

Recommendation Regarding Wellhead Aquifer Protection

Recommendation

The Environmental Advisory Committee (E.A.C.) recommends that the Cortland City Council name a committee to develop specific recommendations for legislation designed to regulate development in areas identified as sensitive with respect to the City's drinking water supply as part of expanded zoning law.

Background

The importance of protecting the aquifer, which supplies the City's drinking water, is a subject that has been discussed at length. Zoning is one means of protecting this important resource by regulating development in sensitive areas where the potential for contamination due to activities above and below ground is high. In fact, these areas have already been mapped. Moreover, the adjacent towns of Cortlandville, Homer and Virgil already have such restrictions in place.

After discussing this matter with John Helgren of the County Health Department, the E.A.C. recommends that the Cortland City Council take the necessary steps to recognize the existing zoning and aquifer maps, which would identify certain areas as needing protection. This action alone, in Mr. Helgren's opinion, may give the City stronger legal standing – even in situations where development outside the City limits might adversely impact the City's water supply (e.g. formerly proposed Tops Gas Station). If the maps in question are not already incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan, they should be.

Committee Mission

The proposed ad hoc committee's mission will be to develop specific recommendations regarding how development should be regulated within the sensitive areas referred to above – similar to those already adopted by Cortlandville, Homer and Virgil. The resulting recommendations would then be submitted to the Council for their review and adoption prior to submission to the Zoning and Planning Boards for similar action. It is anticipated that this committee would be dissolved once its mission had been accomplished.

Committee Membership

The E.A.C. recommends that each of the following groups be asked to designate a representative to this committee: County Health Department, Planning and Zoning Boards, County Planning department, Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District, our committee (the E.A.C.), and the Council itself. In addition, the Council may wish to consider appointing a limited number of city residents to further represent the general public.