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WIDE AWAKE IN NEWBOSMENTO

## Hinchey backs TCE testing at Wallace site

From Journal Staff Reports

Congressman Maurice Hinchey has thrown his support behind state Department of Environmental Conservation efforts to test for trichloroethylene contamination at the former Wallace Industries and Morse Industrial Corporation sites in Ithaca.

“While New York state has the primary responsibility for overseeing the testing and remediation in cases such as the former Morse Industrial Corporation, I want you to know that I stand ready to call upon resources of the federal government should such a need arise,” Hinchey, D-22nd District, said in correspondence to DEC Commissioner Pete Grannis. Hinchey's district includes Ithaca.

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Stressing the threat he believes the contamination represents to Cayuga Inlet, Hinchey also encouraged the DEC in their work.

“Given the location of the operation, oils spilled at the site would be very likely to leach into the adjacent water body,” Hinchey said in the letter. “It is clear to me that ground water testing is needed to determine the extent to which contaminants remain and whether new remediation efforts are necessary. I am pleased that you share this view and have expressed a willingness to delineate this problem quickly.”

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Toxic chemicals now seeping down Ithaca's South Hill also drained into Cayuga Inlet, according to county and state documents from the 1960s and 1970s obtained by The Ithaca Journal.

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Records from the Tompkins County Health Department described thousands of gallons of industrial oils dripping from tons of scrap metal dumped from the late 1960s and early '70s at the now-defunct Wallace Steel Inc., 105 Cherry St., Ithaca.

The heaps of metal were dumped directly onto the ground. Pools of hazardous wastes drained from the metal into the soil and also into nearby Cayuga Inlet, the main southern tributary to Cayuga Lake.

The kinds of oils taken to Wallace Steel were reported as lubricating and cutting oils in the 40-year-old health department reports. However, the records say tons of scrap metal originated from the defunct Morse Chain Company, then located on Ithaca's South Hill. That plant dumped a variety of industrial chemicals — including trichloroethylene, or TCE — on its property where it operated from at least 1918 to 1983 when it was sold to Emerson Power Transmission. Studies have linked TCE to a variety of health issues, including cancer.

Other county health department records from 1984 confirmed that TCE and a variety of other hazardous materials were found at the Cherry Street property.

Grannis has committed to testing soil for contamination in the coming weeks at the former

Wallace Industries site, a spokesperson said this week.

The move was in response to a report in The Ithaca Journal detailing a history of contamination at the Cherry Street site.

Hinchey also said he hopes “adequate remediation takes place to safeguard the health of residents living in this area.”

“These activities have left a situation that is just unacceptable for local residents and raise legitimate concerns about the quality of indoor air due to vapor intrusion,” Hinchey said in his letter.

Businesses currently operating at the Cherry Street location operate in compliance with state and federal environmental regulations. The state's focus on the Cherry Street site is on toxic materials that may have been improperly disposed of in the 1960s and '70s.

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