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Do you remember the sense of despair and betrayal you felt when you learned, as a child, there was no Santa Claus? Or perhaps your world was rocked when you learned there were no Superheroes to save the world from your enemies. Did you ever experience the feeling of hopelessness when you were told your loved one had an incurable disease and the doctors (your medical superheroes) had no more treatment options?

These are the gut-wrenching emotions our community has experienced since we learned in 2019 that we had a corrupt company in our neighborhood.....an enemy in our midst, if you will. We learned that an inconspicuous company (smack dab in the middle of a residential area and near a wetland) had been poisoning our community with toxic chemicals for decades.

We thought the MPCA, MDH even the EPA would be the superheroes who would come to our rescue. We were shocked beyond belief to learn that Water Gremlin would not be permanently shut down. This was the logical consequence everyone thought would happen to a company who had no shown no regard for the health and safety of it's own employees or neighboring residents. Instead we learned that the role of MPCA was to "work with" violating companies to bring them into compliance. The consequence that actually happened was that offending companies everywhere learned that they could lie, cover up, deceive, cause illness without the serious consequence of being shut down. Sure their wrists could be slapped, fines could be collected, (trees could be planted), but business could proceed and profits could be made.

As time went on we learned, to our further dismay, that the MPCA had been partially responsible for the environmental purge on our community. Upon investigation by the Legislative Audit, we were told significant weaknesses in permitting and enforcement had occurred. Investigations, regulations and review of reports that should have occurred, did not. Once again our world was rocked into the depths of despair.

So the egregious violations that Water Gremlin committed racked up by the dozens. To name just a few:

- *Decades of high TCE emissions over permitted levels.
- *120 TONS of TCE in 2018 alone
- *332 pounds of Hazardous waste accumulated for 15 YEARS under machinery
- *Open trenches leading to the wetlands
- *Uncovered containers full of hazardous waste
- *High lead blood levels in employees and their families.

Out of this cloud of doom, a ray of hope emerged. It was in the form of a group of courageous women, who were determined to get answers and protect our community going forward. They created NCCG - Neighborhood Concerned Group and have worked tirelessly for the past 3 1/2 years. Their work with you, MDH, legislators, reporters, journalists and many others has affected many positive changes. Most notably, the Minnesota ban on TCE. They have reached Hometown Hero status, in my mind.

I am also grateful for the ongoing collaboration you have with NCCG and the work you have put into trying to correct the wrongs of the past. It is obvious from the number of staff and hours you have put into this project, that your intentions are good. The public hearing that you held displayed the thought and transparency you are trying to achieve. Though the main speaker was difficult to hear and understand, the draft permit changes are promising.

However, I want to point out my two main areas of concern. You must NEVER EVER let your guard down when it comes to Water Gremlin. As soon as you do, they will be up to their old deceptive ways. They are NEVER to be trusted. You must remain vigilant in your oversight, monitoring and unannounced, FREQUENT inspections in perpetuity!

Secondly, you must remain firm in the level of T-DCE you permit them to use. Do not acquiesce to their request for "a slightly higher allowance of usage." The TURI - Toxic Use Reduction Institute states, "Trans-DCE IS NOT CONSIDERED A PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE TO TCE, perc, nPB OR OTHER HAZARDOUS WASTE." Our community already has suffered under the risks of chemical exposure and too many of us suffer suspiciously-related illnesses.

MDH must stay current on best practices regarding benchmark levels of chemical usage in overly-sensitive communities. For the health of their own employees and our community, Water Gremlin's main goal should be elimination of all toxic chemicals.

There can never be justice made for our community, but your commitment to continue to fight for us is an encouraging step. It has been devastating to see many examples of allowing industry to have rights above the citizens. This is a precedence that has to stop. Please stay true to your mission statement "to protect and improve the environment and human health." Perhaps then our community can rekindle our belief in Santa Claus and (environmental) Superheroes.

Respectfully submitted,
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