

MINUTES OF MEETING

CLIENT : Coastal, Stormwater & Catchment Management Department
 Engineering Unit, eThekweni Municipality
PROJECT : Umgeni River Canalisation Basic Assessment
PROJECT No : J25130 D
PURPOSE : Public Meeting
PLACE : eThekweni Conference Centre, City Engineers Building
DATE & TIME : 12 December 2012, 17:30pm
MINUTE TAKER : Gisela Fechter & Katherine de Jong

NAME	REPRESENTING	E-MAIL ADDRESS	DISTRIBUTION
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PRESENT

As per the attached Attendance Register

APOLOGIES

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ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION

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Attendees at the meeting are required to take their own notes and act on these rather than await the arrival of the minutes. The minutes serve as a record of events at the meeting.

DESCRIPTION	ACTION	DEADLINE
1. 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS		
1. 1.1. Ms Gisela Fechter (GIBB) welcomed everyone to the meeting.		
1. 1.2. Ms Fechter introduced herself as the Environmental Assessment Practitioner on the project and her colleague, Ms Katherine de Jong, who would give a presentation on the project.		
1. 1.3. Everyone introduced themselves.		
1. 2. MEETING PROCEDURE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING		
1. 2.1. A slide was presented with the meeting procedures.		

DESCRIPTION	ACTION	DEADLINE
<p>1. 2.2. Objectives of the Meeting</p> <p>Ms Fechter explained the purpose of the meeting as being a public meeting to consult with Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) on the proposed widening and canalisation of a 1 km stretch of the northern embankment of the lower Umgeni River - just downstream of Connaught Bridge to just before NCP. This being Phase 2 of the lower Umgeni River widening project for flood attenuation of the Springfield/Umgeni Business Park area. The southern embankment had already been canalised.</p> <p>1. 2.1. She explained that GIBB had previously undertaken an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for Phase 2 of the Umgeni Canalisation Project (northern embankment) based on which the eThekweni Municipality was granted Environmental Authorisation about 5 years ago. For various reasons, mainly as a result of acquisition challenges, the start of construction was delayed beyond the validity period. It is for this reason that this Basic Assessment process is now undertaken in terms of the latest EIA Regulations. Therefor this is in effect a repeat EIA.</p> <p>1. 3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION</p> <p>Refer to attached slides on:</p> <p>1. 3.1. Background</p> <p>1. 3.2. Site Location – map included</p> <p>1. 3.3. Description of the proposed widening and canalisation</p> <p>1. 4. BASIC ASSESSMENT</p> <p>Refer to attached slides on:</p> <p>1. 4.1. Background and Project Description</p> <p>1. 4.2. Public Participation Process</p> <p>1. 5. DISCUSSION</p> <p>The following questions and comments were raised and were then responded to by the GIBB and/or the eThekweni team members.</p>		

DESCRIPTION	ACTION	DEADLINE
<p>1 5.1. How high will the new embankment be?</p> <p><i>Response:</i> 16 m. eThekwini team members explained that the 'new' embankment will be cut (wedged out) into the existing embankment to widen the river. The embankment will be raised by about 1 meter above the current top of the embankment ground level. The bottom of the new embankment will be a distance away from the low water mark of the river.</p> <p>Ms Fechter explained that during the previous EIA, Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife had insisted that the 'sand bar' that would be left between the new embankment and the existing embankment be removed to prevent it from being washed into the estuary.</p>		
<p>1 5.2. What is a reno mattress?</p> <p><i>Response:</i> It is a soil stabilisation mechanism consisting of a layer of crushed rock held in place between two layers of wire mesh (similar to a gabion basket). eThekwini proposes this method of stabilisation along the lower part of the proposed embankment. A gabion basket running along the embankment will separate this 'reno mattress' from the upper part of the new embankment. The upper part will be vegetated.</p>		
<p>1 5.3. What soil/material will be used below the vegetation in the top part of the embankment?</p> <p><i>Response:</i> Clean soil (not waste or debris) from the material cut from the existing embankment will be used. eThekwini will consult with a vegetation specialist on suitable plants to be used for the stabilisation.</p>	eThekw. / GIBB	
<p>1 5.4. What will happen with the remaining soil and cut material?</p> <p><i>Response:</i> eThekwini has received permission from the Department of Mineral Resources to 'mine' the sand that needs to be removed from the construction site. However, this is under the understanding that none of this sand be sold. eThekwini will use the excess material as cover for municipal landfill sites.</p>		
<p>1 5.5. What will happen with the concrete that would be dug up – will it be recycled?</p> <p><i>Response:</i> No, the concrete will be landfilled. eThekwini estimated that only a small quantity of concrete will be removed from the site. Recycling of concrete would thus be inefficient. There are also not many concrete recyclers available locally.</p>		

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<p>1 5.6. Will the reno-mattresses also be overgrown with vegetation?</p> <p><i>Response: Yes. The intention is to mirror the vegetation that exists on the current embankment.</i></p> <p><i>eThekwini team members explained that the embankment design was improved by increasing the vegetated areas. The vegetation species have not yet been specified. However, the intention is to 'make it aesthetically pleasing. For public safety reasons, thick bush will be avoided, but some trees will be planted (for shade, and bird perching and nesting sites).</i></p> <p><i>eThekwini plans to appoint an Environmental Control Officer who would inspect the site at least 3 times a week to ensure that environmental controls are effectively implemented and adhered to. In addition, a vegetation specialist will be consulted to establish suitable site rehabilitation measures.</i></p>	eThekw.	
<p>1 5.7. A concern was raised that the biodiversity study that had been undertaken during the previous EIA dates 2005 and may therefore require an update. It was noted that chameleons and crocodiles were recently observed in the area, which may not have been seen before.</p> <p><i>Response: The biodiversity study was undertaken by the CSIR. GIBB did not foresee that there would be any significant changes to the mitigation measures which the CSIR had recommended. However, GIBB will consult with the CSIR or another biodiversity specialist to confirm biodiversity and mitigation requirements.</i></p>	GIBB	
<p>1 5.8. Will the construction activities and shifting the northern embankment have a significant impact on mammals and reptiles; and impede on their movement and habitat corridors?</p> <p><i>Response: It is expected that most of the animals will simply move away and take shelter in the surrounding habitat when construction activities start. Since the construction activities only affect the higher embankment, the habitat in the lower embankment close to the low water mark will remain undisturbed. The lower embankment and the areas outside the 1km-stretch will remain habitat corridors for animals to take shelter.</i></p> <p><i>eThekwini undertook to work with the local Conservancy groups to undertake an animal search and rescue before construction starts.</i></p> <p><i>Changing the design by including stabilisation through vegetating the upper embankment, will provide a habitat for animals.</i></p>	eThekw.	
<p>1 5.9. Fish eagles are observed in the area. Loss of trees is therefore of concern.</p> <p><i>Response: eThekwini has provided for a lump sum for planting of vegetation and trees in the contractors schedule of quantities. This allows for flexibility and more input from specialists on rehabilitation.</i></p>		

DESCRIPTION	ACTION	DEADLINE
<p>1 5.10. Will the water quality be affected? Will the mangroves in the estuary be affected?</p> <p><i>Response: The intention is to undertake the construction in the dry season. This would mean that the construction activities will take place well outside the 'normal' water level. Construction activities would thus have an insignificant impact on water quality. By stabilising the 'new' embankment with reno-mattresses, gabion baskets and/or vegetation, water quality impact will be well mitigated.</i></p> <p><i>Because the 'normal' flow regime of the river will remain unaltered, there will be no impact on the mangroves.</i></p>		
<p>1 5.11. What delayed the project?</p> <p><i>Response: Essentially the proposed project concerns the completion of a widening project that had started in the 1980's. The first phase consisted of the canalisation of the southern embankment. The canalisation of northern embankment was delayed due to land acquisition challenges. eThekweni has now acquired all the land including through expropriation; and all issues regarding lease agreements have been resolved.</i></p>		
<p>1 5.12. What will happen if the project does not go ahead? What causes the flooding risk?</p> <p><i>Response: The river channel is narrow at around Connaught Bridge, which in effect causes a 'bottleneck' which backs stormwater up during extreme floods.</i></p> <p><i>Should the proposed project not go ahead, then the high risk associated with flooding that the Umgeni Business Park at Springfield is exposed to, will remain. eThekweni had committed to the widening when the Umgeni Business Park was established.</i></p> <p><i>It was noted that sections of Springfield would still flood during extreme floods, but the areas that would flood would be much reduced and flood velocities would be much attenuated in areas that still flood.</i></p>		
<p>1 5.13. Has the river not reshaped recently?</p> <p><i>Response: No. Most of the recent rain fell on the coastal belt, which did not cause severe flooding of the Umgeni River.</i></p>		
<p>1 5.14. Does the Inanda dam not prevent the severe flooding?</p> <p><i>Response: No, for example during the 1987 floods the Inanda dam filled up in 5 days, while at the time it had been expected that it would take many months to do so. Under such major floods, the dam provides little flood attenuation.</i></p>		

DESCRIPTION	ACTION	DEADLINE
<p>1 5.15. When do you want to start the construction? How long will the construction last?</p> <p><i>Response: eThekwini estimates that the construction period will last 9 months. The aim is to undertake most of the construction during the dry season – therefore the start of construction is earmarked for April to May 2013.</i></p>		
<p>1 5.16. Who's budget will be used for the project</p> <p><i>Response: Coastal, Stormwater & Catchment Management Department's budget.</i></p>		
<p>1 5.17. Construction was done below Connaught Bridge a while back – what was this for?</p> <p><i>Response: This was for the construction of stormwater culverts. These culverts were designed to fit in with the proposed canalisation.</i></p>		
<p>1 5.18. Will eThekwini install litter traps at the stormwater outlets along the embankment? Some suggestions for litter trap designs were made.</p> <p><i>Response: This has not been incorporated as yet, but eThekwini will consider this. eThekwini has made use of various designs, and will investigate appropriate designs eThekwini were also given the details of a litter trap from DUCT to consider.</i></p>	eThekw.	
<p>1 5.19. What properties were expropriated?</p> <p><i>Response: Business premises along the embankment between Connaught Bridge and NCP.</i></p>		
<p>1 5.20. Will the Durban Solid Waste waste collection facility be removed?</p> <p><i>Response: This facility will not be affected by the proposed development. DSW, as the owner/operator of the facility will make decision regarding the facility.</i></p>		
<p>1 5.21. How will the visual impact be mitigated?</p> <p><i>Response: eThekwini will work with a landscape architect and their Parks Department to ensure that the proposed project fits in with the aesthetics and themes envisaged for the area.</i></p>		
<p>1 5.22. Where will the walkway be located?</p> <p><i>Response: This is open for discussion – it could either be at the top or intermediate at the gabion structure. eThekwini will consult with the local conservancy and community representatives on this.</i></p>	eThekw.	

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<p>1 5.23.The cycling fraternity consider themselves I&APs. Will there be an opportunity for a cycle track.</p> <p><i>Response: Noted.</i></p> <p><i>A cycle track is open for discussion and will also be discussed with the conservancy and community representatives</i></p>	eThekw.		
<p>1 5.24.A representative of the Canoeing fraternity advised that they consider themselves as I&APs. They advised that Connaught Bridge is used as a turning point for canoeists.</p> <p><i>Response: Noted</i></p>			
<p>1 5.25.It was noted that illegal waste dumping is currently taking place along the river embankment. Will there be safeguarding against dumping? Can eThekwini hold property owners who made themselves guilty of dumping waste and soil to extend their properties into the river be held accountable?</p> <p><i>Response: The eThekwini project team is aware of the waste dumping. The waste will be removed.</i></p> <p><i>As mentioned the new embankment will be raised above the current ground level at the top of the embankment. This will mean that the embankment will be elevated by about 1 meter above the adjacent roads. eThekwini expects that this will deter people from accessing the embankment to dump.</i></p> <p><i>It may be difficult and time consuming to hold people accountable for dumping.</i></p>			
<p>1 5.26.Would it be possible for eThekwini to promote the establishment of a Public Liaison Committee (with involvement of Ward Councillors)?</p> <p><i>Response: Yes, eThekwini will consider this. It was agreed that a monthly meeting would be suitable.</i></p>	eThekw.		
<p>1 5.27.It was pointed out that some of the road names on the maps GIBB had provided were incorrect</p> <p><i>Response: GIBB will correct these.</i></p>	GIBB		
<p>1 5.28.It was requested that the 1:100 year floodline be indicated on a map.</p> <p><i>Response: The eThekwini team noted that maps on the existing floodlines are available. However, it should be noted that the canalisation would result in new floodlines. These would only be published once the construction has been completed.</i></p>			

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<p>1 5.29. When and where was the meeting advertised? A concern was raised that the advertisement did not go out in one of the main stream newspapers and it was recommended that this be done. It was also noted that key Ward Councillors were not present at the meeting and should be included in all correspondence.</p> <p><i>Response: Ms Fechter explained that the meeting had been advertised in the eThekweni Metro, as this newspaper is widely distributed. A journalist had also placed an article on the project in The Mercury (on his own accord).</i></p> <p><i>GIBB had considered it unnecessary to advertise in mainstream newspapers, since only few public members had shown an interest during the previous EIA on the same project.</i></p> <p><i>GIBB obtained the contact details of the Ward Councillors in order to notify them of any further correspondence on the project.</i></p>		
<p>1 5.30. When will the Draft Basic Assessment Report be placed in the Library?</p> <p><i>Response: The Draft BAR will be placed in local libraries shortly.</i></p>		
<p>1. 6. WAY FORWARD</p> <p>6.1 Ms de Jong thanked everyone for their comments and for taking the time to attend the meeting. She noted that the Draft BAR would be circulated shortly to all registered I&APs. She reminded everyone that the period 15 December – 2 January would not be considered in the comment period for the Draft BAR.</p> <p>6.2 All I&APs would be notified about the possibility of a second public meeting in the new year (should this be required).</p>		