



Staff photo by Matt Harvey

Spelter resident Albert Sheaffer raises some concerns and some ideas during a town hall meeting Monday morning at the community's fire hall. The meeting was the first of 10 planned as part of moving forward the Spelter smelter medical monitoring and property remediation settlement with DuPont.

## Town hall brings together DuPont, Spelter residents

In first of series of public meetings, both sides discuss cleanup, medical monitoring

by Matt Harvey  
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**SPELTER** — About 140 people came for two public meetings throughout the day Monday as property cleanup and medical monitoring moved closer to reality for current or former Spelter-area residents.

The two sessions at the Spelter fire hall were the first of 10 such public meetings. They're part of the settlement forged between class action attorneys and DuPont lawyers in the Spelter smelter lawsuit that was filed in 2004 in Harrison County.

Michael Jacks, executive director of the settlement claims office, said those attending

submitted 120 medical monitoring forms.

Several officials involved in the settlement helped out, and another 250 medical monitoring forms were handed out for distribution, said Ed Gentle, claims administrator.

Gentle was pleased with the first day's turnout, which came despite rainy and windy weather.

"I think the community is very engaged," Gentle said. "We got a lot of good thoughts about the property cleanup, which we'll use to design a cleanup that's fair and that also will make the best use of funds."

During the morning session, Gentle told residents that an estimate of cleanup costs received during the case was about \$20 million more than the \$34 million that's available. It may make sense, he indicated, to test first and then clean up only those places that are contaminated.

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## DuPONT

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Those who attended Monday strongly supported cleanup being optional. But at the same time, they also believe high participation would be best, both for medical reasons and for improving overall property values, Gentle said.

While Harrison Circuit Judge Thomas A. Bedell has approved the format for medical monitoring, he still has yet to rule on what way property cleanup should be structured.

Input from those participating in the settlement will be used to form a questionnaire, Gentle said. Then, a questionnaire will be sent, asking participants to

during a fairness hearing that likely will be held by Bedell in early June, Gentle told the crowd.

Mare Glass, licensed remediation expert, also listened to questions and recommendations on the cleanup.

Albert Sheaffer, a Spelter resident since 1962, stood up to suggest recycling soil that's removed as part of the cleanup to fill depressions in the land. That soil then would be covered — capped — as environmental regulators required at the Spelter smelter property.

DuPont attorney Stephanie Thacker also fielded a question about the Spelter smelter rail/trail cleanup. It's likely in the hands of state regulators, she said, adding that she'd check to find out the status

ed. She said afterward she's likely to participate in both medical monitoring and property cleanup.

And she especially hopes her daughters — now 19 and 22 — will participate in the preventive testing for cancer and other diseases. The lawsuit contended the zinc smelter once operated by DuPont emitted carcinogens throughout Spelter and areas nearby.

Robert Vogel moved to Spelter in 2006.

"In my opinion, if it's that contaminated, they ought to just buy everything and put a fence around it," Vogel said following the hearing.

Attempts to access his attic have resulted in his throat and eyes burning, Vogel said.

Vogel said he wants to partici-

that coincided with his arrival.

David and Patricia Bennett, Lumberport residents since 1986, were impressed.

Attorney Meredith McCarthy "was very informative, and they're here to help you. We're going to do the medical monitoring, and I'd like to have my property checked just to make sure."

McCarthy's main role in the settlement is to protect the rights of child members of the class action. But like others involved in the case, she's helping out in general for the meetings that last this week and next.

Thacker termed the meetings "a good opportunity for everybody to work collaboratively and put the litigation behind us."