground water for contamination on the 83-acre property, where an office park now houses Polaroid and a few other companies. Raytheon's decisions follow a disagreement last fall when some in town felt the company had insufficient data to conclude that contamination at the site would not have an impact on nearby drinking water supplies.

"I'm feeling so much better about it as a process, and I think their openness and their willingness to come to the table the way that they have ... is a sign of much better things to come," Selectwoman Linda Segal said.

Raytheon leased the 430 Boston Post Road site from 1955 to 1996, using it for things such as circuit board development and hydraulic testing. The cleanup will focus on hazardous materials known to have been generated there, including metals, oils, water-treatment chemicals, and PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyl.

Company spokeswoman Amy Hosmer said the additional testing is being conducted in response to concerns from Wayland that not enough is known about the dangers those contaminants might pose for the nearby wells.

"I think right now we're looking to really address the town's concerns and to working with them," she said.

The scope of the additional testing is still being determined, Hosmer said. The company will install new test wells, she said, and will work with the town determine where they should go.

The company's willingness to appease the town on this point begins a new chapter in the cleanup, town officials say. "Their initial contention was that the issues on the site did not impact drinking water," said Segal, who

has been heavily involved in this and previous environmental remediation efforts in town. "We got them to agree to remove that premise and to acknowledge that they do need to do a better job."

Tests have shown traces of contamination in some town wells, but the levels have been far too low to render the water unsafe, town officials say.

Whether or not the new round of testing reveals a true threat to drinking water, the important thing is that the town will be trying to learn exactly what it's dealing with, Segal and others say.

"I think that they've recognized the town's concern that things be done very properly, because there are a number of towns that have had their water supplies endangered and we certainly don't want that," said Mary Antes, chairwoman of the Board of Selectmen.

The new round of testing is on the agenda for the next public meeting on the cleanup May 14.

The company has already submitted some plans to the state Department of Environmental Protection detailing what its cleanup effort will entail.

But Raytheon may need to rethink them if this next round of testing reveals new threats to the environment, said Andy Irwin, a member of the Wayland Conservation Commission who is helping lead the town's efforts on this project.

Though an outline for the next phase of the cleanup plan was originally due to the state next month, Raytheon is seeking an extension so it has time to see if anything comes of the new testing of the ground water, Hosmer said.

In the meantime, the company has donated \$25,000 to Wayland so the town can hire its own consultant to pore over the data. Though not unprecedented in cleanup projects like this, the \$25,000 check, deposited on Friday, is another indication of the more cooperative atmosphere that now prevails, town officials say.

"Raytheon is committed to working with the community. This memorandum of understanding signifies that," Hosmer said.

Wayland also applied for a \$10,000 technical assistance grant from the state, which it hopes will supplement Raytheon's contribution. The state is expected to announce the grant recipients this spring.

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