

# **NAVAL AIR STATION ALAMEDA**

## **RESTORATION ADVISORY BOARD**

Mr. Derek Robinson  
Department of the Navy  
Base Realignment and Closure, Program Management Office West  
1455 Frazee Road  
San Diego 92108

February 22, 2012

Re: Recommendations for Alameda Point RAB Meetings

Dear Mr. Robinson:

This letter is in response to your series of e-mails asking RAB community members for unanimous advice as to how the Navy can reduce its costs in carrying out its obligation to inform the public and get feedback regarding its Superfund cleanup at Alameda Point.

As indicated in our letters to Congress members Stark and Lee, our preference is to continue having monthly RAB meetings and for the RAB to *continue in existence during the post-transfer cleanup period*. Meeting less frequently, or from remote locations, will undoubtedly result in loss of interest by RAB community members and the public. To some extent this already has occurred.

### **RAB meeting frequency should be in sync with high cleanup budget**

Our research has revealed that the cleanup of the Alameda Naval Air Station comprised about 25 percent the Navy's nationwide cleanup budget for FY 2011<sup>1</sup>. Such a relatively high level of expenditures indicates to us that a commensurately higher level of public scrutiny can be justified. Furthermore, the annual cost of RAB meetings represents a miniscule percentage (probably less than 1%) of the overall expenditures at Alameda Point.

Your request for a consensus recommendation on how RAB meeting costs might be reduced, while still meeting community dialogue requirements, entails consideration of both the frequency and the types of RAB meetings/communication techniques to be employed. We, of course, have not been given any details regarding the labor costs for Navy and Contractor personnel, the costs of preparing presentations, subsistence costs (transportation, meals and lodging), or the Navy's policies regarding overtime for Navy and contractor personnel. We have been told that the cost of transcribing, preparing, editing, publishing, distributing and correcting RAB minutes is a large cost component. We do feel strongly that complete and factual RAB meeting minutes are an essential part of maintaining the administrative record, plus they are mandated by Federal law. Our inquiries of other RAB community co-chairs, Base Environmental Coordinators and community members in the Bay Area (Concord Naval Weapons Station, Treasure Island and Mare Island) indicate that these sites all use a court stenographer. Although desirable, that would probably be more costly than what we are now getting for the Alameda RAB.

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## Cost Saving Recommendations

In the past, the Navy has had a tendency to bring a large entourage of Navy, regulatory and contractor personnel to RAB meetings. One cost-saving approach would be to limit Navy representation to the Base Environmental Coordinator and the Site Project Manager(s), who would be presenting at that meeting. This is actually a recommendation in the Navy guidelines for RABs. In addition, one representative from the consulting firm for each site being reviewed that evening should be present. We also feel that one representative from each regulatory agency (U. S. EPA, Regional Water Quality Control Board and Cal EPA DTSC) should attend. Although these regulators seldom speak or give us any useful information, we feel the regulators are most likely to advocate for the RAB community members' and the public's concerns during the BCT meetings and in commenting on the reports for the various sites. Thus, the Navy contingent at RAB meetings could be limited to two from the Navy, three regulators, one consultant and one stenographer (a total of seven, as occurred in early years).

Another approach to cost saving would be to have presentations on more than one site at each meeting. In past years, the RAB often had presentations on two or more sites at the same meeting. This was reduced to one site per meeting because of the Navy's reluctance to participate in meetings lasting longer than two hours. Using the approach of having two major presentations per meeting could, for example, compresses twelve meetings into six without compromising content or technical thoroughness.

## Reviewing the options

The RAB community members have considered the types of meetings and/or conferencing that could be employed. We have concluded that RAB meetings should continue to be held in the evening at City Hall West. Pre-recorded DVD presentations are unacceptable because they do not allow for RAB comments or questions during the presentation, or for interaction among RAB community members and the public. Presentations to the RAB have progressively become more generalized, cosmetic and superficial. It is primarily through assiduous questioning that we are able to elicit useful information.

Teleconferencing or Internet conferencing will not allow for full public input. Such meetings would have to be held at night to allow for participation by RAB community members and the public who are employed. The cost of Navy participation would entail time spent after normal working hours. The cost of telephone calls or Internet participation must not be imposed on the RAB community members or the public participants.

RAB meetings could be held on the same date as BCT meetings. This would minimize personnel, transportation and the cost of meals. To allow for participation by a City of Alameda Councilperson, the BCT meeting could be scheduled for a Thursday instead of Tuesday (Council meetings are held on Tuesdays).

Several times, in your e-mail communications, you have asked us (the RAB community members) how the Navy could reduce its costs of RAB meetings. It would be more realistic for us to do so if we knew how much the Navy spends on these meetings. Please send us a breakdown of your (the Navy's) expenses per meeting including:

- Navy personnel
- Consultant
- Regulatory personnel
- Stenographer

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## Recommendations on RAB meeting frequency, time, location, and format

We have made inquiries of other cleanup sites in the Bay Area and apparently no other site has had its RAB meetings unilaterally altered by the Navy without first consulting the RAB. Treasure Island chose not to limit its meetings beyond six per year for the remainder of this year. Mare Island has reduced meetings from eight or nine to six and Concord is constrained by meeting with the Army on alternate months. Incidentally, the Army has chosen to not reduce RAB meetings at all, feeling that would be in violation of federal law (the BRAC Act).

Therefore, the RAB community members recommend that RAB meetings be held on the second Thursday of the month during evening hours at City Hall West. For the remainder of 2012, we recommend that a minimum of six RAB meetings be held, plus the annual site tour. Presentations should include not only the four pre-Record Of Decision areas, but also updates on the status of other sites undergoing remediation, questions raised by our action item requests and problems encountered in remediation or contracting. Presentations should be forthright and should not hide problems and issues. The RAB community members should not have to learn about issues, such as the change of contractors for Site 17 (Seaplane Lagoon) or the hitting of an underground drain line while driving sheet pilings at OU-2B, from snooping around cleanup sites or reading the newspapers.

Sincerely,

Alameda RAB Community members (unanimous)

Copies: Councilmembers Johnson and deHaan  
Peter Russell, Russell + Associates

Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Dudnak, Lara, Powerpoint Presentation, *BRAC PMO Program*, April 2010