

Technical know-how pays off for town

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By Christopher Rowland

Although a technical-grant application by Wayland town officials is among the casualties of potential budget cuts at the state Department of Environmental Protection, Selectwoman Linda Segal is not worried.

That's because the town is already getting a sizable infusion of money from an unlikely source: **Raytheon Co.**

Wayland has negotiated to have the defense contractor pick up the town's tab for technical reviews of a contaminated **Raytheon** site near town wells. The sum of \$25,000 that **Raytheon** has already deposited in a special account is \$15,000 more than Wayland would have received under a "technical assistance grant" from the state.

"The town decided, at the time it was asking for a grant, that it would also ask **Raytheon** to cover our expenses," Segal said. "We did both to cover our tracks."

The agreement means that, while other local communities and citizens groups are starving for technical help, Wayland has enough cash to hire an environmental consultant. The consultant is reviewing **Raytheon's** technical documents, monitoring-well data and cleanup proposals for the 83-acre site on Boston Post Road.

Armed with that kind of expertise, the town can make sure **Raytheon** is doing the right thing and raise objections or make suggestions, Segal said. The cleanup will target metals, oils, water-treatment chemicals, and PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls. **Raytheon** leased the land from 1955 to 1996.

Segal and other Wayland officials have extensive experience dealing with polluted sites. They spent most of the 1990s tracking, coaxing, and cajoling Dow Chemical over a contaminated site. That effort was helped by five technical assistance grants from DEP, which gave Wayland residents the knowledge they needed to influence the process.

"We were neighbors. We are soulmates," Segal said of her comrades in NED/Dow Neighbors Inc., the grass-roots group. "It's sort of like being in the battle and the trenches together."

The result of the Dow battle was a major victory for residents. Not only did the neighbors force a cleanup of the property, they managed to defeat an office park proposal by developer Stephen Karp and win new open space for the town.

Segal credited the victory to being well-organized and informed about technical aspects of the process. After that experience, town officials recognized that **Raytheon** would require a similar effort. "In order to be a player in the game, you need to understand and be able to respond to the

science," Segal said. "You need technical assistance. You need expertise. And all that requires money."

Segal vaulted onto the Board of Selectmen, based on her activism in the Dow case, so it was no surprise she became involved after Raytheon disclosed that it had discovered a virtual chemical dead zone on wetlands on the Boston Post Road property.

Segal said she counts many DEP officials among her allies, but recognizes the environmental bureaucracy is overwhelmed. She said citizens must band together and monitor polluted sites in their communities.

"If DEP only audits X percent of its sites," she said, "how do you know the one in your backyard is really clean?"