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PIER 2 PRILLED SULFUR SHIPMENT OPERATIONS

COMMENTS ON MITIGATED DETERMINATION OF NON-SIGNIFICANCE

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As a member of the Anacortes City Council, I am submitting the following comments both personally and as an elected public official representing the concerns of Anacortes citizens. I am not speaking for other councilmembers, nor for City staff.

Cynthia Richardson

GENERAL COMMENTS

It is important for the Port of Anacortes to utilize its shipping docks for their intended purpose, to support the shipping needs of local businesses such as the refineries, and to earn a return on its investment in facilities.

However, it is also important for Port operations to not be detrimental to the city.

Over the past few decades, the “smokestack” industries have gradually closed, making Anacortes a cleaner, quieter, and healthier place to live, work, and visit. Pier 2 already supports shipping of one hazardous product, petroleum coke. Shipping prilled sulfur will add a second. What will be next?

At some point the cumulative hazards outweigh the potential economic benefits. Some people argue that that point has already been reached with the coke operation. Becoming a center for shipping toxic products is not consistent with the goals of either the Port or City Comprehensive Plans.

The docks and truck routes in Anacortes lie directly adjacent to primary residential, business, marina, and shopping areas - a cause for particular concern. Nevertheless, it may be possible for prilled sulfur loading to proceed with minimal health and safety impacts, if the potential hazards are appropriately mitigated.

In the past I have repeatedly supported the Port’s use of its limited deep-water moorage for water-dependent operations, and I will continue to do so. The current Port staff and commissioners have a good record of being responsive to citizen concerns. The sulfur loading demonstration showed that some of those concerns have been listened to. However, in order for a full-scale loading operation to move forward, I believe it is essential that the following issues be addressed.

SAFETY CONCERNS

Item 7.a. of the SEPA checklist says, “Prilled sulfur is not considered a toxic chemical by the regulatory agencies.” That statement conflicts with the MSDS.

According to the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for prilled sulfur, “*This material is classified hazardous under OSHA regulations in the United States and the WHMIS Controlled Product Regulation in Canada.*”

The hazards fall into three categories: Breathing of dust, breathing of vapors, and the danger of fire with its associated risks of toxic smoke and possible explosion.

FIRE SAFETY

The MSDS says that prilled sulfur is a “*Flammable solid, may be harmful if inhaled. Easily ignitable, combustible solid. Dust suspended in air ignites easily and can cause an explosion. Hazardous in contact with oxidizing materials, forming explosive mixtures. Sulfur burns with a pale blue flame that may be difficult to see in daylight.*”

The statement in item 15.a. of the SEPA checklist that there would be no increased need for fire protection services is not correct. A sulfur fire could start accidentally or through terrorist activity, in a truck or on board a ship. Anacortes firefighters are not trained to fight hazardous materials fires of this nature. Additional training of City, Port, and other personnel will be required.

It is essential that means and methods for extinguishing such a fire be ready at all times during the transportation and loading of prilled sulfur. Drills must be conducted frequently to be sure that personnel and equipment are prepared for an emergency.

A ship-board fire could envelop all of downtown Anacortes and northern Guemes Island in toxic smoke. No one should have to live with the life-long debilitating consequences of breathing caustic sulfur fumes or smoke.

The Anacortes Fire Chief is requiring that a Hazardous Materials Inventory Statement and Management Plan addressing the specific hazards of transporting, transferring, and storing prilled sulfur be prepared by an approved independent expert. A plan that sits on a shelf is of no use – it must be implemented.

That plan *must* include provisions for ongoing monitoring to be sure that safety measures are continually complied with, and periodic compliance reports should be available for public review.

It must also establish the authority for a person with appropriate training to shut down the operation if safety provisions are not being complied with or an emergency occurs.

The contractual agreements the Port signs should specify who has authority and responsibility for all phases of operational safety, and allow for termination of shipping contracts if safety measures are not followed.

AIR QUALITY: LOADING OPERATION

According to the MSDS, “*Vapors and dust are irritating to the nose, throat and respiratory tract. Breathing of sulfur dust may aggravate acute or chronic asthma and chronic pulmonary disease such as emphysema and bronchitis. Repeated exposure may cause chronic bronchitis. Other toxic effects on humans: Hazardous by the following route of exposure: of inhalation. Decomposition products may include the following materials: sulfur oxides (SO₂, SO₃, etc.). The products of degradation are toxic.*”

Fugitive dust from the loading operation could affect workers at the DCI shipyard and other port-related businesses, workers in the sulfur operation itself, restaurant patrons, downtown tourists and businesspeople, and nearby residents. Repeated breathing of dust over time could have a cumulative effect.

It is critical that sulfur dust be contained. The Port has suggested re-engineering the loader tube and covered conveyor, erecting a tent over the loading operation, covered trucks, wheel wash system, regular sweeping of the surface of Pier 2, and misting at points in the operation where dust could escape, to assure that dust is contained. Establishing a Marine Terminal Advisory Committee has also been proposed. All of these measures should be implemented for the safety of our citizens.

AIR QUALITY: DE-GASSING STANDARDS

According to the MSDS, not only are the vapors “... *irritating to the nose, throat, and respiratory tract.*” but the odor is described as “*Rotten eggs. Possibly strong.*” While nearby residents would suffer the most from living day after day with a foul smell, it could also have a negative effect on tourists, restaurant patrons, marina clientele, and other businesses. Thus, it is very important to mitigate the odor.

The Port has listed “*De-gas longer period in storage facility in county*” as a mitigation strategy. This should definitely be done.

The Canadian firm handling sulfur shipping has determined that prilled sulfur from the U.S. is unacceptable because it is not sufficiently de-gassed (thus, it smells bad). Why should Americans, and specifically Anacortes residents, be required to live with lower standards than our Canadian neighbors?

If Canadian producers of prilled sulfur can meet these stricter standards, it is clearly possible for American producers to do so. The fact that it may cost more or be inconvenient is no excuse for exposing our residents to something that would be unacceptable in Canada. We should be setting high standards, not trying to get away with less. Any prilled sulfur coming into Anacortes should be de-gassed at least to the Canadian standards or better. If those standards are not met, the contract should allow the Port to suspend operations until this is corrected.

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

The transportation of prilled sulfur by truck burns diesel fuel, contributing to air pollution and greenhouse gasses along the transportation route.

This is an important issue for local air quality, as the route bringing the sulfur to the Port of Anacortes dock brings hundreds of trucks directly through the heart of the city where people live and work. So from a local point of view, even if the air quality in Anacortes is generally good, the concentration of diesel emissions in this small area is clearly undesirable. It is unclear whether anything can be done to reduce these emissions, but that should be investigated.

The proposed \$2.50/ton payment to the City to compensate for the excess wear and tear on the truck route caused by 8,000 additional truck-trips per year could generate approximately \$300,000 annually for City roads. This is particularly appropriate, because City taxes must pay for road maintenance, yet the sulfur operation generates no sales tax.

NOISE, LIGHT, AND GLARE

Item 7 of the SEPA checklist says that loading operations will be limited to between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. However, there is an ongoing problem with shipboard noise – specifically, large generators that run all night. The Port should get these shipboard generators to respect the same operational hours as the rest of the activities.

Item 11 of the SEPA checklist says that this operation will not produce glare. That is incorrect. The existing coke loading operation produces considerable glare, both from lights on the dock and on the ships. These lights are so intense that they throw shadows on walls 5 blocks away. No measures to control light and glare are proposed for the sulfur loading.

Adequate lighting for safe operations can be provided without impacting the nearby residents, by using fixtures that shield the light source, directing it downward toward the work being done, and by positioning the fixtures to shine away from residences. These measures should be implemented.

In addition, at night the large work lights (including those on the ships) should be shut off, keeping only a reasonable level of illumination for security. Besides reducing glare for residents, this will save electricity costs, and reduce light pollution.

CONCLUSION

There is a cumulative cost for implementing appropriate mitigation measures. However, shipping prilled sulfur is a very lucrative business that is well able to pay for necessary mitigation.

The refineries will benefit by shipping the sulfur a shorter distance (*a much* shorter distance in the case of the local Shell refinery) and not crossing an international boundary, which saves time. They will also have an income-producing outlet for a refining by-product, keeping it out of landfills. Marsulex (a business entity directly connected to the refineries) can expand its business in Skagit County substantially, generating increased jobs and taxes, as well as income for the company.

At a 120,000 ton annual volume, the shipping operation alone is projected to generate \$2.7 million annually, of which \$840,000 would go to the Stevedores for the trucking, \$300,000 to the City for street maintenance, and \$1.56 million to the Port. Those figures would more than double if the volume increases to the 300,000 ton annual maximum volume applied for as a modification to the permit from the Northwest Clean Air Agency.

Thus, a modest adjustment in the dollars allocated to each of the entities involved could easily cover the cost of mitigation strategies to protect the health and safety of Anacortes citizens.

The Port Commissioners and staff have a responsibility to the citizens of the Port District and the City to be sure that mitigation measures are implemented. If the hazards cannot be adequately mitigated, the Port should seek other shipping opportunities that are not detrimental to the community.

We should not settle for less than full and appropriate mitigation.