

Reasons for water study differ

By: **RILEY YATES** (Sun, May/27/2007)

Plumstead supervisors are moving ahead with a plan to study the township's water supply, but they remain deeply divided over how quickly it needs to be done.

A minority of the five-member board are pushing for the study to gauge the impact of a potential lawsuit settlement that would allow the Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority to expand in town.

Three members say they are fine with a water study, but that it should not be tied to settlement negotiations.

"They're separate things," Supervisor Vince Formica said. "If we do a water study, it would be to tell us where we are and where we need to go."

On Thursday, supervisors gave tentative approval to taking bids for the study, which could answer how expanded sewers might affect the town's water supply.

A final vote will be made at the supervisors' June 5 meeting, said Dave Nyman, interim township manager.

The jockeying comes as Plumstead is considering a settlement to end a lawsuit by the Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority that claims the township violated a 1978 agreement to stay out of the sewer business.

The suit was filed after supervisors approved three developments that called for on-site treatment plants the township would run. One — Timberly Farm — is already built, with residents bristling over the steep sewer bills they've seen compared to those from the sewer authority.

Settlement opponents have charged it would more than double the number of approved authority hookups in Plumstead, potentially harming the aquifer by pumping sewer water to treatment plants outside the township.

Supervisors Housley Carr and Betsy Helsel, along with the Plumstead Environmental Advisory Council, say an agreement shouldn't be approved until after its impact on water are known.

Carr said Friday he was troubled the majority doesn't believe the study and the settlement are linked.

"The question is, "Once we have this very helpful information, do you use that in your decision making or do you dismiss it?" " Carr asked. "And what the majority say is you would dismiss it."

The settlement would make Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority the sole sewer provider for an area that includes the stretch between routes 611 and 413.

Timberly Farm and the two proposed developments would be moved onto the authority's lines.

Formica said negotiators are working to limit the hookups permitted by the authority. Some of the tie-ins would be for failing septic systems, he said.

The agreement would create a defined sewer district, avoiding a potential court ruling that could hand the authority rights to all of Plumstead, Formica said.

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