

Township considers groundwater protection

By: **CHRISTOPHER RUVO** (Wed, Feb/06/2008)

A recent water shortage at a dairy farm in Nockamixon is another sign that the Upper Bucks township needs to enact a local law protecting groundwater on the double, a township resident said.

The planning commission took a step toward getting the much-discussed well protection ordinance on the books Tuesday by voting unanimously to send it to supervisors with a recommendation for approval.

"We need to do everything in our power to protect the water supplies of current farms, residents and businesses in Nockamixon to foster sustainable development," said Stephen Donovan, a township resident and member of the Bridgeton-Nockamixon-Tinicum Joint Groundwater Committee.

The 30-plus page ordinance essentially prohibits drilling a well unless it can be shown that the well will meet the demands of the home(s) or business it is to serve without overstraining water supplies. A firm proposing a major subdivision would be held responsible under the ordinance for adversely impacting neighboring wells.

Studies by the groundwater committee have found that while wells in the region are drilled deep, residents are having difficulty finding water, and aquifers are not recharging efficiently.

Nockamixon dairy farmer Dave Wolfinger, 52, recently had to drill another well to serve his farm because the well he'd been using had dropped low and was not recharging fast enough during times of peak use, such as when his 150 or so cows drink following milking.

Donovan claimed that "overdevelopment" has affected Wolfinger's well. The question was also asked if Hansen Aggregates Quarry, which Donovan said draws 190,000 gallons of water out of the ground in Nockamixon each day, could be responsible.

"I can't point my finger at anyone or one thing, but I'm sure the quarry and the new development aren't helping any," said Wolfinger.

The well at Palisades High School, which is about a mile from Wolfinger's farm, dropped about 100 feet early this school year. The district installed a new pump that dipped to 280 feet —100 feet lower than the old pump — to get at the water supply.

"We haven't had any problems since. We've been monitoring it and the water is recovering," said David Keppel, facilities manager for Palisades.

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