



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
HOUSE OF DELEGATES
RICHMOND

ROBERT HURT
POST OFFICE BOX TWO
CHATHAM, VIRGINIA 24531

SIXTEENTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
COURTS OF JUSTICE
COUNTIES, CITIES AND TOWNS
MILITIA, POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

July 5, 2006

The Honorable L. Preston Bryant
Secretary of Natural Resources
Commonwealth of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Preston:

I write in reference to a letter that you wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Mitchell dated March 21, 2006 regarding their concerns about the Columbia Forest Products (CFP) facility in Chatham. They were very gratified that you responded by letter to their concerns.

As you may be aware, the Mitchells have been concerned about increased noise levels and intermittent and heavy toxic smoke descending upon their property. There has been little or no scientific inquiry into these complaints; however, Director Burnley did express concern about a video of this smoke taken by Mr. Mitchell. I believe that the staff at DEQ and the management at CFP have attempted to resolve the Mitchell's complaints – but no resolution has been reached. It is my understanding that CFP is currently seeking a permit to install a new boiler system and smokestack with the hope that this will address the concerns of the Mitchells.

You know my commitment to economic development, and CFP is a major employer in Pittsylvania County. I have spoken with people at CFP and I am convinced they are striving to be good corporate neighbors.

Without getting into a lengthy chronology, Charles Hawkins and I were happy to meet with Kathy Frahm on April 26, 2005 concerning this matter. At that time, she explained that based on a review of CFP records, DEQ was satisfied that CFP was in compliance with its permits.

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Because of the lack of objective scientific evidence and at our request, she arranged to have an air quality monitor installed on site to monitor the air quality. These monitors were placed near the affected area in July 2004. According to Mr. Mitchell, they were recently removed in March 2006. He informs me that they were never actually running during the intermittent periods of heavy smoke. DEQ refused to allow the devices to be triggered during times of heavy smoke by the Mitchells. I am unaware of any report on any data collected, but this test seems to me to have been a total waste of time based on the manner in which the equipment was used.

I don't know whether there is any scientific evidence that can be collected to assist the parties in resolving this matter, but I wanted you to be aware of this situation. I have assured my constituents that you will carefully monitor this situation and attempt to resolve this matter in a manner that is fair to all concerned.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at my office in Chatham at (434)432-4600.

Sincerely,



Robert Hurt

RH/dvv

cc: Mr. and Mrs. Henry Mitchell ✓