Jefferson Hills Environmental Advisory Council Meeting

With

U.S. Steel Corporation, Clairton Plant

October 20, 2021

Attendees:

EAC: Lori Bartrug, Kevin Polick, Terry Ackman, Tom Donohue

U.S. Steel: Michael Rhoads, Plant Manager, two other individuals (both Chemical Engineers) involved in the plant environmental controls.

Mr. Rhoads gave a power-point presentation describing the Clairton Plant’s operations, equipment, on-site independent inspections with 4,000 emission points being monitored, automated equipment monitoring 24 hours/day, 7 days/week, continuing environmental performance improvements over the last several years in air quality emissions while typically obtaining 98.5% compliance. He also described their cryogenic desulfurization facility as one-of-a-kind, a best available technology and multiple times better than other facilities typical desulfurization facilities and an improved water quality treatment that returns water to the Monongahela River at a better quality, as per their testing parameters, than when pulled from the river (One EAC member pointed out at the meeting that temperature rise can be a problem for fish, etc.).

Much of the Presentation is contained in the 2020 Mon Valley Works Clairton Plant Operations and Environmental Report which can be accessed at:

<https://www.ussteel.com/documents/40705/71641/U.+S.+Steel+Clairton+Plant+2020+Report.pdf/379b7d75-09b4-6aac-8cc6-9c9ff9c81b16?t=1614861060003>

EAC members had several questions:

Q: What conditions do you anticipate at the Liberty Monitor with the shutdown of the Batteries 1-3?

A: With the shutdown of these 3 batteries by 1st quarter, 2023, the overall load to the stacks will be reduced. While we don’t anticipate it to be significantly proportionally larger than the other batteries load, they are the oldest batteries, rebuilt in the 1950s and recently with endwalls replaced in the last few years, they have been maintained. It’s important to note that we are not the only contributor to the Mon Valley pollution. H2S is also given off from Gas wells (especially those abandoned wells improperly plugged decades ago, which there are many), automobile traffic, sanitary treatment plants, and other industries are contributors to the air contaminants at the Liberty Monitor.

Note: Allegheny County does have a technical support document on the speciation of collected PM 2.5 on their website.

Q: Will the number of days per year be reduced where students can play outside without a health advisory warning?

A: What we see is that due to the wind, inversion characteristics, humidity, etc. in the Mon Valley, the worst PM2.5 readings typically occur during the evening or early morning hours, not during mid-day. So a day may, according to the monitors, being an unhealthy one according to the PM2.5 readings but actually when most people are out during the day the readings are within the healthy limits.

Q: What type of continuous emission monitor (CEM) do you have on your stacks?

A: We recently went to an improved stack design which captures more particulate. The CEM is mounted through the stack at the elevation where you can see a walkway. It is a continuous opacity monitor measuring light transmission or the lack of it.

Q: Does the Clairton Plant have issues with dwindling coal supplies/prices in this world market now?

A: No, we have long-term contracts with supplies coming all by barge from PA, OH, WVa & Kentucky. U.S. Steel has goals and programs in place to be carbon neutral by 2050. Steel-making is a very high carbon producing industry so there is a lot of work in-progress on this goal.

Q: What are your thoughts concerning the new proposed Coke Oven Regulations by Allegheny Health Dept.?

A: While they deal mainly with procedures for visual observations for analyzing leaks, we have been working with them on agreeable formats. This is a very subjective approach since it’s the interpretation of the observers as opposed to an exact mechanical analysis so there are typically wide variations in this reporting. There are also some tightening of the emissions which is questionable from our part since we have paid for and operate the best available technology. If this can’t meet the standards there are little options to do otherwise.

Q: Would you consider adding Jefferson Hills Borough as an effected community to the 2019 Consent Agreement with Allegheny County?

A: No.

Mr. Rhoads offered, in a future visit, a tour of the Clairton Plant in a vehicle.