

OUT Spoken

Daedra and Dawn Battle

1st Letter

Hi Dawn:

I am glad to see BEL wanting to carry out public consultations to complete the legal EIA process. But come on, do you *really* want people to attend? Calling a public meeting for San Ignacio between the hours of 1 - 6:30 pm is unrealistic. *People work for a living!* Call a meeting at 7:00 p.m. and then you can say you are aiming to have maximum attendance.

Let's do this thing right - what do you say to that???

Hope to see your changes made.

Thanks

Daedra

2nd Letter

Hi Daedra,

Indeed BEL is committed to conducting public consultations, and it is for this reason that we will be available at the San Ignacio Town Hall from 1:00pm—6:30pm; on Tuesday. (Please note that this is not a formal meeting.) San Ignacio community residents will have the opportunity to visit us and speak with us on a one and one basis and provide us with an opportunity to factually inform the residents. Of course, many people may come after work and that is fine.

Our objective here is to move away from the large meetings whereby only a few loud individuals with special agendas dominate the meetings, which does not allow for constructive dialogue. Tuesday is not the only time we have planned to talk with community members. If you would like, you can contact me and I'd be happy to give you a full run down of our schedule. You may agree that this is not a "show" and BEL is committed to taking individual concerns seriously, hence the "one on one" sessions planned for Tuesday and other days and times. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Dawn Sampson

Public Relations Officer

3RD LETTER

Hi Dawn,

I agree it is not a show. So let's not get into word exchanges and the use of adjectives. As I have explained to your boss time and time again that is where the expression of opinions come in and detail the entire process of constructive debate and discussion. I would appreciate BEL advertising that long detailed schedule you mentioned. This will allow for all to attend. And should you really want to inform BACONGO and the public, I urge you to fax me the total listing of schedule meetings. My fax number is 02-33380 and you can always email it to me and copy to all the addressed here on this list.

There is a reason why the EIA law calls for public consultation. I refer you to section 18 of the EIA regulations Statutory instrument 107 of 1995. The words by the very usage "public consultation" begins to suggest a description for the structure of these meetings. Holding private one on one meetings - underscores BACONGO's concern with BEL's commitment to transparency and openness. The reason for a public consultation is so that all can benefit from a public explanation of the project by BEL and a public registration of concerns and views. As

well, I point to Subsection B of that same section 18 that states the proponent must record the concerns of the local community regarding the environmental impact of the proposed project. I hope BEL is keeping a register of the comments made at the consultation. I request a copy of all the views and concerns registered. Or are you going to say no to that too like you refuse us a copy of the GE study, the economic and financial analysis of the Chalillo project, the new agreement between BECOL and BEL???

Again, I challenge BEL let's do this thing right - the law calls for "public consultation" not "one on one meetings". Your company is breaking the law. Get to know the law - and follow the law. You can not single handedly decide to move away from the law.

On another note, what you did in Cristo Rey is more a public meeting? However, attacking the comments and views is not what a public meeting is all about. Listing the views and claiming falsehood is not a consultation. Your very structure in Cristo Rey is very counterproductive and can be intimidating to the public. Do not compare BEL to a private company - you claim the Belizeans own BEL so public views are completely in order. Do not bash people's opinions on your little posters pinned on walls - you are to listen and responsibly try to meet them and explain.

I await your fax or email of the listings of consultative meetings.

Let's do right by the Belizeans.

Thanks

Daedra

4th Letter

Daedra:

Section 18 of the Law states 18(1) During the course of an environmental impact assessment, the developer shall provide an opportunity for meetings between the developer and interested members of the public, especially within or immediately adjacent to the geographical area of the proposed undertaking, in order:

(a) to provide information concerning the proposed undertaking to the people whose environment may be affected; and

(b) to record the concerns of the local community regarding the environmental impact of the proposed undertaking.

Therefore:

1. We are aware of the law and we are providing an "opportunity for meetings between the developer and interested members of the public." The law does not state that this should be with a group or one-on-one. BEL has chosen both avenues.

2. The law states that we must "record the concerns of the local community." No where does it state that we must give it to any particular organization. These concerns must be addressed in the EIA and delivered to the Department of Environment who distributes to members of NEAC and other concerned parties.

3. The law requires that the developer "provide information concerning the project" which is why BEL is providing information posters answering some of the known concerns.

4. The Cristo Rey meeting was geared to provide information and to record concerns. Some of the residents had concerns and these were recorded.

BEL has complied with the law and we as-

sure you that we will continue to do so.

Dawn Sampson

Public Relations Officer

5th Letter

Hi Dawn,

Thanks for your reply. It is encouraging to note that you are abreast of the law but disheartening to see that you continue to use the law as an excuse to deny us information. We hope then that records of this public consultation process will be indeed be evidenced somewhere in the EIA document.

You are quite right to state the law did not detail the format of the consultation but it did call refer to the meetings as "public consultation". By your reply then, it is clear BEL will utilize only the most limited scope of possible interpretation to undertake their legal responsibilities. Again, this begs as to the company's commitment to public disclosure, transparency and openness.

Again we renew our request for the following:

1. The power purchasing agreement between BECOL and BEL with the any amendments.
2. The economic and financial analysis of Chalillo
3. The records of the comments and views registered during the public consultation.
4. The GE study.
5. A list of the "public" meetings you are organizing.

We hope that as the sole electricity distributor and as a conscious effort to provide full disclosure, transparency and openness, BEL will agree to offer us these documents.

Thanks

Daedra

6th Letter

Daedra,

I believe at this point it is important to highlight the below:

1. We have chosen both avenues and we have chosen the avenue that is appropriate after consultation with the local residents. You should know that we have spent the past month discussing the project with the local residents.

2. BEL has consulted with the DOE and they advise that the present public consultation is more than adequate.

3. We are not conducting public hearings but public consultations. We draw your attention to Section 18, Clause 4, of the 1995 Regulations that states, "The procedure for public contact and involvement shall be determined by the Department."

4. Furthermore for public hearings, according to Section 24, of the 1995 Regulations DOE "on the recommendations of the National Environment Appraisal Committee, may require a public hearing in respect of the undertaking, project or activity in respect of which an environmental impact assessment is required pursuant to these regulations." As we indicated before, BEL intends to comply with all aspects of the law and does so in consultation with DOE. DOE has confirmed that we have fully complied with the law so far.

5. The law does not require us to give a copy of a list of meetings.

Dawn Sampson

Public Relations Officer