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Support for fencing waste site grows

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SALEM — The Board of Health has added its voice to that of local residents urging the Environmental Protection Agency to immediately fence off the contaminated portion of the Salem Acres Superfund site.

The board took the vote after hearing reports from local residents who are concerned EPA is not moving fast enough to secure the 161-acre site off Marlborough Road recently named to the government's national Superfund priority list.

Rep. J. Michael Ruane, D-Salem, meanwhile, said both he and Sen. Frederick E. Berry, D-Peabody, were still awaiting a response from a recent demand they made to the EPA that the Superfund site be fenced.

He said the demand gave the

agency 14 days to take the action, which would also involve identifying parties responsible for the waste.

Ruane warned, "If they don't move (on the demand), I will stay right on top of them, pressure them to take some action. We're not playing games with this kind of situation. It's a hazardous situation."

Also calling for a fencing of the Superfund site is Ward 4 Councilor Leonard F. O'Leary, in whose district the site is located. The councilor said he fears for the safety of unsuspecting people who walk around the site.

"A lot of people hunt, pick berries on this street, alone (Barcelona Street)," O'Leary said. "I don't know what they're doing on Marlborough Road."

The councilor said he is plann-

ing to get in touch with Deborah Alexander, the Marlborough Road resident who has been heading up efforts by local residents to spur EPA action at the site. "I want to talk to her to see what can be done," O'Leary said.

He said he is also considering drafting a City Council order calling on the EPA to fence off the property. The order might also ask the EPA and state Department of Environmental Quality Engineering to hold a public hearing, with the Board of Health, to discuss possible health hazards at the site.

The councilor said he would also support a public health study of the neighborhood.

Alexander, meanwhile, said she had still obtained no promises from the EPA about fencing off the site. Alexander and a few residents in the neighborhood recently banded together to draft a series of requests to the federal agency. Fencing off four contaminated pits on the property headed the list.

The residents have said they believe the EPA is not moving swiftly enough to put up the fence. An EPA official has said the agency is studying how to

secure the site, but could not promise when action would be taken.

Alexander will be attending a meeting with the EPA as a member of the National Campaign Against Toxic Hazards Dec. 14 at the Marriott Inn in Newton. The group includes people from throughout the area who are concerned with toxic waste in their communities.

She said the EPA is holding the session to give updates to the various residents on clean-up efforts in their areas. EPA regional administrator Michael R. Deland is scheduled to address the group.

Alexander conceded she has not been approached by other residents lately to join her group. "A lot of people are not interested because they don't want the owner to build on the property. They feel if (authorities) come in and clean up the area, the owner would be able to build on what is now wooded land."

She said residents may be unaware "we could litigate so that the owner would never be able to either sell or build on what" has been designated Superfund land. "It's been done in the past in other areas."