

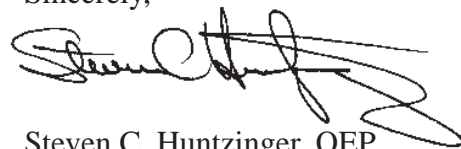
Dear Clients, Friends, and Colleagues,

Recently, a proposed municipal wastewater treatment plant project received some 'bad press' when plant neighbors heard about the project, but did not understand what was going to be constructed. Fears of increased odors, health risks, and ideas of property devaluation were some of the issues raised. The municipality, concerned about the schedule and progress of this important project, decided to hold community meetings and hearings to explain the project and answer the community's questions.

While the intent of the hearings was good, very little progress or new understanding was achieved until the municipality decided to hold an open house at the plant itself. It was during the treatment plant tour that the neighbors really gained some insight into what was actually being done at the plant. Seeing the operation, they were able to understand the types of challenges faced by the plant staff and how the proposed project actually represented an improvement. At the same time, we and the plant staff and municipal leaders, gained a better understanding of the community's concerns. It was in the context of the one-on-one conversations made possible by the plant open house that opened the door to the development of trust among the various parties.

Seeing the positive outcome of the open house, it occurred to me that maybe having an occasional open house at treatment facilities would be a good idea even if there weren't a crisis; you know, the 'pro-active' approach. Having an effective forum for open communication with the community is important. Who knows when you'll need that understanding and good will that comes from knowing your neighbors?

Sincerely,



Steven C. Huntzinger, QEP
Principal
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