



School City of East Chicago

Excellence in Education

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

FEBRUARY 9, 2024

STATEMENT REGARDING CANCELLATION OF SCHEDULED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW MEETING

EAST CHICAGO, IN – The School City of East Chicago (SCEC) agreed to host a public meeting on February 1, 2024, to be conducted by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) on the topic of air quality permitting for the BP Whiting Refinery. IDEM was notified that they would be responsible to provide security for the meeting, which they indicated they could accomplish through coordination with local law enforcement agencies. The meeting was then rescheduled from February 1, 2024 to February 8, 2024, at IDEM’s request.

An unfortunate confluence of events, including the rescheduling of the public meeting, the heightened public interest in the subject matter due to recent events involving the BP Whiting Refinery, and an East Chicago Central varsity basketball game led to a significant number of people present at Central High School, the scheduled location for the public meeting, on February 8, 2024. Approximately one hour prior to the scheduled start of the public meeting, SCEC leadership attempted to determine whether or not IDEM had arranged for sufficient security to manage the number of attendees who were already present outside the building. Approximately one-half hour prior to the scheduled start of the meeting, IDEM advised that it would only be able to assure the presence of “roving” officers of the East Chicago Police Department, who would not be dedicated to providing security at the meeting location.

SCEC then attempted to redirect its security and custodial resources in order to permit the meeting to be safely conducted despite the lack of additional security. Approximately ten minutes prior to the scheduled start time, despite the best efforts and intentions of SCEC to facilitate a safe and orderly public meeting, some members of the public began to attempt forced entry into the building entrance. At that time, SCEC leadership conferred and determined that, in the interests of the safety of those participating in the meeting and the safety of the patrons attending the basketball game, the public meeting could not be conducted as scheduled. The meeting was cancelled at that time and was not conducted as scheduled, due to the failure of IDEM to obtain an appropriate security commitment and the unruly behavior of some members of the public who had gathered for the meeting.

SCEC has proudly hosted similar public meetings for IDEM in the past, which have been conducted without incident and with appropriate security personnel in place. Prior to the scheduled February 8, 2024 meeting, discussions had taken place between SCEC and IDEM with regard to a “backup date” which could be utilized in the event of inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances. SCEC is willing and able to arrange for this public meeting to be rescheduled on the noted “backup date,” or on any other date which can be coordinated with IDEM with arrangements for an appropriate security commitment.