



2018 Annual Report: Environmental Committee

Submitted by: Joan Licari, Chair

Quemetco

Major concerns of the Environmental Committee this year have been requests by Quemetco Inc. for an extension of its operating permit for 10 years to be issued by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and a request to the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) to increase throughput by 25% with a daily operation to 24 hours/day. Quemetco, located at 720 S 7th Ave. in the City of Industry, recycles lead/acid batteries, mainly from automobiles, but also other lead containing products. It has been operating since 1959. HHIA currently is calling for denial of the 25% increase.

Some residents of Hacienda Heights live within approximately 600 feet of the facility and for years have been concerned that emissions of lead, arsenic, cadmium and antimony commonly associated with these types of plants could be causing health problems in the communities nearby. Arsenic is a known cancer-causing agent while young children are especially vulnerable to the toxic effects of lead potentially affecting the development of the brain and nervous system. Lead also can cause long-term harm in adults, including increased risk of high blood pressure and kidney damage. Chronic exposure to cadmium (low level over an extended period of time) can result in kidney, bone and lung disease while chronic exposure to antimony can result in lung, heart, and gastrointestinal diseases. Opposition within the community has grown as an increasing number of Heights residents have become aware of the potential health issues. Many are calling for closure of the plant

The focus of permitting during the year has been on the request to increase production. HHIA is working in coalition with the Clean Air Coalition of North Whittier and Avocado Heights and the San Gabriel Valley Task Force of the Angeles Chapter of Sierra Club in opposing this increase. This emphasis developed because a Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report related to the increase in production was issued by the SCAQMD. Two community meetings were held at the Hacienda Heights Community Center by the agency to inform the public as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

In addition, throughout the year, the coalition had become increasingly upset with DTSC because results of soil testing for lead, arsenic, cadmium and antimony within ¼ mile of the facility 2.5 years ago had not been released to the public. These concerns led to a meeting between members of the coalition with our California Assemblyman (and Speaker of the Assembly) Ian Calderon along with representatives of the supervisorial districts covering the communities.

The two public meetings hosted by SCAQMD were held a short time later. At the second meeting, results of the DTSC testing were released. Because of the elevated results of metals in some areas, DTSC is expanding the soil testing out to a radius of 1.6 miles around the plant. This testing will begin in the early part of 2019. The environmental report is expected in the latter part of 2019.

In addition, on Oct. 31, 2018, it was announced that the Office of the California Attorney General was suing Quemetco for violations of regulations and is threatening fines for continuing violations. About the same

period, Ian Calderon, Janice Hahn, (Los Angeles County Supervisor for Hacienda Heights), and the Hilda Solis, Supervisor representing Avocado Heights, all submitted letters to SCAQMD strongly opposing the 25% expansion.

We anticipate that the permit for 10 years extension of operations will be considered in 2019. HHIA will continue opposing the expansion of operations and will consider our position on the ten-year extension as that proposal is considered by DTSC.

Puente Hills Landfill Park:

Planning continues for implementation of Phase One of the development of a regional park on the Puente Hills landfill closed since 2013 after operation for 56 years. In 2016 after 18 months of planning that included public meetings and public comment, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors permitted the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation to proceed planning of a 142 acre park to serve residents in the wider southern California region. The park will be built in several phases over the next 30 years. The first park area is slated to open to the public in 2020.