

Plumstead evaluates impact of sewer authority agreement

Supervisors resist sending water out of township

Rebecca Fink

Plumstead Township supervisors are refining the request for proposal of a hydrology study to evaluate water resources.

The study is necessary to evaluate the impact of a possible agreement with Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority, which would expand the areas serviced by the authority.

Plumstead hydrologist Bruno Mercuri explained at the recent supervisors' meeting that the study will use domestic and public well logs, as well as township consultant reports and Delaware River Basin Commission reports for data.

The sewer authority filed a lawsuit against the township in 2005 in response to approval of developments using township operated sewer treatment plants on site. The Estates at Timberly Farms uses a Plumstead-operated sewer plant. Carriage

Hill and Plumstead Chase developments plan the same. The suit alleges that the township broke an agreement made with the authority in 1978 that contains a non-compete clause, according to township Solicitor, Jonathan Reiss.

Residents expressed concern about an agreement being reached before a study of groundwater is completed. Conclusions from a previous study by Castle Valley Consultants and Penoni Associates indicate that water withdrawal would exceed natural replenishment at build-out of the township.

Plumstead's Environmental Advisory Committee urged the supervisors to conduct an environmental impact study to determine localized impacts of the expanded authority system on stream base flow, aquatic ecosystems and wetlands. In their letter to the supervisors, they ask for "scientific-based data to assist the supervisors and other advisory boards in making

responsible decisions in this issue."

Supervisors Housley Carr and Betsy Helsel voiced concerns about water quality and supply, if Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority is allowed to expand.

"We need to take a scientific look at water resources to make a correct decision now," said Carr. "Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority will become the de facto planning commission of Bucks County if allowed to expand," he continued. Opponents to an agreement believe that expanding public sewer lines allows more sprawling development.

Helsel explained that by allowing BCW&SA to expand, Plumstead would be piping tens of millions of gallons a year out of the township, instead of recharging aquifers with onsite sewage treatment. "Since 1987 our goal has been to keep water here," she said. "New technology optimizing ground water recharge needs to be considered."