

Remarks: Public Hearing On Raymark OU-6 Proposed Plan
Mayor John A. Harkins
October 6, 2010
Town Council Chambers, Stratford, CT
*****Media Embargo Until Delivered*****

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening.

The remediation of Raymark waste is an issue that has consumed nearly my entire career in public office. This is for good reason- I strongly feel that it is the most significant issue facing the Town of Stratford.

I won't belabor the battles and shouting matches and very public disagreements the residents of this town have had with the DEP and the EPA on how to proceed on this issue. Those disagreements are in the past.

As Mayor, and as someone who has been intimately involved as an advocate for residents impacted by Raymark contamination for 15 years, I stand here confident that we have turned the page and begun a new, more collaborative and more productive chapter in this long running saga.

The pieces are falling into place:

There is a consensus among residents and they are speaking with a unified, and more measured, voice. They've agreed to a LIMITED amount of judicious consolidation in an appropriate area, in exchange for the government providing a comprehensive plan for the remediation of all waste and the removal of at least some of it from Town.

The Town, for the first time in a long time, has pro-actively engaged our Member of Congress, Rosa DeLauro over the last several months. Thanks to her help we have a more open line of communication with the EPA and are getting better, and more timely, information on this process.

And I believe the EPA is more willing than we've seen in the past to work with us. I met with Jim Murphy and Save Stratford today, and am grateful for the assurances we've received that a comprehensive plan for remediation will be forthcoming, that a plan to communicate with residents more frequently is being put in place, and that our desire to remove as much waste as possible from town will be considered as we move forward.

It is a new day, and while trust issues between all sides will only be healed with time, I believe we are moving in the right direction.

That direction can be seen in the plan being discussed tonight, where the law I worked hard to pass in the legislature preventing the consolidation of more than 1000 cubic yards of waste in one area serves as the foundation for the EPA's proposals.

In closing, I want to make a plea to the state and federal officials here tonight: please be honest and forthcoming with this group of residents moving forward. Heated public meetings and forums of the past aside, we are reasonable people who want to be part of the solution. We understand there will be mistakes and sometimes plans need to be changed to fit fluid circumstances. However, the suspicions that have hindered progress on this matter for so long will only be re-validated if our government fails to be forthcoming not just with good news, but with bad news as well.

Thank you.