

GAZETTE NEWS-CURRENT

Big Picture, Local Focus.

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Owner of polluted site claims to be innocent victim

Final part in a series

By **BRANDON SMITH**

For the News-Current

The current owner of the former Lammers Barrel factory property, Helen Gorby, claims to be a mere victim of circumstance in the story of Lammers Barrel. She says she and her husband bought the property in 1974 or 1975, and were not told anything about the possible pollution on the site. She said she only knew that there had been a fire there.

"We had a[n automotive] transmission business and we were going to expand and we never got to it. And then about the time we were thinking strongly about expanding, the EPA came in," she said.

Ms. Gorby says that the EPA forbid her to erect her business on the site.

"We wouldn't have bought it, I'm sure," had we known about the pollution, she said. "I just got stuck with it, just a victim of circumstances, I guess."

Future of the site

Beavercreek city officials already have ideas about re-purposing the site once it is cleaned

up — possibly as a park, said Ms. Gorby, who is more than willing to part with the property.

Yet the Ohio Department of Health has said that cancer risk rises, ever so infinitesimally, just by walking across certain parts of the site. Those parts were fenced off in the early 2000's because of concern for children and adolescents who had been known to trespass on the site, the report said.

EPA's job is to assure adequate cleanup, said Mr. Fischer.

What does cleanup entail? No specifics are known yet, except that both the soil and the groundwater will have to be removed of their toxins. One option could be excavating all the soil on the site, cleaning it and replacing it. And groundwater could be pumped out, cleaned and replaced. Or other compounds known to react and neutralize the toxins at Lammers could be injected into the soil and water.

This reporter asked Scott Glum, Site Manager of Lammers for Ohio EPA, how much cleanup might cost. A million? Two million? Ten mil-

lion? More? Each time, Mr. Glum did not deny the possibility.

The responsible parties have banded together, as Mr. Fischer said they often do, to clean up the site. There are incentives for the companies to work in a timely fashion, said Mr. Fischer, but Lammers is considered a longer-term project and with those, speed is relative.

In the mean time, people who live in the Woodhaven subdivision are left to wonder what impact the pollution has had — if they know about it at all.

More pollution nearby

The Ohio Department of Health has said the homes with wells above the official threshold of pollution have been connected to the county water system. However, in the same report, they said that more testing should be done on a previously un-explored portion of the subdivision. They tested positive for pollution there.

See tomorrow's edition of the Greene County Dailies for Joan Baxter's recounting of the fire.