



August 7, 2008

Environmental group, manufacturer trade accusations

Tonight's hearing about new Liberty Creek plan

By *KEVIN WALTERS*
Staff Writer

FRANKLIN — Environmental activists and officials for a paint-making company are launching fresh criticisms of one another heading into tonight's public hearing on chemical pollution in Liberty Creek and the Harpeth River.

Bill Penny, attorney for Egyptian Lacquer Manufacturing Co., said he hopes the public hearing — the second in two years about the matter — will end the "general vilification" of the company surfacing on Web sites and blogs in recent weeks.

"I hope that we can set the record straight," Penny said. "We would encourage people to listen to the facts, the real facts, and hopefully put everybody's minds at ease."

Tonight's hearing on the company's plan is the latest part of a years-long controversy that's worried neighbors and cost the company in excess of \$1 million.

Egyptian Lacquer officials have claimed responsibility for the chemical pollution discovered in late 2006, blaming rusted underground pipes connected to chemical storage tanks at its Fort Granger Drive facility. Since the discovery of the leaks, the company and its consultants have taken steps to corral the chemicals still flowing into the river and creek.

The latest plan could involve using a powerful vacuum to suck up chemicals from the ground on the company's site or redirecting the flow of the creek.

Chemical presence persists

The most recent tests of the river in June show continued presence of acetone and toluene as well as benzene, a known carcinogen, and other chemicals from at least one seep on the Harpeth River near the CSX railroad tracks.

The chemical seeps on the river are below the intake for the city's water plant and are not affecting Franklin's drinking water.

But their continued presence is illegal, said Pam Davee, development director of the Harpeth River Watershed Association. She said a better plan must be created.

"There is no vilification. It is fact," Davee said. "There is no plan to clean up other than on Egyptian Lacquer property, and it's not working for anyone or anywhere else."

But Penny said the continued presence of chemicals is to be expected during the hot summer months when the creek and river are generally lower.

"It doesn't change anything in terms of what the risk is, and it doesn't change anything with regard to the plan, at least from our perspective," Penny said.

To quell criticism, the company bought an advertisement in Tuesday's Williamson A.M. to "end the erroneous information and outrageous allegations being made on Web sites, in letters and by word-of-mouth."

Meanwhile, neighbors on nearby Daniels Drive have launched their own Web site about the matter.

Downtown Neighborhood Association President David Morris said he met with state Department of Environment and Conservation Deputy Commissioner Paul Sloan about the matter.

"I've talked with him, and I'm confident they're heading in the right direction, but we want to continue to monitor it very closely," Morris said.
