

Group hails steps taken by officials

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Interfaith Action, a federation of urban churches, businesses and organizations, now may be willing to support the City of Rochester's revised plan to dump what the federation terms "contaminated" soil in a landfill on the city's west side, according to an Interfaith spokesman.

Mark Gregor, manager of the city's Division of Environmental Quality, said Oct. 24 that the city is willing to fund the hiring of an independent environmental consultant to test the soil in order to allay neighbors' fears. Edward Doherty, commissioner of environmental services for the city, previously told the *Catholic Courier* that the soil already has been tested and is not hazardous.

Gregor said the city plans to invite members of local neighborhood associations to serve on a committee that would examine future uses of the landfill, which he said could be reclaimed for recreational purposes.

On Oct. 27, Interfaith Action member Phil Martorano said he and other Interfaith members welcomed the steps outlined by Gregor.

"Things have been updated to a lot of our satisfactions," Martorano said, noting that Interfaith Action may meet this week with Doherty to discuss the dumping plan. Interfaith Action had gathered about 150 signatures on a petition asking the

city to halt its original plan to dump the soil, Martorano said. However, the federation has stopped gathering signatures as it examines the new plan, he said.

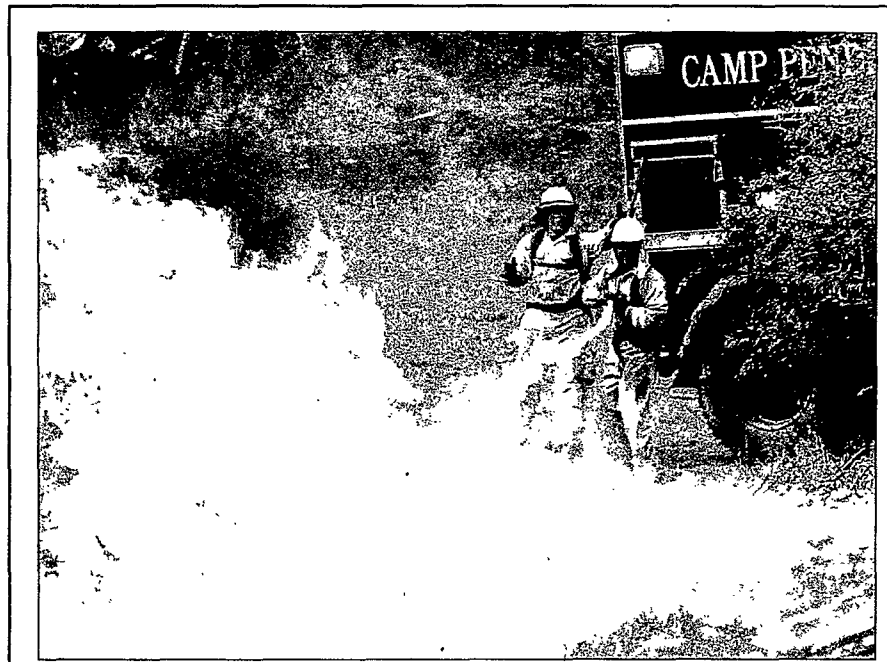
The dirt originated in a parking-lot renovation project in Charlotte, but was mistakenly dumped in the Town of Greece. The city has proposed removing the soil and dumping it in a former landfill located behind the sports field of Edison Technical and Occupational Center and a lot in which school buses are routinely parked.

Any foundry slag — a porous, rock-like substance created by the burning of iron ore — found in the dirt will be removed from the soil and placed in a special Monroe County landfill in Riga. This measure would be in compliance with state regulations regarding the disposal of non-hazardous, solid-waste materials, Doherty said, adding that such materials could not be left at the city's west-side landfill.

City officials also noted that any final dumping plan must be approved by state environmental officials.

Members of both Interfaith Action and Most Precious Blood also attended a Rochester City Council meeting Oct. 21 to voice their concerns. Father Gary L. Tyman, pastor of Most Precious Blood, said he attended the city council meeting to show support for his parishioners.

"We have lots of questions about



Reuters/CNS

Winds fan fires

Firefighters at the Camp Pendleton Marine Base fight a blaze in Valley Center, northeast of San Diego, Oct. 27. Fueled by mountain winds, fires spread through southern California, killing 14 people and injuring dozens. More than 40,000 people have been evacuated from their homes.

what the city plans to do," Father Tyman said.

Some of those questions were voiced by Donna Smith, a parishioner at St. Cecilia's Parish in Irondequoit. Smith owns and manages an apartment complex in the west-side neighborhood, and told city councilors that her neighbors have had to deal with air pollution, rats and other ill effects of previous dumping.

"We want the dumping process halted until all residents, school parents and employees of area businesses have been informed of the proposal, and have had a chance to fully understand its implications and respond with our concerns," she told the council.

In an interview after the council meeting, Lois J. Giess, city council president, said neighbors have already been informed of the plan through meetings. She added that the city also may inform neighbors of final plans by delivering fliers to their homes.

"I know that no work will go forward until all the 'i's' are dotted and the 't's' are crossed," Giess said.

According to Interfaith Action, neighbors are concerned that contaminated dust will float across Edison, the school buses, homes and businesses; that the soil contains ar-

senic, barium and other toxic materials; that the city's plans to wash trucks after every trip to the landfill is a sign of the soil's contamination; and that people with respiratory problems will be adversely affected by the dumping. Additionally, Interfaith Action said neighbors are also concerned about excess noise and traffic from dump trucks driving through the neighborhood.

Doherty previously told the *Courier* that "the material is certainly not harmful in any way." He added that any soil found to have unacceptable levels of toxic material will be removed from the site, although he stressed that the city does not expect to find any such material. Doherty also said the city will continually monitor the air quality around the site. He explained that trucks carrying the soil must be washed after each trip to prevent soil from caking, and said the trucks will be taking a route to the site that is some distance from any residences.

Gregor added that the dumping plan has been scrutinized heavily.

"I don't think I can stress enough that there have already been a lot of environmental and health (officials) who have looked at that plan," he said.

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(National Research Corporation 2003 Internet Report)

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