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October 16, 2018

Alec Messina, Director
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
1021 Grand Avenue East
P.O. Box 19276
Springfield, IL 62794-9276

Re: Strengthening Public Involvement in Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Decision-Making: Site Remediation Program Actions Related To The Former Crawford Coal-Fired Electric Generating Facility

To The Director:

Please be advised that I represent Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (“LVEJO”), a not-for-profit organization focused on improving the health, safety, and welfare of the public and community in and around the Little Village neighborhood in Chicago, Illinois.¹ LVEJO’s members include several Chicago residents who live near an industrial site formerly operated as a coal-fired electric generating unit by Midwest Generation. The common street address for this large site is 3501 S. Pulaski, Chicago, IL. A diagram depicting this 70-acre site is attached to this letter and labelled as LVEJO Exhibit A.

Upon information and belief, the site is now owned by Hilco Redevelopment Partners, a unit of Hilco Global. Other Hilco-related entities that are also connected to this property are HRE Crawford, LLC and Hilco Monarch Investments VI, LLC. LVEJO is concerned about the nature and extent of contamination on this site and plans for its remediation. These site activities will directly affect the health, safety and well-being of Little Village residents, including LVEJO’s members, now and for the indefinite future.

I am writing to you because this site is now enrolled in Illinois EPA’s Site Remediation Program. I’m attaching copies of the documents that initiated this process, labelled as LVEJO Exhibit B. LVEJO is unaware of any community relations plan that will enable public knowledge of, or participation in, the remediation of this site. 415 ILCS 5/58.7(h). LVEJO is requesting Illinois EPA to design and implement a strategy to ensure public participation in relationship to this project of significant interest. LVEJO is committed to working with Illinois EPA to help ensure a well-grounded public understanding of activities related to this site, and to helping to facilitate communications between the community and Illinois EPA.

A proactive, comprehensive public participation strategy is justified in this case because of the composition of the surrounding community, the complexity of the site, and the statewide

¹ For a more complete description of LVEJO, please see: <http://lvejo.org/>

importance of establishing best practices for Illinois EPA's actions in relationship to the remediation and reuse of former coal-fired electric generating facilities.

There is a strong environmental justice justification for a full and complete opportunity for public participation. According to information derived from the demographic feature of U.S. EPA's ECHO database, 24,717 people live in 6,213 households within a one-mile radius of the Crawford facility. More than 96% of the people who live in this one-mile radius are Hispanic. U.S. EPA's ECHO database also indicates that in this one-mile radius, there is a total population of 8,323 children 17 years and younger. There are densely populated residential communities immediately to the north and northwest of the facility, including the Gary Elementary School and Piotrowski Park.

The 70-acre site presents complex remediation challenges because of its long history as a coal-fired power plant. I am attaching a diagram of known operating units that may be sources of releases of hazardous substances into the air, surface material, subsurface material, groundwater, the adjacent Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal and CSSC sediments. This diagram is labelled as LVEJO Exhibit B. Members of the public have a significant interest in understanding the nature and extent of contamination, the cleanup objectives, the scope of the remediation, and the technologies and techniques the Remedial Applicant is proposing to address site contamination. For its part, Illinois EPA has an unparalleled opportunity to demonstrate how the SRP functions to ensure a complete site characterization, the choice of protective cleanup standards and the choice of appropriate remedial measures.

The remediation of this site is of statewide and national significance because it is one of the first generation of coal-fired facilities that is being remediated and repurposed. There are 275 similar retired facilities in the U.S., presenting remarkable challenges and opportunities. The remediation of the Crawford facility – among the most prominent facilities in the nation – offers Illinois EPA the opportunity to be a leader in developing best practices for this category of former industrial facilities, including in the way it designs and executes community relations and public participation.

LVEJO recognizes that the Remedial Applicant may choose to execute its own community relations plan, either with or independent from Illinois EPA. LVEJO also recognizes that the Illinois Right-To-Know law may impose public notification requirements independent of the SRP. LVEJO is requesting Illinois EPA to develop a public participation strategy that includes specific familiar elements, regardless of RA cooperation or separate legal notification requirements. These elements are:

1. promptly providing all tangible information that is part of the SRP process, both in a local repository and on-line (perhaps via Illinois EPA's existing document explorer website);
2. working with LVEJO to conduct local public information meetings at key intervals during the site remediation process (upon completion of the site investigation report, upon completion of the remediation objectives report, upon receipt of the remedial actions plan), including providing Illinois EPA staff members to participate in these meetings;

3. establishing a means for public comments and questions to be directed to the IL EPA staff members who will oversee site remediation activities;
4. developing fact sheets in both English and Spanish at key intervals in the remediation process to describe important activities that are being undertaken at the site and to address significant public comments and concerns;
5. identifying a primary point of contact at the Illinois EPA for the public to contact with questions and concerns about the design and implementation of site remediation activities.

As you know, these proposed public participation techniques are entirely consistent with Illinois EPA's Environmental Justice Policy and with common Illinois EPA community relations practices.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please contact me if you have any questions or comments. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Harley". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Keith Harley
Attorney at Law

enc.

cc: Chris Pressnall
Environmental Justice Officer
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
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