

## **Testimony of Lynne Bonnett Before the Commerce Committee**

*Regarding*

### **HOUSE BILL 5465, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE'S REGULATORY AND PERMITTING PROCESS**

*Submitted by Lynne Bonnett, former chairperson of New Haven Environmental Justice Network: 2004-2006*

March 15, 2012

Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 5465, AAC the State's Regulatory and Permitting Process. I respectfully oppose this bill, which threatens to undo important environmental protections.

I have been involved in negotiation with the Hospital of St. Raphael's request to operate their power boilers using dirty fuel oil. They agreed to burn cleaner fuel during summer months when people were outside to help alleviate adverse health effects from forcing people to breathe polluted air year round. Without the threat of regulatory hearings they would not have agreed to negotiate. The entire process certainly took more than 90 days. If we were limited to 90 days they could have just stalled knowing that after 90 days they would get their way. It is impossible to negotiate under those circumstances.

I also have been involved in the Greater New Haven Regional Water Pollution Control Authority formation. NHEJN negotiated with the city of New Haven to have environmental protections included in the asset purchase agreement such as having important GNHWPCA board decisions such as expansion and renewal of sludge contracts require 2/3 vote as well as creation of an environmental stakeholder position, the right to petition to have items put on the agenda and the creation of an environmental fund.

We asked that GNHWPCA phase out the importation of sludge from other regions of the state and find alternatives to incineration. The New Haven Board of Aldermen unanimously passed a non-binding resolution asking that they phase out all outside sludge contracts by 2014. GNHWPCA said they were not interested in doing this but they agreed to hire CH2M Hill to do a cost benefit analysis. Through various means CH2MHill concluded that what the sewer plant was currently doing was the best.

We asked the Yale Environmental Protection Clinic to assist us; they conducted an extensive review of the cost benefit analysis and concluded that it was at best sloppy and not transparent. It was totally devoid of public input (one of their stated goals). The flaws in the analysis were so consistently skewed in favor of their desired outcome that the report was at worst biased and inaccurate. We would have never known this was happening without the assistance of the Yale Clinic. The public simply does not routinely have access to this level of expertise. We were very lucky. That is what is wrong with cost benefit analysis in my opinion. I worry about using cost benefit analysis to make environmental decisions. It is so easily abused and the public is shut out by the technical expertise required to execute it.

I live near East Haven CT where the beaches were badly damaged by the hurricane. In addition, erosion along parkland in our city of New Haven due to storm surge is a good indication that protection is needed and that certain houses and developments should not be where they are. Climate change is here; weather is forecast to become more extreme. Perhaps it is time to put a limit on development along certain waterways and restore best practices land use along rivers and streams to provide for cleaner water for all aquatic life as well as sustainable fish harvesting for protein sources in our diet. Many low-income people use fish from local waterways to provide much needed protein for their food. In addition, property loss and damage from storms causes all of us to pay more for insurance. If development is appropriate from an environmental standpoint it is less likely to be damaged or to cause damage. I don't think that most developers have this expertise.

Please reject HB 5465. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lynne Bonnett  
Chairperson NHEJN 2004-2006  
675 Townsend Avenue, Unit 169  
New Haven CT 06511