

Linda M. Finucane

From: Peter Olsberg <peter.olsberg@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 06, 2015 9:13 AM
To: Linda M. Finucane
Cc: Karp Robert; Cheryl Lappin
Subject: The Atrium Centre - Petition for a Special Permit for Laboratory use

Dear M/s Finucane,

I would be obliged if you would circulate this email to the members of the Land Use Committee.

I am a resident at The Farm, 99 Florence Street and attended the hearing of the Land Use Committee on February 3rd. I would be obliged if you would circulate this email to the members of the Committee.

In seeking a special permit to allow laboratory use in the Atrium the owners are hoping to secure a tenant or tenants in the "Life Science" arena.

Life Sciences are defined to encompass companies in the fields of biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, biomedical technologies, life systems technologies, nutraceuticals, cosmeceutical food processing, environmental, biomedical devices and organizations and institutions that devote the majority of their efforts in the various stages of research, development, technology transfer and commercialization. Life Sciences are all sciences that have to do with organisms like plants, "animals" and human beings.

The memorandum prepared for the petitioners dated 1/30/15 seeks to explain that the special permit will limit the uses to NIH Biosafety Level 1 and Level 2 (including elements of rDNA) which they state POSE NO HAZARDS outside the lab.

A fuller definition of these levels is as follows:

Biosafety Level 1

This level is suitable for work involving well-characterized agents not known to consistently cause disease in "healthy" adult human beings, and of minimal potential hazard to laboratory personnel and the environment. It includes several kind of bacteria and viruses including canine hepatitis, non-pathogenic Escherichia coli, as well as some cell cultures and non-infectious bacteria.

At this level required precautions against the biohazardous materials in question are said to be minimal and most likely involve glove and some sort of facial protection. The laboratory is not necessarily separated from the general traffic patterns in the building. Work is generally conducted on open bench tops using standard microbiological practices. Usually, contaminated materials are left in open (but separately indicated) receptacles. Decontamination procedures for this level are similar in most respects to modern precautions against everyday microorganisms (i.e washing one's hands with anti bacterial soap, washing all exposed surfaces of the lab with disinfectants etc.). In a lab environment all materials used for cell and/or bacteria cultures are decontaminated via autoclave. Laboratory personnel have specific training in the procedures conducted in the laboratory and are supervised by a scientist with general training in microbiology or a related science.

Biosafety Level 2

This level is similar to Biosafety Level 1 and is suitable for work involving agents of moderate potential hazard to personnel and the environment. It includes various bacteria and viruses that cause only mild disease to humans, or are difficult to contract via aerosol in a lab setting, such as C. difficlie. most Chlamydiae, hepatitis A, B and C, orthopox viruses (other than smallpox), influenza A, Lyme disease, salmonella, mumps, measles, scrapie, MRSA and VRSA.

BSL-2 differs from BSL-1 in that:

1. laboratory personnel have specific training in handling pathogenic agents and are directed by scientists with advanced training
2. access to the laboratory is limited when work is being conducted
3. extreme precautions are taken with contaminated sharp items
4. certain procedures in which infectious aerosols or splashes may be created are conducted in biological safety cabinets or other physical containment equipment.

It is obvious that in order to protect both lab personnel and the wider public from potential hazards stringent precautions have to be put in place and vigorously maintained. Without knowing who the tenants will be and what procedures will be carried out in the laboratories it isn't possible to determine what dangers the public (particularly those many elderly residents or those not in good health who live in the area) could be faced with in the event of a serious incident. I think that it is therefore disingenuous for the petitioners and their advisors to claim that BSL1 and BSL2 uses POSE NO HAZARDS. Why are stringent precautions necessary if this is the case? It cannot be determined what the impact would be if there was an incident that caused health problems as the tenant and its laboratory use, which could change over time, is not known.

There only needs to be one serious incident emanating from a laboratory (whether for BSL1, BSL2 or higher) either in Newton or elsewhere in the country to create a furore that would seriously impact the desirability of living in this area of Newton. There have been incidents of organizations whose activities are subject to similarly imposed precautions that have not complied with these and have not been adequately monitored, and serious problems have resulted. There is also the issue of human error even where proper precautions are otherwise in place.

Whilst we can appreciate the great work that many Life Science organizations have done, the facilities that they occupy are much better sited in locations well away from dense areas of population. Steps should be taken to identify such locations so that Life Science practitioners can be assured that they are welcome in Newton on appropriate sites.

I would be happy to discuss these issues further if the Land Use Committee desires.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Olsberg