

# The HAC

## The City's Committee to Disempower the Community

We would not be having Hiawatha Advisory Committee (HAC) meetings if the following events and decisions had not occurred;

- 1) **East Phillips' Long-term exposure to Industrial Pollution:** At least three generations of this racially diverse and economically challenged community have been severely affected by industrial pollution from a local asphalt plant and a next door foundry as well as the surrounding freeways and thoroughfares. Children have missed school negatively affecting their learning and future life possibilities & adults have missed work and lost jobs due to asthma attacks, ADHD and lead & arsenic poisoning.
- 2) **East Phillips' Commitment to Environmental and Economic Justice:** The East Phillips Improvement Coalition (EPIC) and the community came together to rid itself of these health hazards. They stopped a garbage transfer-station, a wood burning co-generating plant and high-voltage powerlines down the Midtown Greenway from adding to their trauma and with help from Karen Clark and Linda Berglin they passed the most rigorous Cumulative Pollution Legislation in the nation for this community.
- 3) **Pending Roof Depot Site Sale:** In 2014 EPIC learned that the Roof Depot, Inc. wanted to sell its 7.5-acre site including the nearly 260,000 sq. ft. warehouse built in 1947 as the Sears Midwest Distribution Center. This site is across E. 28<sup>th</sup> St, from the foundry and the asphalt plant and EPIC realized the critical importance of controlling it to prevent another polluting industry from moving in.
- 4) **The Perfect Solution:** In early 2015, the community came together with a list of local problems and needs and the East Phillips Indoor Urban Farm was born. Its goals:
  - a. Green, Living-wage Jobs for the community
  - b. Second chance job opportunities
  - c. Job Training
  - d. Organic, Aquaponic year-round food production
  - e. Affordable Family Housing
  - f. World Café /Coffee Shop
  - g. Community Kitchen
  - h. Cultural Markets
  - i. Bicycle shop on the Midtown Greenway
  - j. Economic and Environmental Justice for East Phillips
  - k. All under one of the largest solar arrays in the State atop the former Sears Warehouse.
- 5) **The Perfect Storm:** The Public Works (P.W.) Department of the City, when they heard of the community plans, went to the Roof Depot owners with the threat of the use of Eminent Domain and bought the building, even though the community had raised \$9 million of development and investor money. The Community was devastated especially that their long standing fight to deindustrialize the site was replaced with the industrial storage facility and diesel fleet of the City's Water yard – exactly what the community had hoped to avoid.
- 6) **In Minneapolis, Community Engagement Does Not Exist:**

In early summer 2017, after the City's purchase of the site, the City Council directed Public Works to "engage" with the community. This resulted in the creation of the Guidance Advisory Committee (GAC). Control of the meetings was tight and consisted of P.W. attempts to placate the community by showing pretty pictures and permitting only a choice of shrubs and flowers but never permitting the Urban Farm presentation. During the 4<sup>th</sup> GAC meeting the real intent was laid bare when State Rep. Karen Clark tried to explain her legislation requiring limits on the cumulative pollution in East Phillips. GAC Chair, Bob Friddle, threateningly rushed at Clark yelling and forbidding her to speak, saying she is not supposed to be here and causing her and most of the community to leave the meeting in disgust. Thus ended the GAC.

In late winter 2018, after the City Council voted unanimously to support a motion which provided no space for the Community's Urban Farm Project BUT which contained C.M. Cano's "Staff Direction" containing 9 points, 8 of which provided options for the inclusion of components of the Urban Farm Project. The 9<sup>th</sup> point increased RSP Architect's pot for designing the City's Water Yard to \$2,700,000.00. Bob Friddle, formerly a high ranking employee at RSP is now the Director of Facilities Design and Construction for the City. The "Staff Direction" prompted the formation of the Hiawatha Advisory Committee" (HAC), another attempt to disempower and manipulate rather than engage the community. This was made abundantly clear when P.W. enlisted the help of the unaware Pillsbury United Communities (PUC) at the May 6<sup>th</sup> 2019 HAC meeting. PUC presented a PowerPoint offering themselves as an alternative to the East Phillips Indoor Urban Farm project and at a time when the community has still not been allowed to present their plan or PowerPoint to either the GAC or the HAC.

7) **The City's Number One Principal of Community Engagement states,**

*"Right to be involved – Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process"*

*(Passed by Mpls. City Council in 2007 – updated in 201*

There has been no meaningful involvement by the community surrounding and most impacted by the decisions made about the Roof Depot site - ever! The community has not even been permitted to show its PowerPoint of their five year project. Further, only one member of the Urban Farm team has been allowed to represent the community's project on the HAC, a committee of 26 members. We suspect most HAC members have absolutely no idea what the community's five years of work involved or what the Urban Farm project entails. This has been nothing other than an effort by PW and the City to disempower the community. Therefore, the EPNI Team will come prepared to make its presentation at the beginning of the May 20<sup>th</sup> HAC meeting to provide HAC with any claim of legitimacy to their alleged "community engagement".

*This is the community's three-acre shared use plan.*

*It uses only 18% of the 16.4-acres of land owned by the City at the Hiawatha site.*

*The community would much prefer the entire 7.5-acre Roof Depot site which would allow;  
many more living-wage jobs, more affordable housing, no more pollution and  
one of the State's largest Solar arrays.*

