

New York State Department of Public Service Staff Comments on
Public Involvement Program Description in TGE's Preliminary Scoping Statement

SECTION 4.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

The material presented on public involvement indicates that TGE has initiated its PIP with a community presence. It is in the process of establishing a local office and has set up a web site and local/toll free telephone numbers. Initial public contact efforts appear to have been made with a limited number of community representatives by telephone and mail. Many of these contacts seem to have met with opposition. Based on the information provided, it appears that the applicant's PSS has not been prepared with direct input from the general public/stakeholders.

4.1 Community Involvement Process

TGE should carry out outreach efforts to create public awareness of its proposal not only in areas within the immediate project area, but also in areas adjacent to it, i.e. across the river in Manhattan/New York City and surrounding communities in Brooklyn and Queens. Explain how this will be done.

TGE should demonstrate the evaluation tools it will use to determine the effectiveness of its public involvement message. These tools (such as attitudinal research, surveys, focus groups) should measure the public's awareness of the project and its status.

4.1.1 Pre-Application Phase: Early Planning, Stakeholder Identification and Informal consultation

Provide copies of all educational materials developed for the project to date. Consider publication of materials in Polish, Spanish and possibly Yiddish - particularly relevant to the Williamsburg area.)

Provide copies of all media coverage on the project to date (press releases, new stories, paid advertisements, etc.)

Provide project media plan (complete list of all media outlets that will be used on an ongoing basis) and the geographic areas each reaches. Outlets should also cover those that serve the Non-English speaking communities (Polish, Spanish and Yiddish, etc.)

Provide information regarding specific outreach and involvement activities that TGE plans to carry out to encourage public participation during the pre-application phase.

Explain how TGE will determine the number and types of meeting formats (town hall, open house, etc.) to be held to ensure optimal outreach to the public.

Provide information about one-on-one and group meetings that TGE arranged with community individuals/organizations since filing the PSS.

Explain how TGE is making the public aware of its willingness to speak to established groups and community.

Explain how TGE will provide answers to the questions raised by stakeholders at community sponsored meetings as listed in the Summary of Questions Posed during Public Meetings in the Appendix, such as in a Q&A section on its web site, mailer, newsletter, etc.

Provide information regarding how the general public will be offered an opportunity to participate in the draft stipulation process.

Provide information about the public and educational programs that TGE is considering coordinating with New York City College, Brooklyn Business Library and Government Library Services.

4.1.2 PSS Distribution, Notice and Submittal

Mailing List and Database

Provide a copy of the current project mailing list (separate from the project's service list).

Explain how residents of the Greenpoint and Williamsburg communities directly surrounding the proposed site have been targeted for the mailing list. Include the criteria chosen to determine the area (radius from project site). Provide plans for ongoing mailing list expansion and stakeholder identification (besides meeting sign-in sheets and toll free hot line/web site inquiries) such as purchasing zip code mailing lists, paid media ads, fliers, post card or web site offer to be placed on mailing list, etc. We note that the mailing for the October 11 Open House meeting apparently was not sent to Williamsburg addresses.

Provide information as to how residents of other areas adjacent to the proposed project area, who may see themselves as "stakeholders" in the project, will be targeted for the mailing list.

Direct Mail

Provide a copy of the introductory letter/brochure/newsletter that this section states will be mailed to Greenpoint and Williamsburg residents in each of the languages in which it is prepared. How will this mailing list be assembled? Will bulk copies be supplied to libraries, community centers and community board offices, etc.? If so, which specific drop sites will be used?

Please add the following DPS and DEC staff representatives to all mailing lists: Dianne Cooper, Leigh Walrath and Peter Seidman (DPS), and John Cole (DEC).

Web Site

On the Home Page of the web site, a topic button for "Current Events" or "Calendar of Events", etc. should be added and maintained so that viewers find a timely posting of the project's upcoming outreach event(s) and project milestones.

Provide information as to when the web site will include the document, Frequently Asked Questions & Answers.

Explain how the availability of the web site will be publicized on an ongoing basis.

Discuss plans to add additional materials to the web site.

Hot Lines

Discuss how the local and toll free telephone and fax numbers will be publicized on an ongoing basis.

Onsite Office

When will the onsite office be staffed and open to the public?

Provide the onsite office's telephone number, hours, staffing pattern, etc.

Provide information as to how its availability will be publicized on an ongoing basis.

Formal Document Repositories

Identify the specific libraries in the Greenpoint-Williamsburg area where the PSS is currently available besides the onsite office and Brooklyn Borough Hall. Provide information as to how this availability will be publicized on an ongoing basis. Discuss the steps that have been taken with the libraries to ensure that the PSS (and application) will be made easily accessible to the public and kept up to date.

TGE should also consider repositories at a public library and a community board office in Manhattan and in Queens adjacent to the project area to serve as a repository of the PSS (and application). Provide information as to how these additional repository sites will be publicized.

Provide copies to both staff and the NYSDPS Central Files Office of the public notice that TGE published of its PSS filing as each actually appeared in all newspapers used.

Please provide staff with draft of application filing notice prior to publication. (Under separate cover, Staff will provide TGE with copies of other Article X Application Filing notices.)

DPS Process Forum

After TGE has completed some initial public outreach including public meetings, distribution of written information (mailing, newsletter, etc.), Staff will make arrangements to hold an Article X process forum. Staff will coordinate with TGE on the choice of site as well as invitation mailing and paid advertisements to publicize the event. TGE will need to provide staff with its mailing list and service list on mailing labels.

Continue Face-to-Face Meetings

Provide more information as to how TGE will continue to reach out to the community groups and publicize its willingness to speak to groups and organizations.

4.1.3 Application Phase: Preparation and Submittal of Article X Application

In its application, TGE should document at all its PI activities in a PIP appendix that includes:

1. Detailed and quantifiable information regarding all meetings and attendees;
2. Reports of all of the applicant's PIP activities carried out during the early planning and pre-application phase;
3. Details regarding plans for public information/ involvement activities to be held during the Application phase (separate from the formal application and intervenor process), implementation and construction phases of the project;
4. Copies of all educational materials developed for the project thus far;
5. Documentation of major media coverage since the beginning of the project (press releases, news stories, paid advertisements, etc. (If press releases are used to inform the public, copies of the actual press clipping should be included in the Appendix to indicate that the release reached the targeted group.);
6. Public events/meetings, web site content, public educational materials/project brochures, sample mailings, public communications; and

7. Number of hits and information received from stakeholders on project web site, info telephone line, etc.

Continued Outreach

See comments in 4.1.3 number 3.

Periodic Distribution of Newsletters and Fact Sheets

Provide information regarding how often the newsletter will be published and methods of distribution (mail, web site, drop sites, etc.)

Public Meeting/Open House

TGE states that “at least one public meeting will be held following distribution of the PSS and before finalizing the Stipulations and submitting the Application.” This is out of order as it appears in the Application Phase, instead of the Pre-Application Phase. The 1999 Article X Amendment made it the applicant’s responsibility to make the public aware of the stipulations and to offer meaningful opportunities for public participation in the stipulation process - before filing the Application. (A plain language version of the stipulations, posted on the project’s web site and used as a handout when meeting with the public can be a useful tool in helping stakeholders better understand technical stipulations.)

Please see comments in Section 4.1.1, number 8. The public’s opportunities to participate in the stipulation process should be in addition to general project awareness. It does not seem that “one public meeting following the filing of the PSS and before finalizing the stipulations” would be adequate.

Media Outreach

Please see comments in 4.1.1, number 2.

Neighborhood Presence/Community Benefits Programs

Provide information regarding community’s response to TGE’s offer of support of waterfront revitalization projects.

Coordination with DPS

It is requested that TGE submit a written monthly PIP update and meet with staff on a monthly basis to discuss its PIP efforts.

4.1.4 Hearing and Decision Phase

In the application filing, TGE should include specific plans as to how it will continue its outreach efforts to keep community members who do not choose to participate as parties or intervenors in the case informed of project progress. The formal application review process does not take the place of public involvement/information efforts.

TGE’s stated plan to distribute a fact sheet and explain the intervenor status/funding is an excellent activity to be carried out in the Pre-application Phase. Discuss how and when it will be carried out.

4.1.5 Post Certification Phase: Ongoing Public Participation after the Article X Certification is issued

In its application, TGE should demonstrate how it plans to:

1. Involve stakeholders during the Compliance and Implementation phases of the project.
2. Inform communities/stakeholders of its construction schedule prior to and during the project's construction phase.