

Date: March 31, 2014
To: Common Council, City of Franklin
From: Robert and Naomi Knoll
Subject: Expansion of The Rock Sports Complex on Milwaukee County's Closed Franklin Landfill to Construct and Operate a Professional Baseball Stadium and Potential Concert Venue

About 40 years ago (early 1970's), we purchased a lot in Franklin on West Hawthorne Lane, adjacent to a beautiful woods and field owned by Milwaukee County. We contracted with a builder to build our dream home. One day on a progress visit to the construction site, we turned around to see 2 Franklin Firemen in full firefighting gear, checking for methane gas in our partially completed home. We were told that our neighbor just had a fire in their basement and that the fire ignited spontaneously, caused by methane gas from the former landfill site that bordered all of our property. That is how we found out that the Milwaukee County field behind our lot was actually a former landfill site and that methane gas was flowing horizontally from it underground into our basement through the drainage tile!!

Following that incident, the County installed a special explosion-proof ventilation fan in our basement to vent any methane gas that might accumulate in our basement, along with methane detectors to detect any explosive methane gas in our basement. The County also installed a series of vertical methane vent pipes in the closed landfill to vent off methane gas.

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One day, about 20 years later (January, 1996), our 17 year old daughter, who was feeling ill and had stayed home alone from school, called her mother at work to mention hearing an alarm in the basement. We knew what that meant! By the time the fire departments arrived, prepared to deal with the gas and/or an explosion, methane was detected at the front door above the explosive level. Firefighters backed off entering until a huge ventilation fan at the front door brought down the concentration of gas in the house. The natural gas line to the house was immediately turned off. When readings lowered, windows and doors were opened and vent fans used to clear the gas. Hours later, after we were allowed back into the house, the garbage smell was so strong we could hardly breathe – and it stayed that way into the night. It took days for it to leave completely. We were just thankful that there was no explosion with our daughter (and her cat) in the house, as she had been in an upstairs bedroom with the door closed and didn't hear the alarm until she opened the door. Her mother would not have arrived home from work for at least another 1 ½ hours and we feel there was a good chance there would have been an explosion before that time.

It was determined that due to weather conditions at the time (dense, heavy air in January), the dense air did not allow the methane gas to vent vertically through the ventilation pipes installed in the landfill and the methane traveled under the frozen ground horizontally into our basement, and that the ventilation fan in the basement had not been operating.

After this incident, the County re-evaluated the landfill gas management system and in 1997 installed a whole new and improved methane gas extraction system in the landfill, extracting the methane gas through a vast network of underground pipes, drawing the methane gas to a burner to burn off the

extracted methane gas, and also install far deeper vertical vent pipes that extended substantially further down into the refuse buried in the landfill. The County also now monitors our well water quality annually for the presence of any Volatile Organic Compounds that may be leaching into our drinking water from the landfill.

We have not had an incident in our house since the mid 90's, but we make sure that the ventilation fan is operating constantly, and have 2 methane gas monitors in the basement that will alert us if someone is home to hear them. We still smell garbage outside from the vent pipes in the landfill under certain weather conditions with heavy air quality.

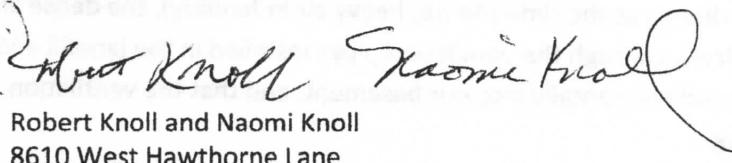
The County has also now installed a methane gas probe in our lot near the edge of the landfill to monitor the horizontal travel of gas out from the landfill to determine if the gas extraction and venting system is working adequately to keep methane from migrating into our house.

However, approximately 5 years ago (around 2008 or 2009), ventilation pipes in the methane extraction network were discovered to be broken, crushed and blocked due to the natural decomposition of refuse in the site at an uneven rate, resulting in uneven settling of the decomposing refuse in the landfill and the gravel and clay cap over it, bending and blocking the ventilation and extraction pipes and failing to extract the gas to the extractor flame burning off the collected gas. The County dug up and replaced broken and failed pipes, installed a clay barrier below ground and replaced the cap and vegetation over the ventilation pipes. If this needs to be done again under a baseball stadium, who will pay for it?

Since this appears to be a condition that will re-occur as an ongoing problem, we are concerned that any excess pressure (of any kind) or blocking of any venting pipes might again cause a horizontal flow of methane gas into our basement. We are also concerned that the pressure from the weight of a baseball stadium, asphalt parking lots, earth berms and thousands of combined people, cars, trucks and busses, and any blocking of venting pipes, might cause a catastrophic event in our home and/or at the baseball stadium on the cap of the closed landfill site.

While baseball diamonds on top of the former landfill cap may be fine, the weight of the proposed expansion on top of the landfill cap and network of methane gas extraction pipes added by constructing and operating a professional baseball stadium and potential concert venue on Milwaukee County's closed Franklin Landfill site, causes us great health and safety concerns, not only for us but also for all the people who may be attending baseball stadium or concert events. Is there a risk of liability for the City of Franklin?

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.



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