

## Episode 6: Good Neighbors? Pt. 1.

In protecting the Hudson River environment between River Miles 130 and 135 it is important to assess the likelihood that major industries here, bordering the river or making use of it, will behave morally and with concern for their outsized impact on the lives and health of ordinary people.

Living in our neighborhood as they do, we would ask, as neighbors do, are they good neighbors, responsible, caring, fair-minded, law abiding and trustworthy? Qualities that we, as neighbors expect of others and of ourselves as neighbors. Asked another way, will the social fabric of mutuality woven here over generations be made stronger or damaged and corrupted by the decisions and behaviors of those major industries? Regarding the Port of Coeymans, a major local industry, there has been strife and controversy(1)(2). Over time, various public events have contributed to an air of suspicion and tensions. For example, a suspension of disbelief may be required to accept that a company also owned by the owner of the Port held a New York State contract to collect tires, and that just happened to coincide with seemingly apparent plans of the international cement giant, LaFargeHolcim, to burn tires for fuel. Yet both companies, according to this report(1), denied any conversations or discussions between themselves to provide or use tires as fuel. Coincidence? One cannot help but feel there is more going on, at some level, that is hidden from local view.

A suspension of disbelief may likewise be required to accept that George McHugh, the lawyer for Carver Laraway, the owner of the Port, leaving that employment to run for Town Supervisor was also coincidence: "McHugh said there was no connection between his departure from Laraway's company, his bid launched last month in this fall's town supervisor race, and the common interest that both LafargeHolcim and Laraway have in waste tires."(1).

Denials like those above, especially when clean air and healthy lungs are at issue do not contribute to a sense of mutuality, of good neighborliness. Instead, defense and attack appear to characterize the tensions still pervading local political struggles. These tensions are revealed in the record of politics around the Coeymans clean air law; the Port of Coeymans and local law constraining importing and disposal of solid waste; and overall control of the government of the town as it relates to problematic local environmental issues of various sorts, chief among them clean air.(2)(3)(4)(5)(6) Questions, doubts or suspicions may arise regarding the roles of George McHugh (formally attorney for Carver Laraway) who as of this writing, is simultaneously serving as the town attorney of the neighboring Town of New Baltimore and a Town Supervisor for the Town of Coeymans. How is this not a source of potential conflict of interest if and when the interests of the two towns diverge? Regardless of what person might simultaneously hold these two critical responsibilities in adjoining townships, how can the decisions of town government affecting the Town of Coeymans not influence the advice of the town attorney of the Town of New Baltimore if the advice is coming from the same person? Is skepticism to be resolved by idealism? One should trust that lawyers by nature and profession will not entangle self interests with legal opinions or politics?

Neighborliness between industries and communities, is it even possible?

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Written and produced by Chris Leide and Michael Tucker for ChrisLeideMusic LLC.