

January 29, 2005

The Community Journal
Letter to Editor
P.O. Box 67
Ashburnham, MA 01430

Dear Mr. McLean

I was highly troubled after reading the Jan 28th article about the Air Quality at J.R. Briggs. The story seemed to focus on complaints about conditions in the portable classrooms and mentioned a routine check of the HVAC system. Although a great deal of technical information was presented, I am wondering why there was no mention that 7 of the 21 recommendations made by Mr Feeney, Chief of Emergency Response/Indoor Air Quality, had not been addressed over the 4 year timespan? I am wondering why there was no mention that tennis balls placed on chair legs are made of a number of materials that are a source of respiratory irritants? I am wondering why there was a "routine check of the HVAC system" when back in 1999 and 2003 reports prepared by the MA Dept. of Public Health "strongly recommend that an HVAC engineering firm fully evaluate the ventilation system."

On Jan 14th the school nurse at Brigg's called me to take my 7-yr-old daughter home early. She had a severe eye and throat irritation. I worried why her eye was so irritated; and after searching on the Internet for "Air Quality and Briggs School, Ashburnham, MA" I found two reports from Mr. Feeney dated 1999 and 2003. I spoke with Mr. Feeney on Jan 19th, and was shocked to learn that he had not heard from any parent about either report until my call; and that he was unaware the school was about 1/4 mile downgradient of the unlined Ashburnham Dump on Williams Road. I believe there is a brook nearby that travels to and around the Briggs building and playground area.

On Jan 21st I spoke with a Toxicologist at ASTDR who said this was not a good atmosphere for young children, and he was especially concerned about long-term exposure. The Toxicologist said I should tell as many parents as possible.

My wife and I met with Dr. Zapantis on Jan 21st to express our concerns about long-term exposure to poor air quality. I left him copies of the 1999 and 2003 report, and told him about my concerns about the proximity of the school to the unlined dump.

According to the DEP document "Inactive or Closed Solid Waste Landfills in Massachusetts" dated June 2004, the Ashburnham Dump, Williams Road/Center St (Rt 101) Landfill is not lined 0/5 acres, not capped. #SL0011.003 closed 1977. Landfills listed as "Unlined" have no barrier between the solid waste fill and the underlying soil. A "Lined" landfill indicates that all or some portion of the landfill is lined, while "Unlined" means that no part of the landfill is lined.

There are over 500 young children who attend this school. I am extremely concerned that CO2 levels in every classroom were higher than the MA DEP Guideline for Schools, and some rooms were nearly 3X the guideline. I believe these children deserve to be taught in a healthy environment.

Sincerely,

Wayne Adams

P.S. For anyone who would like to learn more about this, please visit the Mothers Against Toxic Towns website at: www.matt1.org