

Groundwater, Soil Contamination Concerns Raised At Godfrey Meeting

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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GODFREY - PJ Jun of Jun Properties, LLC raised concerns about groundwater and soil contamination that was discovered during a Phase 2 environmental inspection of the future development site of a BJC Outpatient Center parking lot at the corner of Godfrey

Road and Celesta Street. He spoke during the public comment portion of the April 18 Godfrey Village Board meeting and explained how it was discovered, where it's coming from, and what can be done about it.

"Phase 2, we discovered that yes, there is contaminated soil, there is contaminated groundwater," Jun said. "The culprit seems to be benzene. There's a laundry list of chemicals that are in petroleum products ... fortunately, the level isn't that much higher than the threshold level - nonetheless, it's there."

The source of this contamination appears to be from two or three former gas stations that operated between Godfrey Road and the railroad tracks to the east, Jun said. He added that once BJC found it on the site of their future parking lot, they inspected the southern part of the property and discovered contamination there as well, though not at high levels.

Jun also suggested a few solutions, including digging up the contaminated soil, injecting it with "microbes," or notifying the State of Illinois EPA so they can determine the threat level of the situation and "take a different approach." Regardless, he said building regulations should be implemented at the southern part of the property to restrict future developers from using the site's water as their water source.

"Our end game is to get a letter from the State of Illinois that says, 'No further action required,'" Jun said. He added that could either be done if the state determines the area is not a threat, or with the installation of monitoring wells to make sure the contamination doesn't migrate or get worse over time.

"My theory is, this source of contamination has been removed for 30 years, so I think the chances of it migrating further are slim," Jun said. "This contamination migrated onto our property - our property was never the source of the contamination."

Jun asked the village to consider allocating some funding to help cover the expenses associated with inspecting the site, though an exact amount is unavailable until the state EPA responds to their request letter. He noted that the village recently allocated \$30,000 to assist Scooter's Coffee during the construction of their Godfrey site and believes the BJC project would meet the criteria for funding from the village.

He also said BJC is withholding funds for the development until further action is taken on the site of the future Outpatient Center parking lot.

Trustee Ben Allen said he remembered when Jun first bought the property in 1995 and also remembers the former gas stations in question, and said Jun "really is an innocent

person that's been impacted" in this case and that he would like to open the door to possible aid from the village after the state has assessed the situation.

Trustee Rick Lauschke noted that the contaminated water is 12 feet underground and said he "didn't understand" the problem with moving forward on the development.

"I don't understand why there'd be a problem if you're 12 feet deep," Lauschke said. "Are they worried that it's going to evaporate up through the ground and kill somebody?"

Trustee Virginia Woulfe-Beile responded that she still believed it was important to take action on the contamination.

"The remediation is important because groundwater does move, and benzene is a carcinogen," Woulfe-Beile said. "The cleanup's important - you can't just say, 'Well, it's 12 feet underground.' So yeah, moving forward with that is of course the right thing to do and I agree with Ben that I'm sure we can come to some form of agreement."

Any funding approved by the village would potentially come from Business District funds if eligible. Jun said he expects a response from the Illinois EPA within the next 30-60 days.

A full recording of the April 18 meeting is available below, on [Riverbender.com/video](https://riverbender.com/video), or on the [Riverbender.com Facebook page](https://riverbender.com/facebook).