

Moving Pillsbury Forward MPF, NFP
Community Meeting
Lanphier High School, 1300 N. 11th St. 62702

April 27, 2022

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chris Richmond welcomed everyone and introduced Polly Poskin and Tony DelGiorno, MPF board members; Senator Doris Turner, 48th District; and Micah Miller, District 186 School board member.

II. A. Project Background

Chris reviewed the history of the Pillsbury project. A work group began meeting a couple of years ago to review what to do with the abandoned Pillsbury site.

1991 Pillsbury closed down, and moved out when Cargill bought the property.

2001 Cargill closed it down and tried to sell the site.

2008 Pillsbury was sold for scrap. The second buyers (2013) ended up in trouble with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the IRS.

2017 EPA did significant cleanup, including 220 tons of asbestos.

2020 The work group became a non-profit, Moving Pillsbury Forward (MPF). Its 5-year-plan for the site was slowed a bit by COVID and by legal negotiations.

Last month All parties agreed that the owners of Pillsbury could deed it over to the new nonprofit, MPF, and begin to move ahead.

Last week Court case wrapped up – Illinois EPA (IEPA), City, County, and Attorney General collaborated to gain control of the site with MPF and decide on best uses in the future.

Now MPF has started clean-up with volunteers. The crews are removing vegetation (City is helping with disposal), picking up random trash, patching holes in fences to secure the site, and working with Springfield Police Department on security/preventing trespassers.

May The Phase II survey will begin. First, they will test for asbestos, then drill holes to test for soil contamination. In mid-May they will drill larger holes to test groundwater.

B. Environmental Survey

The IEPA has set a method for survey. A regional environmentalist firm with a branch office in Springfield is doing the work on contract and will compile a report by early September or

October. That report will help with grant writing to ameliorate issues identified. Possible grants include IEPA, Federal EPA (Brownfield). Infrastructure legislation passed last year set aside money for clean-up by the federal government about 10 times more than usual for such projects. MPF is working with city, county and congressional delegates to secure grants.

The hope is for mid 2023 grant awards to begin remediation of contamination and demolition. Approximately \$8-12 million is needed to remedy contamination and complete demolition.

MPF hopes to get grants and complete demolition over an 18-36 month period. Partners are invited to invest in development.

A 5-year development plan is underway. That's one reason to meet tonight. MPF wants to discuss what the 18 acres could become and hear concerns and wishes of people in the community.

III. Survey – Polly Poskin

Polly said MPF wants input from people in the neighborhood and community about future uses of the site. She acknowledged that citizen desires often compete with developer interests. She noted that many of those in the room were present at the previous meeting in November 2019. Some ideas from that meeting included:

Health Care Clinic
Dog Park

Grocery Store
Bike Trails

Affordable Housing
Community Center

Another meeting occurred in January 2020. People had questions about the future, such as, how and when will Pillsbury be acquired, when site work will be completed and when will it be beautiful and safe. It used to be a source of revenue and pride.

COVID prevented another meeting until this meeting.

People asked why Cargill was able to walk away without doing any cleanup and remediation of problems. Polly said this is a policy issue for the city.

MPF is moving toward answers and action. She said a small survey for tonight asks if people live close to the Pillsbury site or at least a mile away. Next, MPF would like people to note 1-4 ideas they have for uses of the site. MPF wants to gather as much input as possible about what citizens want on the site.

She thanked people present for caring about the Pillsbury site and its future in Springfield.

Chris introduced John Keller, Pillsbury Neighborhood Association President, and thanked him for his service.

IV. Question/Answer Session – Chris Richmond

Chris invited those present to ask any questions they have about the MPF project.

Q Will you take silos down and what is the cost?

A Yes, silos will be demolished, though demo contractors say they should be demolished last.

Q What about the railroad yard and its use?

A The railroad yard is still an active railroad. It is a national company that runs short line railroads. Genesee and Wyoming own it. They say they'd like to help identify a light industrial use for the railroad. The Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance is collaborating in that research. The railroad spur may be an asset for future use of the property.

Q Will silos be imploded?

A No. The method to demo most structures is to use long arm equipment with hydraulic "munchers" and use water to keep grit and dust down. This will minimize impact on the neighborhood. They will not use a wrecking ball.

Q Is there effort to hire local contractors?

A MPF intends to hire local contractors, if they are able to do the work. Some of this depends on federal grants, which require working with unions and organized labor and 20% minority work force.

Q When demolition takes place, how will it affect traffic and truck routes through the neighborhood?

A MPF will do its best to ensure safe truck routes. At least 50% of brick material will stay on the site, if EPA approves. This material may be used for a berm to shelter the neighborhood from the railroad. Metal, wood and roofing will go to a landfill.

Q Is the silver paint on the silos asbestos?

A It is a coating that probably has asbestos in it, which is why they do a wet, munching demolition. Environmental workers will be on site to evaluate and direct that process to minimize any risks with asbestos. More information on that will be available after the Phase II evaluation.

Q Will there be testing for lead paint?

A Environmental contractors will assess lead content and locations, so it can be addressed. The silos will also be tested for lead.

Q Are any of the buildings salvageable?

A No. They are all in advanced state of deterioration, and scrap operations have left them in a state of advanced decay and partial demolition. Chris went into the building with the water tower today, and found much of the wood is rotted through and beyond salvage. The buildings are dangerous.

Q How much will the environmental study cost and who will do it?

A The contract is just over \$200,000, though there may be add-ons per direction from IEPA (hopefully no more than \$50,000 overage). The Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance has suggested it will help pay, and the city council is also considering support of up to 50% of the cost.

Q Of the Phase II cost, how much is laboratory work?

A Lab work, by a state certified laboratory, is about half. Another significant cost is for three licensed contractors to take core samples for a week.

Laboratory results take the bulk of the six-month assessment period. Samples will be collected by the end of May, with June-August for lab work.

Q How deep will core samples go? Will they reach areas 2-3 levels below ground?

A The contractors have capacity to drill deep through concrete in basement levels. Many of the underground areas are dry, but water will have to be pumped out of some areas.

Q Did any coal mining occur under the plant?

A Contractors have looked at mine maps and know there was a shaft five blocks away, but there is no mine evidence at Pillsbury. If evidence of mines is found, that will need to be addressed.

Q There is a coal mine head at 15th & Ridgley. Is MPF aware of this?

A Mines are nearby, but there is no evidence of mining under the Pillsbury site. If mine tunnels are found, that will be addressed.

Q Will any members of the community be allowed to tour the site, including buildings, basements, etc? Is it safe and would people need protective gear?

A Naturally, people are curious, and it is an interesting place. It is a very dangerous site due to demolition and harvesting of material. MPF may be able to contract with videographers/drones to video the site, so people can see it. Some parts look okay and others look like bomb sites, with hazards everywhere. Anyone on site wears a N95 mask, and workers will wear full body suits and respirators.

Q After remediation, will tours be possible?

A Remediation and demolition will go together. It is very difficult to separate those two tasks, and tours are not safe.

Q How will you keep asbestos and other contaminants separated, if doing remediation and demolition simultaneously?

A That is a process to be managed by the engineering firm and the IEPA. Asbestos removal and sorting of contaminated material will be part of every step of demolition. A similar process was used during demolition of the YMCA on 4th Street.

People can view a drone video on Face book. There is a 22-minute video of Pillsbury on YouTube made with a drone by a trespasser.

Q Will there be an auction/fundraiser of mementos from the site?

A That is tough. It hasn't been Pillsbury since 1991, so there are very few Pillsbury items to display or sell. A lot of old, broken equipment may have contaminants in it. MPF has found a few old iron tools that could possibly be cleaned, for display or sale, but they are not identified as Pillsbury items.

Q How will demolished materials (concrete, bricks, etc.) be used on site?

A This can be used for basement areas and to build a berm to border the site as a noise and visual shield. Clean material (e.g. soil) will be used to cover it.

- Q What happened to the dog stuck on a roof that was in the news a couple of years ago?
- A The dog was found deceased at the base of one of the silos in October 2019. Animal control collected the dog's remains and determined the dog had eaten rat poison. That incident, while tragic, helped raise attention to the problem of abandoned sites like Pillsbury. It galvanized the drive to create the task force and the MPF nonprofit.
- Q When will the next meeting be?
- A After the Phase II Report is issued, MPF will hold a meeting to share results and discuss next steps.
- Q Did Chris go to the top of the headhouse?
- A Chris went with a police officer, wearing protective gear. The goal was to ensure it was safe for contractors.
- Q Are break-ins and trespasses decreasing?
- A MPF took possession last month. Since then they have repaired fences. Incidents of trespass have been reduced in the past two weeks. Springfield Police Department installed a camera, which has helped. Neighbors have reported less activity on the site with installation of a camera with a strobe, removal of vegetation and fence repairs. Additional surveillance cameras have also been installed to monitor trespass.
- Q Can you take photos of the buildings for people to see.
- A Pillsbury website will feature some interior photos so people can see the buildings. Exterior tours outside the fence can be arranged if people are interested. Contact MPF website, pillsburyproject.org

V. Action Items – Tony DelGiorno

We want all to get involved.

- Sign up for email.
- Please volunteer for site cleanup, if you have time.
- Please donate, if you are able. Any amount helps.
- Donate services (e.g. Tony donates his legal services)
- Contact elected officials (Mayor Langfelder, US Senator Dick Durbin, US Senator Tammy Duckworth) to urge them to support directed spending on the project.

Thanks to all for attending and to District 186 for the use of meeting space.