

PORTSMOUTH SITE ADVISORY BOARD

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SITE-SPECIFIC ADVISORY BOARD

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

July 25, 2024

**1862 Shyville Road
Room 160
Piketon, OH 45661**

PARTICIPANTS

Site-Specific Advisory Board: **John Hemming**, Board Member; **Lisa Pfeifer**, Board Member; **Wayne McLaughlin**, Board Member; **Matt Setters**, Board Member; **Julie Galloway**, Staff; **Cindy Lewis**, Staff; **Eric Roberts**, Meeting Facilitator

Absent: **Jody Crabtree**, Chair; **Herman Potter**, Vice-Chair; **Sam Brady**, Board Member; **Donna Carson**, Board Member. **Bryan Davis**, Board Member; **Randy Evans**, Board Member; **Beth Workman**, Board Member.

U.S. Department of Energy: **Jeremy Davis**, Deputy Designated Federal Officer; **Greg Simonton**, Federal Coordinator

Department of Energy Contractors: **Melissa Green**, ETAS

Board Liaisons: **Sean Kubera**, Ohio Department of Health (ODH); **Grace Stutler**, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA); **Tom Schneider**, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA)

Public: Chick Lawson, Jeffery Walburn, Nuclear Investigation; Vina Colley, PRESS/NUWS; Gina Doyle, Don't Dump on US; Karen Asbury, Walter Asbury, Makenzie Grubb, Smily Stone, Steven Ater, Lisa Ater, Pat Marida, Leah Penix

MEETING MINUTES

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Environmental Management (EM) Portsmouth Site-Specific Advisory Board (PORTS SSAB) meeting was in Piketon, Ohio and virtually via YouTube. Participants included EM SSAB leadership, support staff, DOE contractors, and the public. The meeting was open to the public and conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

Recordings of this meeting can be viewed on YouTube at the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=portsmouth+site+specific+advisory+board

Opening Remarks

Mr. John Hemmings opened the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

Mr. Eric Roberts, contractor support for the Portsmouth/Paducah Project Office (PPPO) and meeting facilitator, welcomed attendees and reviewed the ground rules and logistics of the meeting. All board members introduced themselves.

Agenda

Mr. Roberts asked board members if any changes or alterations were needed to the agenda. We are seeing none. Looks like we do not have a quorum tonight so we will not have administrative issues. We will have the presentation, Federal Coordinator Comments, Liaison Comments, and public comments.

Deputy Designated Federal Officer Presentation

Mr. Jeremy Davis, Deputy Designated Federal Officer of the Portsmouth Site-Specific Advisory Board, presented an overview of Portsmouth Environment Monitoring Data Websites. Jeremy Davis discussed about the different websites you can look at for more information.

www.energy.gov.pppo/portsmouth-site

<https://portsdemo.com> with links to

- PEGASIS
- Energy.gov
- PORTS Virtual Museum

Mr. Wayne McLaughlin inquired whether the 120,000 users are unique. Mr. Jeremy Davis replied that they are total users, and it's unknown if they are repeat users. He also mentioned uncertainty about the possibility of collecting that data. Later, Mr. Eric Roberts asked Julie to bring up the Energy.gov website so that they could review it. Additionally, a copy of the presentation is available on the PORTS SSAB website. <https://www.energy.gov/pppo/ports-ssab/listings/meeting-materials>

Federal Project Coordinator Comments

Mr. Greg Simonton, the Federal Project Coordinator of the Portsmouth Site-Specific Advisory Board, firmly presented the early recommendations for interacting with area students to the board. Our summer interns have been on-site since May, totaling about 50 interns across the site this year. Mr. Jeremy Davis emphasized that this marks the first year the Department of Energy (DOE) was able to engage DOE interns through the minority-serving institution program. Impressed by their caliber, Mr. Davis noted having three engineering students and one chemical student, all of whom turned out to be some of the brightest interns we have ever had. Mr. Greg Simonton also confirmed the printing of the student Annual Site Environmental Report (ASER) for availability in the fall. Additionally, plans for the Science Alliance, a three-day event to showcase the site, are in progress. It's noteworthy that all these initiatives have stemmed from the board's recommendations in 2010, and these events are continuously growing in scale each year.

Liaison Comments

Mr. Sean Kubera, Ohio Department of Health (ODH), said he had no comments.

Mr. Tom Schneider, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) said he had no comments.

Ms. Grace Stutler, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OPEA), said she had no comments.

Administrative Issues

Mr. Eric Roberts stated that since we do not have a quorum tonight, we will not address any administrative issues. Instead, we will wait until we have a quorum to discuss the recommendations.

Public Comments

Letters to be attached to the minutes for July

- 1) Ketterer PORTS NP plants
- 2) Oklo PORTS Reprocessing Warning
- 3) Zahn's School Chr Acad footnoted

Mr. Chick Lawson asked for this three-page article to be included in the minutes. It is a letter signed by Mike DeWine and discusses the presence of undiluted plutonium back in 1985, which was being handled without the workers' knowledge. The second page contains lab results from 326 samples, showing a significant number of transuranic elements. The report also mentions the presence of plutonium originating from Russian material brought in 1993 and shipped out in

1994, specifically plutonium 238, 239, 240, and other transuranic elements. The third page comprises ASER reports from 2019. The top line indicates an incident that led to the shutdown of Zahn's Corner school. Notably, the reports from Camp Creek, Ohio, and Otway show higher numbers than Zahn's Corner. The author suggests that crucial information was withheld and questions the accuracy of the testing and ATSER numbers due to improper protocols and background usage, backed up by DOE documents. This withholding of data is considered criminal, and the author asserts that it has led to inaccurate numbers being reported.

Mr. Jeffery Walburn said he worked at the plant for 31 years and testified in front of the United States Senate. He indicated that he didn't need their help, and he would provide the report's number and name. On August 30, 1994, during questioning, Mr. Timbers confirmed that there was plutonium in the material being brought from Russia to Portsmouth. There is an NRC document from the same date. In 1999, GAO brought in 30 metric tons (equivalent to 2200 pounds) of material to Piketon, and it was discovered that it was not factual. There were documents suggesting that it was essential to do it, and around that time President Clinton was apologizing for human radiation experiments. Environmental studies from Russia to St. Petersburg to Piketon were related to warheads, but the material brought to Portsmouth was not warheads, and these documents do not apply to the handling of the material. Recent reports show that fish in Little Beaver Creek independently checked positive for plutonium. There is a concern for human safety, especially for children who may swim or play in the area, as the creek flows into the Scioto River. In Russia, they tented their contaminated creeks and buildings to keep people away. It's been five years, and no child has been checked yet for exposure. Testing has only been done for heavy metals in the air, soil, fish, and water.

Ms. Vina Colley has been raising concerns about contamination in Little Beaver Creek, Big Beaver Creek, and Scioto River for over 40 years. She mentioned that the EPA has known about the contamination since 1992, and the company has been aware of it since the 1970s. She expressed her frustration at feeling like the community and workers have been experimented on. Additionally, she highlighted that reprocessing at the site began in 1954, not 1992 as previously stated. She also mentioned that plutonium extraction took place at the site, and she has documents detailing experimental activities involving plutonium. Remember this information: Back in 1992, during a public meeting in Waverly, someone mentioned that there was a serious issue with plutonium that hadn't been adequately addressed for 40 years. They called on the local board to take action and speak with the Department of Energy, the Ohio EPA, and the health department to find out why warning signs haven't been posted. There was also a mention of a trailer park being instructed by the EPA to stop using well water due to contamination, although the community members were unaware of this mandate. Additionally, there was concern about chemical contamination, as well as the leakage of cells that could affect the aquifer. The speaker stressed that the contamination could impact a large area, including people who live far away. They urged the EPA to post warning signs around contaminated creeks where people are baptized, in order to prevent any future tragedies.

Ms. Emily Stone discussed In 1992, during a public meeting in Waverly, concern was raised about the issue of plutonium contamination. It was pointed out that no significant action had

been taken over the past 40 years. It was suggested that the relevant authorities should be approached to inquire about the lack of signage regarding the issue. Additionally, it was noted that the trailer park had been advised to stop using their well water due to contamination, but the community was not informed about this. There were also concerns about chemical contamination, air and water pollution, and the threat to the aquifer from leaking storage cells. The speaker stressed the importance of addressing these issues, especially since the aquifer connects to the Scioto River and eventually affects people hundreds of miles away. The request was made for the EPA to post warnings in the creeks to ensure the safety of individuals using the water for various activities. The seriousness of the situation was emphasized, with a warning that responsibility would fall on the authorities if any further harm occurred. It sounds like you have a valid concern about the safety and potential hazards related to the plutonium and chemicals in your community. It's alarming that there seems to be a lack of transparency and communication about the risks involved, especially when it comes to the safety of the water and air in the area. The fact that leaking cylinders are still present and that there's a possibility of a catastrophic event like a tornado causing even more problems is deeply concerning. It's also troubling that there seems to be a lack of public awareness and warnings regarding these issues, especially for high school kids who are potentially being exposed to these hazards. It's essential for the relevant authorities to address these concerns and prioritize the safety and well-being of the community.

Ms. Pat Madria stated It seems like there are significant concerns about the potential health and environmental impacts related to the activities of the PORTS facility. The references to the explosion in Russia and the efforts to suppress information are troubling, and it's understandable that the community is calling for transparency and accountability. The findings of Dr. Ketterer's report, especially regarding the presence of neptunium-237 and technetium-99, are alarming and should be taken seriously. The fact that the health department is seeking additional funding to expand their studies to include other transuranic elements indicates the gravity of the situation. The detection of plutonium in fish samples and the ongoing studies regarding the Scioto River further emphasize the need for thorough and transparent investigation into the potential contamination caused by the facility. The community's call for the advisory board to address these issues and the solicitation of public assistance in analyzing fish samples underscores the urgency of this matter.

Ms. Gina Doyle said I have a young lady with me today marks the fifth-year anniversary of her father's death. She asked me if I would read a statement for her. Her Mom and stepdad are here with her. She says where do I start? I should never have to talk about this; I was daddy's little girl, my dad worked at a sawmill not far from the A Plant. He drove by there everyday for thirteen years to go to work. One evening we were talking, and he was complaining about severe stomach pains. We rushed him to Adena Pike where they told us he had multiple lesions on his liver. Fast forward a few days and he was formally diagnosed with cancer, he found out he had cancer on December 9th 2018 and he passed away July 25, 2019. He lived seven months from when he found out. This should have never happened, he was 46 years old, he was healthy man, where he worked at sawmill, three other guys died or had cancer. It's a shame we have to sit in silence, but we are now a voice. It's understandable that you and the community are grappling with significant concerns regarding the potential risks and impacts of the nuclear facility. The

victory in halting the bid on the school is commendable, but it's clear that the issue is far from resolved. The call for the school to be bought back and demolished speaks to the serious nature of the situation. There are questions about the protocol for residents in the event of a nuclear accident and the lack of public alerts are valid and pressing. The need for clear guidance and communication in the event of a potential disaster or release of radioactive materials is paramount. The absence of information on qualifications for a project manager overseeing the demolition of the contaminated facility is also concerning, and it's crucial for the community to have confidence in the expertise and capabilities of those managing such crucial endeavors. The absence of alarms and the lack of transparent information about recent releases contribute to the feeling of uncertainty and unease within the community. Your insistence on the acquisition of Zahn's Corner School and the poignant list of people affected by cancer further underscores the urgency of the situation. It's clear that the community's patience has been tested, and the need for concrete, actionable steps to address these pressing concerns is paramount. The well-being and safety of the residents should be the top priority, and it's important for the relevant authorities to fully engage with and address the community's valid concerns.

Final Comments from the Board: None

Mr. Eric Roberts stated the plan is to get back together in September and look at the recommendations.

Mr. John Hemmings closed the meeting at 7:14 p.m.

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July 17, 2024

Dorothy Brohard, Administrator
Pike Christian Academy
400 Clough Street
Waverly, OH 45690
Via regular first-class and certified U.S. mail

RE: PCA's intended purchase of Zahn's Corner Middle School campus

Dear Ms. Brohard:

I write as legal counsel for the statewide Ohio Nuclear-Free Network (ONFN). On behalf of ONFN's members in Pike and surrounding counties, we ask that Pike Christian Academy terminate its plans to acquire and reutilize the Zahn's Corner Middle School because, as a school, it would pose genuine health risks to staff and children. Zahn's is radiologically contaminated and, sitting 1.5 miles from the perimeter fence of the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant complex (PORTS), the site will become even more contaminated from ongoing and anticipated activities at PORTS. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) fixed the federal government's liability for ruination of the school as a learning center when it compensated Pike County to close and replace the school. Zahn's must be demolished and the site remediated to the extent that is possible, and it must never be used as a school again.

Over decades, and particularly during recent demolition of major structures at PORTS, large volumes of radioactive elements have been emitted into air and water which have traveled far offsite. An air monitor [14 miles from the plant](#)¹ has picked up particulates from PORTS. The DOE reported in 2017 that trace amounts of [radioactive neptunium-237 were detected](#)² in an air monitoring station located across from the Zahn's School grounds. Later, [americium-241 showed up](#).³ Both can cause bone cancer as well as damage to the lungs, liver, kidneys and thyroid.

¹ <https://huntingtonnewsnetwork.com/?p=1372>

² <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2019/07/f65/Sampling%20Analysis%20Report%20Zahns%20Corner%20Middle%20School.pdf>

³ <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/radioactive-materials-close-ohio-school-nearly-year>

Over the past decade, multiple residents in the vicinity of PORTS link their health problems to PORTS. At one point [five child cancer cases⁴](#) were identified in the Piketon area; three of the children died. Pike County General Health District and the Scioto Valley-Piketon Area Council of Governments [publicly discourage area residents or visitors from eating produce⁵](#) from in-ground gardens within six miles of PORTS. [Plutonium and technetium have been found in soil samples as far as Scioto County⁶](#) Waverly, and Lake White, as well as areas within six miles of PORTS.

In 2019, extensive scientific investigative work undertaken by Dr. Michael Ketterer, emeritus chemistry professor from Northern Arizona University, including dust samples taken from the interior of Zahn's School, confirmed the presence inside of [high-enriched uranium isotopes chemically identified as emissions from PORTS⁷](#). Within a six-mile radius of PORTS there have been hundreds of verified instances of americium-241, neptunium-237, plutonium-238, plutonium-239, plutonium-240, technetium-99, uranium-233, uranium-234, uranium-235, uranium-236 and uranium-238.

Earlier this week, on July 15, 2024, Dr. Ketterer released a new study where he had concluded that [PORTS transuranic isotopes have been concentrating in plant matter⁸](#) for years in the upland areas alongside the Scioto River and its tributaries, Little Beaver and Big Beaver Creeks downstream from the PORTS water drainage outfall.

The Scioto Valley School District board, in a sensible decision, permanently closed Zahn's School in 2019 out of concerns that children might be suffering adverse health effects from the radioactive contamination of the school and its grounds. The school board formally stated that ["the health and safety of staff and students is of paramount importance."⁹](#)

The historic emissions of various radioactive elements will take from thousands to literally millions of years to decay to harmless background levels. But ongoing and planned new activities at PORTS will add even more radioactivity to the air, land and water around the facility:

> The demolition of gargantuan industrial buildings laden with radioactive contaminants will continue for years if not decades, lofting radiation-bearing fugitive dust into the air.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ <https://sciotovalleyguardian.com/2023/10/13/nuclear-resurgence-in-pike-county-a-dangerous-gamble-or-key-to-economic-revival/>

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aB1tGb_miJVz-UH2uCjKxgES8Dw2sXIV/view

⁸ <https://local12.com/news/investigates/new-testing-reveals-radioactive-elements-plants-near-cold-war-facility-southwest-ohio-piketon-fallout-duane-pohlman-cincinnati-portsmouth-gaseous-diffusion-plant>

⁹ <https://www.piketon.k12.oh.us/article/1671278>

> A depleted uranium processing facility at PORTS has recently opened a new depleted uranium processing line to [purify depleted uranium for use in nuclear weapons](#),¹⁰ which entails a dirty and dangerous industrial method.

> Centrus Corporation is currently using [centrifuges to enrich uranium for nuclear reactor fuel](#)¹¹ at PORTS to nearly a 20% concentration of uranium-235, which process inevitably emits airborne radioisotopes.

> [Two experimental nuclear reactors](#)¹² are planned to be built at PORTS by 2030 by a firm named Oklo.

> Oklo is also thinking about applying to license a one-of-a-kind [nuclear fuel “recycling” plant](#)¹³ to reclaim reusable radioisotopes from the spent nuclear fuel produced by the two planned reactors. Those reactors will generate spent nuclear fuel that can be “recycled.” Nuclear fuel “recycling,” also called reprocessing, is a dirty and dangerous activity that has been undertaken commercially only once in the U.S., in [West Valley, New York](#),¹⁴ where the plant operated briefly, [contaminated the watershed](#)¹⁵ by emptying into Lake Erie, and poisoned workers. The reprocessing plant might be built at PORTS.

With so much evidence of past and future threats to the health of those around the PORTS complex, it is important to consider the legal responsibility the board and managers of Pike Christian Academy would owe to the staff and students of a reopened Zahn’s School. As a party acting *in loco parentis* of students, Pike Christian Academy might in the future be viewed as criminally liable for re-establishing a school there: it could be seen as causing a “substantial risk to the health or safety” of children attending school there by “violating a duty of care, protection or support,” the standard stated in Ohio’s child endangering statute, O.R.C. § 2919.22(A). Violations can be prosecuted as third-degree felonies.

Another state law, O.R.C. § 2927.24(B)(2), states that “(No person shall) Knowingly . . . expose one or more persons to any . . . radioactive substance with the intent to cause, or create a risk of, death or serious physical harm to any person.” Obviously, no one running Pike Christian Academy has any intention of causing physical harm to staff or students. But in light of the evidence of radiological dangers from past, present and future projects at PORTS, if diseases befall students, the Academy’s intentions might be viewed differently in the future as reckless or worse. Violations of § 2927.24(B)(2) are a first degree felony.

¹⁰ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/01/23/2020-01074/amended-record-of-decision-for-the-installation-and-operation-of-a-depleted-uranium-hexafluoride>

¹¹ <https://www.centrusenergy.com/what-we-do/nuclear-fuel/high-assay-low-enriched-uranium/>

¹² <https://www.powermag.com/siemens-energy-poised-to-partner-with-oklo-on-aurora-nuclear-reactor/>

¹³ <https://www.powermag.com/oklo-readying-to-deploy-commercial-scale-nuclear-fuel-recycling-facility/>

¹⁴ <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/West-Valley/Fuel-Reprocessing-History>

¹⁵ <https://www.nirs.org/campaigns/west-valley/>

We make our plea to you with positive, caring intentions. We know that Pike Christian Academy is made up of caring neighbors who look out for their students and staff. Ohio Nuclear Free Network's members respectfully submit that what's best for the community's children, who are our future, is that the reopening of Zahn's School should have no place in that future.

Sincerely,

/s/ Terry J. Lodge
Terry J. Lodge

Joel Bradburne, Manager
Portsmouth/Paducah Project Office (PPPO)
U.S. Department of Energy
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