

Testimony of Laura Jackson

DC Zoning Commission Meeting – Thursday, May 01, 2014

McMillan Sand Filtration

Case 13-14

Good evening Mr. Hood and other members of the Zoning Commission:

My name is Laura Jackson and I am homeowner in the Stronghold neighborhood, less than a block from McMillan Park.

I strongly oppose this development and appeal to you from the basic motive and instinct of survival, not just self-preservation but survival for my community as well.

There is a Zoning map following this written testimony that will make it easier to follow my testimony and visualize the area discussed. I'll try my best to summarize three important points in three minutes:

PANCREATIC CANCER EPIDEMIC IN STRONGHOLD – WHAT IS TO BLAME? We Don't Know ...

In the past 18 months, six people living within a 1/2 block radius in Stronghold, which is directly across from McMillan Sand Filtration have developed pancreatic cancer – four of these people have already died, and another is in home hospice.

According to a recent City Paper article, statistically, there should only be one death from pancreatic cancer in 17 years for this small area. According to the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, in 2012 and 2013 there were only 80 cases each year of pancreatic cancer in the entire District of Columbia.

EPA has contacted several agencies including Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, DC Department of Health and DC Water to review this crisis to determine if environmental factors are the cause of this epidemic.

“200 Feet List” Zoning Rule Regarding McMillan

Placement on the “200 Feet List” gives more weight to the desires and concerns of those individuals and business. Only 66 homes in Stronghold are included on this list and all the 129 homes in the gated community of Park Place are included. Only a few feet of grassy area on the corner of North Capitol and Michigan Avenue are included in the drawn boundary (see small red dot) Few, if any of these homes are within 200 feet and none are shown on the map.

Only one of the six people with pancreatic cancer was located within the “200 feet” radius, although all are shown on the Zoning map submitted. The “X” represents the block where cancer struck a Stronghold family.

We request all houses shown on the map submitted by developers be included on the record and those that are not shown be excluded, giving more weight to those legitimately closer and most affected with this development.

Environmental Concerns and Testing

There is not a Health Impact Assessment Study or Environmental Impact Assessment Study published on the developer's website. Although developers have recently published an "Existing Conditions Assessment and Feasibility Evaluation" and "Transportation Impact Study" neither address water quality or health concerns. There should be a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study to consider the public health aspects of construction. Development of McMillan should not be approved until it is ruled out that the cancer epidemic is related to McMillan.

In closing, this reminds me of an episode of Twilight Zone television show I saw as a child. Aliens came to Earth and promised a wonderful future for man. After the title of their book was translated "How to Serve Man", people rushed on a spaceship with high hopes going to the promised land of paradise. It wasn't until people boarded the spaceship that the rest of the book was translated and it was a cookbook! "How to Serve Man".

I believe this is the same situation. People are blindly supporting this project with the pretty pictures, presentations and promises assuming that proper environmental tests have been conducted and it is safe. There are four major hospitals including Children's Hospital with vulnerable children and two day care centers within the boundary. This doesn't affect just Stronghold, it affects the entire city.

I plead with this Commission that we don't board the spaceship until we are absolutely sure that we will be safe.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in this important matter. Bless you all.

Laura Jackson

29 Franklin Street, NE

Washington, DC 20002

used to include Park Place

Michigan Avenue

PANCREATIC CANCER EPIDEMIC IN STRONGHOLD - WHAT IS TO BLAME? We don't know

In the past 18 months, six people living within a 12 block radius in Stronghold directly across McMillan Sand Filtration have developed pancreatic cancer - four of these people have already died, and another is in home hospice.

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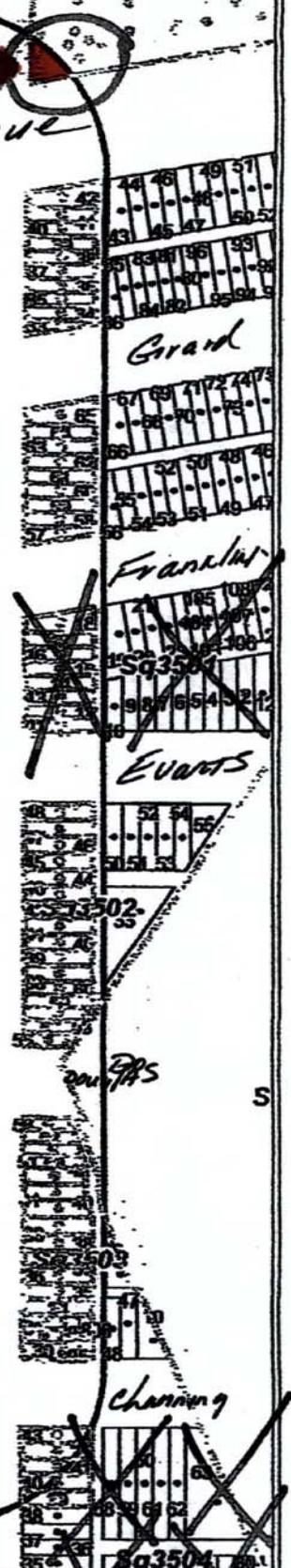
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North Capitol Street



801

Sq3

Sq3126

800

Sq3127

Channing

BRYAN

Square 3128 Lot 0800

McMillan Sand Filtration SITE

- Property Lines
- 200 Foot Radius

*** Office of Tax and Revenue
 Real Property Assessment Division
 Geographic Information Systems

Map Created: 05-06-2013
For planning purposes only

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CITY DESK

Stronghold Residents Want to Make Sure Their Water Is Safe

Posted by Perry Stein on Apr. 25, 2014 at 1:44 pm



In the last three weeks, every household in the Stronghold neighborhood received a flier at their homes with some startling allegations: The rate of pancreatic cancer in the area is suspiciously high, and some residents suspect that it could be tied to their water supply.

Laura Jackson, who has lived in the seven-square-block radius neighborhood that lies east of North Capitol Street and south of Michigan Avenue NE for more than two decades, says in the past 18 months, four Stronghold residents have died from pancreatic cancer. As she and other residents started handing out fliers and talking to neighbors about this, she says they discovered two more people in the area with pancreas-related illnesses.

Jackson and some of her neighbors started researching and learned that the National Cancer Institute estimates that an average of 80 people died per year between 2006 and 2010 from pancreatic cancer in all of D.C. According to 2010 census data, 457 residents live in Stronghold. If 80 out of the approximately 601,000 residents counted in D.C. in the 2010 census die from the cancer each year, the neighborhood should only have one death every 16 years or so. (That is assuming, of course, that each resident and each demographic

has an equal chance of being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, which may not be true.) The people who died in Stronghold ranged in age from their 50s to 80s, according to Jackson.

Those stats made her wonder if the cancers were just a coincidence, or if there was some other explanation. And her fliers put the blame on the neighborhood's drinking water because, after some research, she discovered that pancreatic cancer could be linked to arsenic contamination in drinking water.

"Studies have shown that exposure to arsenic-contaminated drinking water wells may be associated with an increased risk of pancreatic cancer!!!" one of the fliers read. "Neighbors have complained about cloudy and murky water. The water company flushed water recently because of these reports."

Those claims are true, but it's not clear that they necessarily have anything to do with each other. A 2013 *BMC Cancer* medical journal study examining arsenic-contaminated drinking water wells in Florida did find that exposure to arsenic-contaminated drinking water could be associated with higher rates of pancreatic cancer. (Though this particular study looked at water coming from wells; Stronghold residents don't get their water from wells.) But **Greg Kail**, a spokesman for the American Water Works Association, says arsenic contamination in water cannot be detected through sight, taste, or smell—which means cloudy and murky water isn't necessarily a sign of arsenic.

DC Water spokesman **John Lisle** confirms that within the last year, the agency has received reports of brown water in Stronghold, specifically on Everts and Franklin Streets NE. Lisle says the pipes there are around 100 years old (the median pipe age in D.C. is 79 years), and the department flushed the pipes several times this year. It then tested the water coming from the area fire hydrants and found no abnormalities. DC Water says brown water is likely caused by excess iron in the water, which is not a health risk and is often the result of aging pipes made of iron.

Lisle says DC Water takes questions about health seriously, but at this point, there's no reason to believe that these cancer cases are in any way connected to the water supply.

"If what they are saying is true about the number of cancer cases, that could certainly be a public safety issue," he says. "But I'm not sure why the residents have jumped to the conclusion that it's the water."

Stronghold gets its water from the same place as the rest of the District: the Potomac River. The water then goes through treatment at the Washington Aqueduct before it's distributed throughout the city. Lisle says the arsenic levels of the water tested at the aqueduct are well below federal limits. Because of different pipes, the water that residents get throughout the city could vary. But the department, he says, also does more than 5,000 tests a year at distribution centers and has come across no arsenic problems.

DC Water has contacted the Department of Health about Stronghold's concerns, and the agencies are in the preliminary stages of figuring out what additional water tests should be conducted.

"We take this very seriously, but at this point there is no evidence that the culprit is the water," Lisle says.

A resident also called the Environmental Protection Agency, and spokesman **Roy Seneca** says the agency has been in contact with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and someone will be responding to neighbors soon.

Jackson sent out a press release from residents last week about these water concerns, saying they wanted a "Health Impact Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment Study" to be conducted "immediately." She tells City Desk that if it isn't the water causing these illnesses, she wants that possibility eliminated so residents can look into other environmental factors.

"We don't know what it's coming from...We definitely want water testing," says Jackson, who adds that the city agencies have been helpful so far. "These are wonderful people that have been just great neighbors."

Residents also contacted Ward 5 D.C. Councilmember **Kenyan McDuffie**, a longtime Stronghold resident who says he personally knows two of the residents who recently died from pancreatic cancer. While he says he's contacting the necessary agencies and working to ensure that his constituents' concerns are addressed, he's confident that DC Water has effectively and routinely tested the water for chemicals. It is, after all, the same water he has at his own house.

"Anytime you hear claims like the ones from the residents in Stronghold, I think we should take them seriously," McDuffie says. "The chief priority is to get the community answers."

DC Water's Lisle says that if anyone is concerned, they can call customer service at (202) 354-3600 and ask to have their drinking water tested for free.

Photo by Darrow Montgomery

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D.C.

High number of cancer cases in D.C neighborhood has many concerned

By Stephen Tschida
April 18, 2014 - 06:07 pm



(WJLA) - A seemingly high number of pancreatic cancer instances in one neighborhood in the District has many wondering if a common environmental factor has anything to do with the sicknesses.

Neighbors said in the past year and six months, there have been six cases of pancreatic cancer—all within a few blocks of each other.

Four people have died, one is in hospice care and the sixth is recovering from treatment, neighbors told WJLA.

"Everyone is just so afraid and so fearful," Laura Jackson said. "Something is wrong; something definitely is wrong."

A flyer with an "X" for each cancer case is now circulating the neighborhood. Neighbors said even the slightest stomachache has people wondering if they have cancer.

The residents contacted metropolitan staff, asking them to conduct tests to determine if there is an environmental factor contributing to the concentration of cancer cases.

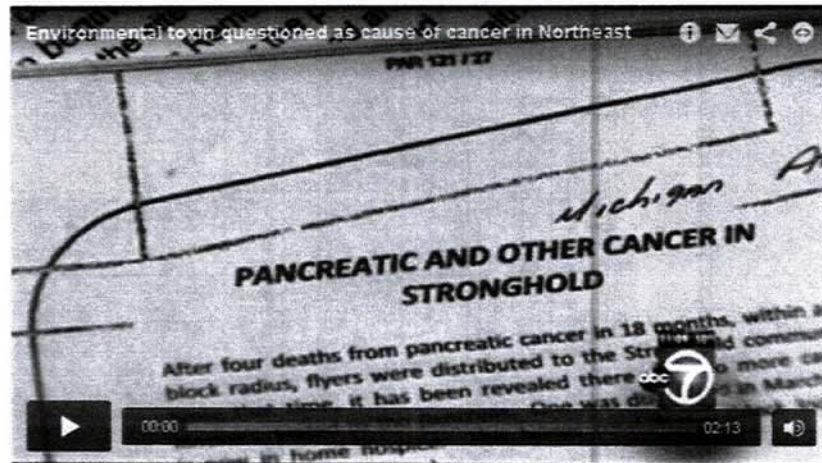
"That is obviously an issue, a concern to us as well and possibly a public health issue, John Lisle, spokesman for the District's water and sewer authority.

Some in the neighborhood have complained about murky water, but city employees say that's because those homes are located on dead-end streets and therefore, the pipes need occasional flushing.

"The city generally is getting all of the water in the same place; it's odd that so many people in the same neighborhood would get it (cancer)," District resident Allison Lakomski said..

Environmental toxin questioned as cause of cancer in Northeast

By Stephen Tschida
May 5, 2014 - 09:51 pm



(WJLA) - A small group with a huge fear: pancreatic cancer.

When Vivienne Rouson died at age 83 in Northeast, those who lived nearby mourned, but did not worry. Then, her much younger neighbors started to die from the same illness. There were six cases on pancreatic cancer within a few blocks in a year-and-a-half, and some here are starting to wonder whether an environmental toxin is the cause.

A group of citizens asked various agencies for help, and on Monday night, two reps from the city came to talk about grants for healthy homes – but they offered no information about the apparent cancer cluster.

Residents of this tiny neighborhood called Stronghold say they have heard from the EPA and D.C. Water, but so far, nothing from the D.C. Department of Health.

The Washington Post

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D.C. hospital reports high rate of black women seeking treatment for advanced breast cancer

By [Lena H. Sun](#), Published: May 9

Cancer specialists at [MedStar Washington Hospital Center](#) are trying to find out why African American women are showing up for treatment with advanced [breast cancer](#) at rates that are almost double the national average.

Of 1,764 women who went to the hospital for breast cancer treatment from 2006 to 2011, 311 of them, or about 18 percent, had stage 3 or stage 4 breast cancers. Nationwide, 10.5 percent of all breast cancer cases are stage 3 or stage 4, according to National Cancer Institute data.

“We don’t know why we are having all these cases with advanced cancer,” said Elmer E. Huerta, director of the cancer-prevention program at the hospital.

Of the 311 with advanced breast cancer, 169, or 54 percent, were women who lived in the District, and most of them were black. And of those, 68 women, or 40 percent, were residents of Ward 5, where the hospital is located. Ward 5 is mostly in Northeast Washington and includes the neighborhoods of Brentwood, Brookland and Fort Lincoln.

Officials did not have ward breakdowns for the other cases. Ward 5 has the highest breast cancer mortality rate of the city’s eight wards, according to the [D.C. Cancer Consortium](#), a nonprofit organization.

Initially, hospital researchers suspected that lack of access to health care might be one reason for the higher rates of advanced cancer; it is a reason the District has one of the country’s highest cancer mortality rates.

But to their surprise, hospital officials found that 97 percent of the Ward 5 patients with advanced breast cancer were African American women with insurance coverage.



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“It is striking that women who have medical insurance are presenting late with a disease” that could have been detected earlier with screening, Huerta said.

Hospital officials don't know why that is happening. One possible reason is fear, Huerta said. But another explanation may be that many women are confused about the importance of mammograms because of conflicting studies about their benefits and risks, he said.

One 42-year-old woman who recently began treatment for advanced breast cancer told Huerta that her doctor recommended a mammogram after she turned 40. But the woman put it off because conflicting information about screenings made her think “it was not important to do,” Huerta said.

Huerta and others cautioned that the analysis was conducted only at Washington Hospital Center and that this is the first time the hospital's Cancer Institute has looked at cancer data in this way.

On Friday, the hospital received a \$100,000 grant from the Avon Foundation to begin a community outreach program to educate women in Ward 5 about mammograms. The hospital plans to hire a breast health educator from the community to visit beauty parlors and other locations to increase awareness of screening, diagnostic and treatment services.

The District has a higher rate of breast cancer mortality than any of the states: 27.6 per 100,000 in 2008, compared with a national average of 23.5, according to the D.C. Cancer Consortium. The 2008 breast cancer death rate in Ward 5 was 40.5 per 100,000, followed closely by 39 per 100,000 in Ward 8, and 29.9 per 100,000 in Ward 7.



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