

The Saraland City Council met in special session on November 7, 2024, at the Saraland Municipal Courtroom. The meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m. by Council President McDonald. Roll call was as follows:

Present: Council President Joe McDonald  
 Councilmember Wayne Biggs  
 Councilmember Newton Cromer  
 Councilmember Natalie Moya

Absent: Councilmember Veronica Hudson

Attorney, Andy Rutens was present.

Councilmember Moya opened the meeting with prayer.

Council President McDonald advised the purpose of this meeting is to hold a public hearing on the City of Saraland’s application for an EPA Cleanup Grant for the Sportsplex. The grant application will be described, and public comments will be solicited on the application and proposed use of cleanup grant funds.

Other municipal business may be considered at this time.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Community Meeting Minutes<br/>                 EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant<br/>                 The Land: Saraland Sports &amp;<br/>                 Recreation Complex</b> | <b>Meeting Minutes<br/>                 Page 1 of 7</b> |
|--|---|

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| DATE & TIME:         | 11/7/24, 6:30 pm  |
| LOCATION OF MEETING: | Saraland Municipal Courtroom, 937 Saraland Boulevard South, Saraland Municipal Annex. |
| MINUTES TRANSCRIBER: | Casey Etheredge   |

**PRESENTERS:**

| #  | PERSON            | REPRESENTING     | FUNCTION |
|----|-------------------|------------------|----------|
| 1. | Howard Rubenstein | City of Saraland | Mayor    |

|    |             |                                    |   |
|----|-------------|------------------------------------|---|
| 2. | Andy Rutens | Galloway, Wettermark, & Rutens LLP | City Attorney   |
| 3. | Isaac Smith | PPM Consultants, Inc.              | Environnemental consultant and grant writing assistance |

| ITEM | DESCRIPTION OF DISCUSSION  | PERSON LEADING DISCUSSION |
|------|--|---------------------------|
| 1.   | Introduced the City plans to submit the cleanup grant, the Project Team; timeline and desire for community input on redevelopment. | Rubenstein                |

Council President, Council Members, good evening, and those who are with us tonight, thank you very much for joining us. I am Dr. Howard Rubenstein.

I'm the Mayor of the City of Saraland. We have our Council here tonight. Council President Joe McDonald, Council Vice President Newton Cromer, Council Member Wayne Biggs, and Council Member Natalie Moye.

We also have with us tonight our City Attorney, Andy Rutens, and our Assistant City Clerk, Casey Etheredge. I also want to introduce Isaac Smith. Isaac is with PPM and will be sharing the presentation with us tonight.

The purpose of the meeting, the city is undertaking the construction of The Land, a sportsplex development of over 100 acres. This development will allow for the growth of athletic opportunities for our citizens and sports tourism and will also help expand our tax revenue. The general contractor for construction of the sportsplex uncovered non-native soil in the northernmost edge of the sportsplex property.

We immediately reported this, we're addressing the problem, and we have the opportunity to receive federal assistance to remove and mitigate the material. We are committed to keeping our community informed on the plans, efforts, and progress to do this. We're going to take a few minutes to provide some history on the site, after which we will hear your input on the project and the plans.

The grant application will require proof that this meeting was conducted and will be submitted with the grant application. We will further explain the grant and the financial assistance provided. A sign-in sheet should be at the entrance of the meeting. Please, if you haven't already signed in, please do so before you leave tonight.

The site that is being used for the sportsplex was formerly used for plants, sand and clay mining in the 60's and 70's. I want to clarify that this property is adjacent to, but is not, the closed city landfill.

The city began purchasing portions of the property in 2007, which was at that time vacant wooded land. Site plans include softball, baseball fields, multi-use football and soccer fields, pickleball courts, volleyball courts, trails, concessions, buildings, indoor recreational facility, as well as state-of-the-art exercise equipment. This will be wonderful for our community.

Construction began in early 2024. It required significant earth work to be done. In late August, contractors discovered non-native soil in the northern portion.

Non-native soil is soil that looked, smelled, and appeared different from other soil. Testing indicated the existence of polychlorinated biphenyls, also known as PCB's, in the area of non-native soil. At that time, the city notified contractors on site to stop work immediately in the area where the soil was located, and the city engaged PPM, a company that is well-experienced with a lot of knowledge and ability to assist the city in coordinating all remediation efforts with the appropriate regulatory authorities. PPM Consultants continue to analyze the soils, and a soil sample report was provided to the city on September 12th.

This report confirmed that in this property were PCB's, chromium, and pentachlorophenol. These are industrial chemicals used commonly in the past, for manufacturing processes. Small areas of solid waste were also proved at one location with bricks and rubble, and several metal drums with some resin-like material.

This was believed to be limited in the extent of damage. Materials may have been dumped here in the late 70's, early 80's, about the time that many environmental regulations came into existence. We have drilled numerous soil borings to delineate the extent, covering several acres on the northern portion adjacent to the city's old landfill that is capped and covered in vegetation.

Foreign material has been found as deep as 35 feet buried beneath the surface. Reports were forwarded to EPA and ADEM, who are working closely with us to address it. They're actually conducting additional assessments as we speak.

Access to the area has been restricted until we receive the appropriate approvals. We are having to make adjustments to the Sportsplex construction schedule and layout to accommodate. Actually, as you can imagine, this was quite a shock to the city. But there is a silver lining in that we have identified these substances, and the city is committed to remedying this and making sure that when the Sportsplex opens, it will be a safe and wonderful place for our children to play.

At this time, I will introduce Isaac Smith with PPM, and he will provide further information.

|    |  |       |
|----|--|-------|
| 2. | Definition of Brownfields; history of the development and discovery; contaminants present at site; availability of grant application and draft Analysis of Brownfields Clean up Alternatives (ABCA), overview of cleanup plan. | Smith |
|----|--|-------|

Thanks, Mr. Mayor.

Once again, I'm Isaac Smith with PPM Consultants. We're a professional engineering and environmental consulting firm with eight offices across the southeast, and I manage the Spanish Fort office.

I'm going to go through a little bit about the EPA Brownfields program, which is what the grant will be submitted under, and then talk a little bit more about the conceptual cleanup plans. Brownfields—and that's an EPA term—are formal, commercial, or industrial properties that may or may not have environmental contaminant issues from things like petroleum substances. Things like old gas stations, dry cleaners, maybe an auto repair facility, manufacturing sites.

So a lot of these sites are passed over, obviously, from developers due to concerns about environmental contamination. Many of those sites, in fact, don't have contamination, but it's more about the stigma of what they were in the past. EPA likes to see those redeveloped as does ADEM or any other state agencies, and put back into service, where they provide tax revenue, jobs, to remove the eyesore from the area.

And they also—if those environmental issues exist, those can be mitigated. So, as we mentioned, there's funds available for these Brownfield sites, both for assessing them and redeveloping them or cleaning them up. The city is applying for an EPA Brownfield cleanup grant to bring additional funds to the project.

There is a deadline for that, and that is November the 14th. The grant will be competed against across the country. There's many people who submit for the cleanup grants.

The number varies from year to year. The results of the application will come in spring of 2025. The exact date is unknown, but usually it's somewhere around May. And then those funds will become available in the beginning of the next fiscal year, so October 1st, 2025. Part of the process is seeking input and involving the community on the application and the conceptual cleanup plans, so that is the purpose of this meeting tonight. I'll now move into kind of the conceptual cleanup plan.

So, number one, the protection and safety of future visitors to the complex is obviously the city's top priority. The mayor mentioned that in a couple of his different addresses early on in the meeting tonight, and that's why we are seeking agency approval for both the EPA and ADEM for the cleanup plans. As of now, the plan is to remove a few of the multipurpose fields in the north that were to be located where the foreign material was found.

The mayor mentioned the drums, which we will also be removing and probably disposing of that material at an off-site landfill. The non-native soil that has been disturbed from the original source area on the northern parcel will be moved back to that area.

The volume of foreign material is simply too large and expensive to remove and take to a landfill. The agencies do allow for leaving this type of material in place if the health and safety hazards are properly addressed and mitigated. As of now, the conceptual design is to cap and cover it, probably vegetate it as well and fence it off, unless it can be designed to safely build on top of at some point in the future.

When properly maintained, a cap and cover is a proven and effective measure to prevent current and future subsurface exposure to protect both human health and the environment, and that is according to EPA's regulations. As I said, this is a conceptual plan. This is the current plan, but until EPA and ADEM both give approval, it will be in flux.

We do have a draft of the conceptual cleanup plan and the grant application, as well as an ADEM letter showing their approval and offering their assistance. The letter from ADEM is also a requirement in the grant application, and it was submitted last week by Crystal Collins to the redevelopment section. We were on conference calls with her and other ADEM officials, and they voiced their willingness to assist the City in any of these matters.

There is a copy back on the table, or Ashley Nicole has one, if anyone would like to review those. They will also be available at City Hall after the meeting. Like I said, formal cleanup plans will be developed as we move through the process, and as the Mayor noted, the assessment work is still in progress.

We're currently installing groundwater monitoring wells this week. There's been a lot of work in a period of space to meet this November 14th grant deadline, and PPM will also be involved in researching other funding sources to bring to the table offsetting financial responsibilities by the City. I also mentioned that this type of project, although it may seem rare, this exact scenario with PCB's has actually occurred in the state, in Oxford.

It's called the Oxford Lake Softball Fields, where there was some PCB contamination and a cap and cover was done, just like we're proposing here. The fields are open, they're being used now, and there's no effects there. Those documents can also be provided if anyone's interested.

I'll turn it back over to the Mayor, if you have any other questions or comments, Mr. Mayor, and then we can solicit community input on the conceptual plan.

|    |   |        |
|----|---|--------|
| 3. | Mr. Rutens did not have any additional points to discuss.       | Rutens |
| 4. | There were no questions posed to the Project Team by attendees. | All    |

**Mayor Rubenstein:**

At this time, I'm going to turn the meeting back over to the Council President to solicit any comments from the audience tonight.

**Council President McDonald:**

At this point in time, I'll consider this hearing open if anyone wants to speak on this matter. If you don't mind, you can come to the podium, give us your name and address and speak your concerns.

I don't see anyone moving, so I'll consider that a no comment.

**PUBLIC MEETING QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES:**

There were no questions presented during the public meeting.

|    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 5. | There were no interviews by local newspaper reporters. |  |
|----|--|--|

|    |         |            |
|----|---------|------------|
| 6. | Closing | Rubenstein |
|----|---------|------------|

I would also like to announce that if anyone has any additional questions after the meeting, you can email them to Judi Smith, the City Clerk, at [jsmith@saraland.org](mailto:jsmith@saraland.org), or call City Hall at 251-675-5103, and we'll do our best to respond as long as we receive those questions or comments before November 12th.

I do want to state the City's primary and overriding concern is the health and safety of our residents and the future users of the Sportsplex, as well as preventing exposure to our constituents. This is our top priority.

All potential risk pathways will be addressed in the cleanup plan, and approval for what we are going to do will be secured from all required regulatory agencies.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Community Meeting Minutes<br/> EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant<br/> The Land: Saraland Sports &amp;<br/> Recreation Complex</b> | <b>Meeting Minutes<br/> Page 6 of 7</b> |
|--|---|

END

Motion was made by Councilmember Cromer, seconded by Councilmember Moye, to authorize the mayor to apply for the EPA Cleanup Grant for the Sportsplex. Motion carried.

Motion was made by Councilmember Moye, seconded by Councilmember Cromer, to authorize the mayor to execute a contract for advertising with the Saraland Middle School Robotics, in the amount of \$300.00. Motion carried.


Motion was made by Councilmember Cromer, seconded by Councilmember Biggs, to engage services with Facilities Resource Group, Inc. (FRG) to help with the furniture planning and appropriate internal decoration parts of the new City Municipal Complex. Motion carried.

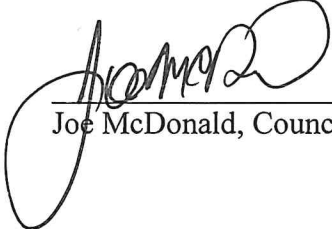
Motion was made by Councilmember Cromer, seconded by Councilmember Moye, to authorize the mayor, subject to the city attorney's review, to contract with Uniti Fiber to provide internet infrastructure services for the new City Municipal Complex. Motion carried.

Motion was made by Councilmember Moye, seconded by Councilmember Cromer, to authorize the mayor to execute a letter with Neel-Schaffer, extending the professional services agreement with Neel-Schaffer, for the Celeste Road MPO project. Motion carried.

There being no further business to come before the Council, motion was made by Councilmember Cromer to adjourn at 7:01 p.m.

ACCEPTED and APPROVED the 14th day of November 2024.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Casey Etheredge, Assistant City Clerk

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joe McDonald, Council President