

## **By Frank Williams, Chairman, Brunswick County Board of Commissioners**

On Thursday, June 15, 2017, I joined with leaders from other jurisdictions in southeastern North Carolina, as well as state officials, at a meeting with Chemours, the company that produces the compound known as GenX that has been found in area water supplies. The following is a summary of the meeting, to the best of my recollection.

### **Why the Meeting with Chemours was private:**

Chemours does not have an operation in Brunswick, New Hanover or Pender Counties. After Chairman Woody White from New Hanover County reached out to them, they agreed to voluntarily meet with us. However, they attached some terms to their willingness to meet: the meeting would be private, there would be a limited number of attendees, and only one reporter (a pool reporter) would be allowed in the room. Ultimately, we were faced with a choice: meet with the company under those terms, or don't meet with them at all. Because of the critical importance of beginning this dialogue, we chose the former.

### **The following local officials and state officials were at the table:**

- New Hanover County Board of Commissioners Chairman Woody White (kudos to Chairman White for taking the lead in setting up this meeting)
- Brunswick County Board of Commissioners Chairman Frank Williams
- Pender County Board of Commissioners Chairman George Brown
- City of Wilmington Mayor Bill Saffo
- Cape Fear Public Utility Authority Board Chairman Mike Brown.

### **Additional Brunswick County Presence:**

- Brunswick County Manager Ann Hardy and Executive Director of Health & Human Services David Stanley were also present at the private meeting.
- Commissioners Randy Thompson and Pat Sykes and Health Director Cris Harrelson attended the follow-up press conference.

### **Additionally, the following state officials were present:**

- Secretary Michael Regan, N.C. Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
- Deputy Secretary for Health Services Mark Benton, N.C. Department of Health & Human Services (NC DHHS)
- Dr. Zack Moore, State Epidemiologist / Epidemiology Section Chief, NC DHHS
- Sheila Holman, Assistant Secretary for the Environment, NC DEQ
- There may have been other state officials present whom I missed.

### **General Impressions:**

- It is important to note that Chemours, a spin-off of Dupont, does not have operations in Brunswick, Pender or New Hanover Counties. The plant in question is in Bladen County, fairly close to the Cumberland County line.
- Given that none of our local governments have any jurisdictional authority over Chemours, I appreciate the company sending representatives, some of whom are apparently based in Wilmington, Delaware, to meet with us.

- It was my impression that the company was sincere and competent, although perhaps a bit blind-sided by the reaction to this issue (more on that later). They seemed to be making an effort to understand and address our concerns, although not all of those concerns have been addressed at this point.

### **What We Learned – General Information**

- First, I will attempt not to re-hash information that has been previously posted on our website: <http://www.brunswickcountync.gov/genx>.
- Chemours has a consent agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to manufacture GenX. According to the company, they re-capture 100% of the GenX produced at this operation. Apparently, the EPA has exclusive regulatory jurisdiction over this portion of the operation.
- According to the company, there is a separate and apparently unrelated process, in a different part of its facility, where GenX is an “unregulated by-product” of that process. This is apparently the source of the GenX that has been found in our river. This has apparently been taking place since 1980.
- The company contends that, because the GenX being discharged through that separate process is an unregulated by-product that is not subject to the EPA consent agreement, the discharge is permissible. Thus far, no one from the state or federal regulatory agencies have disputed this assertion.
- Given the above, it appears at this time that Chemours is operating within the guidelines of its state and federal permits. The N.C. Department of Environmental Quality is looking into the matter.
- Chemours indicated that it has the expectation that GenX levels have dropped at least 80% since the NC State sample testing in 2014 due to abatement measures.

### **How Much GenX is in the Water?**

- According to information the N.C. Division of Public Health earlier this week: There are no U.S. regulatory guideline levels for GenX. The GenX levels detected in 2013-2014 would be expected to pose a low risk to human health. Please note that this could be subject to change as further evaluation of GenX is conducted. Please sign up to receive emails from Brunswick County as further information becomes available.
- When asked to explain the concentration of GenX being discharged into the water in layman’s terms, the company indicated that if they released enough water to fill a swimming pool, about 10 drops of GenX would be discharged with that water.

### **What We Asked of Chemours**

- Brunswick County, New Hanover County, Pender County and the City of Wilmington were united in our request that the company eliminate the discharge of GenX into the water. The N.C. Department of Environmental Quality pressed Chemours to reduce or eliminate the discharge of GenX into the water. *The company is working to reduce the discharge, but did not commit to a complete elimination.*
- We asked that Chemours provide any and all GenX-related health studies and data to the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services and to our local health directors. *The company indicated a willingness to do so.*

- We asked that Chemours provide all test results, now and in the future, to state regulators as well as our county and municipal staff. *The company indicated a willingness to do so.*

### **Is the Water Safe?**

- When asked this question, a Chemours representative stated that they were “confident in their belief that the water is safe.”
- The state epidemiologist said that there was a “low risk” of adverse health effects from drinking the water.
- While each person and family must make their own decision, I will personally continue drinking the water based on what I know and have read.