

NEWS-HERALD

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Bedminster group plans to study wells

By: Bob Keeler , Staff Writer

Gathering information about existing wells in Bedminster will help show the effects of future development before it's even built, according to one of the people involved in a new project to monitor the wells.

We don't know how deep our wells are, or how much water's supposed to be in them," Mary Lennon said. "We're trying to find out what normal is, so if there is proposed development and they do a test well, we might be able to tell what the impact of the well is."

An offshoot of Bedminster Concerned Citizens, calling itself Bedminster Groundwater Committee, was recently formed after being contacted about a private foundation's offer to provide as many as four loggers to monitor wells in Bedminster, Lennon said.

"We can get baseline water levels wherever we put them," Lennon said. "It logs the level every hour for as long as it's on that well and we're talking about having it on a well for months or a year."

The wells have to be studied for an extended period because water levels are different at different times of the year, she said.

Information about the amount of rainfall is also monitored, she said.

Similar studies have been done in neighboring Tinicum Township, she said.

"Hopefully, it'll make people more aware of their wells and how important water is," Lennon said.

Lennon, who is part of the Bedminster Groundwater Committee, gave the Bedminster Township Board of Supervisors information in September about the group's plans, with an update at the board's Oct. 10 meeting. Bedminster Township Planning Commission recommended that loggers be put in the Pipersville area and in the high-density housing area near Dublin, Lennon said.

Preliminary work to see which of seven Pipersville wells could be used for the loggers has been done, she said.

"We'll probably only put one well there, but we've got three possibilities in the Pipersville village to put a logger there," Lennon said.

The Pipersville tests measured the water in the wells being between 63 and 77 feet below the surface of the ground, Lennon said.

"That's shallow," Supervisor Morgan Cowperthwaite said.

Both Cowperthwaite and Supervisors Chairman Eric Schaffhausen said they were surprised that the well water was that close to the surface and they think it is further down at their homes.

One of the wells initially tested as being much lower, but that was because laundry was being done and the water levels subsequently returned, Lennon said.

"We hope to get some of the loggers in place before winter so we can get started," Lennon said.

This year's dry summer has led to 53 Pennsylvania counties, including Bucks County, being put under a drought watch, with residents being asked to cut back water usage by 5 percent.

"My pond's down a foot, which I haven't seen in years," Schaffhausen said.

While there is a bright side in that the dry weather meant less lawn mowing, people should be "modestly modifying behavior" to cut back on water use, he said.

The dry weather came as a surprise to many people after a wet spring, he said.

"The drought has sort of snuck up on us," Schaffhausen said.

In other matters at the Oct. 10 meeting:

* Plans were approved for six new homes on the McKnight tract on Slotter Road.

The site, which totals about 40 acres, also includes an open space lot and one existing home.

"About 20 [acres] are preserved as either natural resources or agricultural," said Tom Fountain, the township's engineer.

Some trees will be removed for septic systems at the homes, but much of the existing woodlands will be maintained, he said.

* Sarah Heyer has been hired as a part-time assistant in the Bedminster Land Use and Bedminster Municipal Authority offices, which share space in an Elephant Road building.

The additional position, which was planned for in this year's budget, is needed both because of additional work at the offices and to make it more convenient for residents to contact someone at the office during business hours, said Peter Braun, township manager.

There is another part-time office assistant working there, but that left times when no one was in the office, he said.

"There will be basically five days a week coverage in that office, where before you didn't have that," Braun said.

* The board gave its support to the county's referendum question asking voters to approve \$87 million of borrowing for open space and land preservation.

"I can't think of anything more important to the county in the long term," Schaffhausen said.

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