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Concerned Citizens discuss contamination cleanup

By Judy Lambert > J-T Staff Writer



Approximately 100 to 120 citizens gathered at the American Legion for Monday night's meeting of the Concerned Citizens to address the issues of water and soil contamination. (Photo by Judy Lambert)

Between 100 and 120 people attended a Blackwell Concerned Citizens meeting on Monday to listen and ask questions of the three representatives from law firms in both Oklahoma and Texas.

The meeting was opened by Bill Massey, a licensed real estate broker in the state of Oklahoma, in which he discussed the responsibility that lies on the shoulders of Phelps Dodge, the owners of the old Blackwell Zinc Company, Inc. property, which they purchased in 1999. Although Phelps Dodge is not responsible for the contamination left by years of the zinc smelter running, the firm purchased the property in a year when testing soil samples were available.

Therefore, Massey argued, along with the purchase of the property, P-D also inherited the responsibility for the contamination problems facing the citizens of Blackwell today.

Massey talked to the group about the contamination of the ground water beneath Blackwell, which has been tested to show extremely high levels of cadmium, a chemical that can be deadly. He went on to suggest that if the ground area had been cleaned up after the smelter closed, there would not be the contamination faced today. He referred to the sister smelter that closed down in Bartlesville around the same time and said that the area in Bartlesville was properly cleaned up, in which he was personally involved. He also referred to the property in east Ponca City that was contaminated and he helped in the cleanup process.

Massey argued that the 30-plus years of delay in cleanup, the contaminated area now covers the largest part of the city, as far as the groundwater contamination.

A map of the city was handed out to the people attending the meeting with the area from 21st Street, just west of the smelter property, west to First street, as far north as Doolin (Hwy 11) and south to Ferguson. There are small areas even north of Doolin and south of Ferguson that are included in the groundwater contaminated area.

Massey also suggested that residents check with the abstract companies or the Kay County Courthouse in Newkirk to see if the deed to their home has a "contamination agreement" filed on it. He explained that this agreement would be given to anyone interested in purchasing one's home and property if the owner should decide to sell.

According to Keith Langston, attorney for the law firm of Nix, Patterson & Roach of Daingerfield, Texas, the soil contamination covers the "entire city of Blackwell" and even beyond the city limits. He said that the topsoil, which is constantly being moved by the winds, rain, or human movement, is the soil containing the lead and arsenic.

After bringing in specialists, including scientists, to test over 40 homes in various areas of the city, the group discovered high quantities of lead and arsenic inside the homes.

Benjamin Barnes, attorney with Beeler, Walsh & Walsh of Oklahoma City, spoke to the group about the surface contamination and the tests that they had done. He mentioned that one small child had been tested for lead and was found to contain 0.47 plus lead, when 0.05 is a statistic problem. He also spoke with a man who had over 23 surgeries at the age of 28, which could be possibly linked with this contamination. Also the rising rate of children with ADD and ADHD, and the rise in cases of seizures and cancer in this area could also be as a result.

Langston and Barnes are part of the group of attorneys involved in the suit against Phelps Dodge, and will be available this week to visit with interested parties. Langston said to those who live within the city limits, "It is highly likely that you have lead and arsenic in your soil and in your home."

He said that the age of a home does not matter. Whether the house was built in 1930 or recently,

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County Profile	the chance of the house and soil being contaminated is very high.	4Kids.org
Sports Football Baseball Basketball	Peggy Massey, another of the speakers for the meeting, made it clear that the underground water is not the drinking water used for the city. However, she explained that the aquifers, which are approximately 15 feet under the surface, are contaminated with cadmium, and they are contaminated with this chemical.	Ask Dr. Universe Berit's Best Brain Teasers CoolMath.com CRpuzzles.com
Web Resources 	She went on to explain that these aquifers feed into the little streams that run throughout Blackwell, including the stream that runs through the Kay County fairgrounds. She pointed out that, especially during the fair week, people come into contact with that contaminated water. "Kids play in it. We stoop down and drink water out of it," Massey said. Although Phelps Dodge has claimed to have capped off the underground water use, there remain streams fed throughout the city by the underground aquifers.	Discovery Kids Encyclopedia Britannica Fact Monster Figure This! FirstGovForKids Funderstanding Great Sites for Kids HighSchoolHub Kid Scoop KidSites.com KidSites.org Kidz World Learners Online Linkasaurus Merriam-Webster National Geographic PBS Kids SandlotScience.com Surf Net Kids SurfingWithKids TeenCentral TeenInk The Daily Gnus Time for Kids Web Feet Yahoo!igans
Dictionary Internet Safeguards Quit Smoking	She had spoken with Sarah Downard, project manager in charge of the cleanup process by Phelps Dodge. Downard said that she could be reached at 405-702-5126, and welcomes anyone who has questions about the aforementioned "contamination agreement" that may be attached to one's property deed.	
The Bible Online	Massey encouraged homeowners and the people of Blackwell to go out to the V. F. W. between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. through Thursday of this week to talk to the attorneys who will be going up against Phelps Dodge. They will be there to answer any questions you might have at no out of pocket expense to you. Appointments are not needed. Simply come at your convenience.	
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