

Planned Wells Fuel Water Concerns

Written by JSonline.com

Saturday, 03 May 2008 12:37

Loss of supply, effect on lakes feared

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Posted: June 15, 2006

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=436100>

Excerpts:

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East Troy leaders, who last year won a Circuit Court ruling allowing the well, want the structure to be "substantially complete" by Sept. 15, a village official said. Another problem is the growing unreliability of older, less productive wells that are forcing East Troy and Delafield to search outlying areas for sources of uncontaminated drinking water. Shallow underground aquifers, which for decades have only been the source of supply for area lakes and private wells at lake homes, are now being considered for general municipal use in the village of Mukwonago.

But those developments have put municipalities on collision courses, as rural neighbors suggest that uncontrolled commercial and residential growth within populated areas puts their previously reliable rural water supplies at risk. "They build and build and build and build and create a situation where there are water problems," said Rob Hudson, founder of Friends of Lake Beulah. "They don't say 'No' to your big construction guys because they want the tax base that construction brings." Bryce Styza, chairman of the Chenequa Village Board and himself a developer, said Tuesday that officials of this largely residential and wealthy community have decided to hire an engineering firm to drill four monitoring wells on public and private property. 2 years of testing The wells would be used to measure how the Delafield well affects Pine Lake during a two-year period. Village officials also are worried about the well's effect on other bodies of water, such as Beaver, Cornell and North lakes. Styza said the board had considered court action to stop the Delafield well but chose to install the monitoring wells, instead. "They also will measure water temperatures in Pine Lake," Styza said. The new municipal well involved will provide water to the Village Square retail development at Highways 16 and 83. It also will connect to the city's water system at I-94 and Highway 83 through a water main. New water would be blended with existing city water to reduce the concentration of potentially cancer-causing radium, which occurs naturally. Well approved twice

As for Lake Beulah, an administrative law judge in Madison has upheld the 2003 decision of the state Department of Natural Resources to allow East Troy to drill its new well. That decision was later upheld by a Walworth County circuit judge. Based on the court ruling, the DNR late last month issued East Troy a drilling permit. Two lake owners' groups continue to fight the well through the state appeals court. A decision is expected within the next few months, said Paul Kent, a Madison lawyer who represents East

Troy. East Troy officials argue that the well is needed to meet existing demand for water. It's not for future growth, they say. And the DNR has threatened to fine the village if it doesn't increase water capacity for residents and for emergency services. The village has received three bids from well drillers that range from about \$300,000 to \$350,000. The Village Board will consider awarding a contract at its Monday meeting, said Judy Weter, the village administrator. East Troy also is weighing alternative well sites offered by lake groups, Weter said. "The village is concerned that the other sites (would) still have the quality and quantity of water that we need," she said. Village President Bill Loesch says in a prepared statement, "We have negotiated in good faith with the Beulah Management District and the Lake Beulah Protective and Improvement Association to find an alternative site, but those negotiations have thus far failed to turn up a suitable alternative site. It's now time to move forward." The board has announced a number of self-imposed limits on operating the well to keep it from having "adverse impacts" on Lake Beulah or neighboring private wells. They include: -- The pump rate, which will be limited to no more than 333 gallons per minute for two years -- one-third what's allowed by the DNR -- except for emergency situations. -- The village will conduct groundwater elevation monitoring and surface water monitoring of the lake for two years. -- Owners of private wells that are damaged by the well will be connected at no cost to the village water system. Mukwonago's search A third chapter in this water saga had been Mukwonago's interest in drilling a well on the shore of Upper Phantom Lake on property owned by the YMCA in the Town of Mukwonago. The Town of Mukwonago, like Chenequa, considered legal action to prevent the new well, fearing it would adversely affect the lake's underground recharge system. Village attorney Shawn Reilly said Mukwonago is no longer interested in the YMCA site. Instead it is exploring farm property to the south in the Town of East Troy.