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Another N. Meadow site tests positive for perc

By JENNIE DALEY
Journal Staff

ITHACA — While the Department of Environmental Conservation investigates a potential state superfund site on North Meadow Street, less than two blocks away another site with the same type of contamination was identified this summer.

HSC Associates, a heating and air conditioning business at 313 N. Meadow St., tested positive for perchloroethylene and trichloroethene in July. The two chemicals, both considered likely carcinogens, are better known as perc and TCE, respectively. Perc is the most common solvent used in the dry cleaning business, and TCE is a byproduct of perc when it breaks down.

For the dozen years that Marvin McHerron, part owner of the business and building, worked in HSC's Meadow Street offices, a dry cleaner has operated next door.

"It seems pretty obvious" where it came from, McHerron said.

The DEC has little information on the site in its public spill records. There is no listing of the level of contamination found nor if they've begun investigating the dry cleaner next door. McHerron said no one from the DEC or the Environmental Protection Agency has contacted him about the results.

"I find it very strange," he said. "If they can't label it a carcinogen, then why are they making such a big deal about it and, if it is such a big deal, then don't you think the DEC or the EPA would have come and talked to the owners?"

While he hasn't talked to the DEC, he said representatives have approached the Angelo Dry Cleaners, his neighbor. Perc is no longer used at Angelo, but was for a number of years.

There is some evidence of an investigation near the site. A walk down North Meadow Street Thursday showed that at least two soil vapor monitoring wells were installed across the street from HSC and the dry



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cleaners. The caps on the wells match exactly those down the road across from the former dry cleaner at 507 N. Meadow St.

There, the state recently committed to a significant investigation, and likely, remediation of the former Meadow Street Cleaners and Tailor, which operated from the early 60s until about 1977. They have also recommended the property be a Class 2 site in the state Superfund program, meaning it is a significant threat to public health and environment, requiring action.

The HSC building, which the company moved out of before the contamination was identified, has been for sale for about a year now. McHerron said it was at the request of a potential buyer that the tests were done.

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