

North Hanover/Lyme Residents United  
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November 1, 2016

Dartmouth College Board of Trustees  
6010 Parkhurst Hall, Suite 204  
Hanover, NH 03755

Re: Hanover and Lyme, NH Property Values affected by the Dartmouth Rennie Farm Contamination

Dear Dartmouth Trustees,

Over 50 families who own homes and land in the north area of Hanover and Lyme, NH, who have seen their property values decline, and sale contracts and rental agreements withdrawn due to the Rennie Farm contamination, request your involvement to redress these negative impacts on our homes and land. This health, real estate, moral, and ethical concern is causing a serious public relations issue with the community at large due to Dartmouth's lack of transparency and inaction.

As background, the problem was first caused in the 1960s and '70s by the Dartmouth College Medical School burying over two tons of radioactive remains of laboratory animals on the Rennie Farm. A potential health problem was exacerbated in 2011 when excavation of these remains released 1,4-dioxane, a suspected carcinogen, into the groundwater. Dartmouth College has known about this contamination since as early as 2007, but kept the information private, leaving the community uninformed. Indeed, high levels of 1,4-dioxane were recorded quarterly in 2012 and on through 2015, at times reaching 300-500 times New Hampshire's acceptable level. Then in September of 2015, this same contaminant was detected in the residential well of a family across Rennie Rd. More recently, on October 10, 2016, the College notified neighbors that a second residential well-- a full mile away from the Rennie Farm had tested positive for 1,4-dioxane. This latest development gravely concerns us and it seems that this problem is further than ever from being contained. Please see Rob Wolfe's *Valley News* articles, Vermont Public radio's website, ([www.digital.vpr.net/post/mid-century-dartmouth-hazardous-waste-site-contaminates-drinking-water#stream/0](http://www.digital.vpr.net/post/mid-century-dartmouth-hazardous-waste-site-contaminates-drinking-water#stream/0)), NH Department of Environmental Services' One Stop Data Center and <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~ehs/rennie.html>

North Hanover/Lyme Residents United has formed three committees. The health concerns, which are paramount, will be addressed by the Health Committee, and in addition to this Communications group, there is also a Real Estate Committee.

#### Specific Property Value Concerns

The property value issues which will continue and likely worsen, and which need timely attention are:

- North Hanover property owners have recently had offers to buy their homes withdrawn by the prospective buyers because of the fear of the Rennie Farm contamination. This shocked us and brought reality to our property value and salability concerns.

According to Upper Valley realtors, the properties in or perceived to be within the Rennie Farm contamination area are currently not sellable or are only sellable for very low prices relative to the value of the properties before the contamination became known. It has been estimated that our property values have declined significantly.

- Other North Hanover property owners are delaying selling their homes or have taken their homes off the market. This result conflicts greatly with career opportunities, retirement plans, and reduces family wealth in addition to causing undeserved frustration and unhappiness. For many of us, our homes represent the majority of our assets.
- North Hanover property owners who bought their homes after the 1960's, and recent buyers, have all been caught unawares of the health risks and devaluation of their properties due to Dartmouth's lack of concern, self-interest, and inaction over 50 years and especially now. None of us would have purchased our homes here had we known about this contamination in our backyard. North Hanover residents are rightfully dubious about Dartmouth's intentions going forward, and that you will do the morally and ethically right thing for your neighbors.
- The Town of Hanover stands to lose substantial property tax income due to the reduced value of the properties in the Rennie Farm contamination area. This reduction in property tax income caused by Dartmouth College could negatively affect Hanover's town operating budget and ability to meet the expectations of its citizens. Although we expect the Town will pursue this issue directly with the College, we are making you aware of it. A new tax assessment is expected shortly and this issue needs to be addressed before that occurs.

Dartmouth's Office of Environmental Health & Safety has been working in good faith with the North Hanover residents since July 2016 to help us understand health concerns and keep us abreast of their contamination remediation efforts. While we appreciate these efforts, we expect much more to be done. The stigma that Dartmouth College has brought on our neighborhood is causing much anxiety and fear. Health risks and the attendant devaluation of our homes, and the disruption of our daily lives because of anxiety about the unknown, with no resolution in sight, require an immediate response.

We would like to hear from the highest level of Dartmouth's administration, i.e., the Board of Trustees and President's office, that you acknowledge responsibility for this situation and publicly commit to a timely resolution agreed upon by the residents. Dartmouth is morally obligated to do its best to return our neighborhood to its previously healthy and economically secure condition before this contamination threw our lives into disarray.

Sincerely

Members of the Communications Committee

North Hanover/Lyme Residents United

--Laurie Greenberg

--Jiang Gui

--Olivia Jaras

--Catherine Reed

--William Tingle

cc: Hanover/Lyme Residents United

Maureen O'Leary, Director, Environmental Health & Safety

Richard Mills, Executive Vice President

Julia Griffin, Hanover Town Manager

Tom Burack, Commissioner of NH Department of Environmental Services