

Patriot Water Withdraws Application

No frackwater treatment plant for Owego

by Sue Smith-Heavenrich

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On Wednesday, March 3, just one week prior to a scheduled meeting with the Town of Owego Zoning Board of Appeals, Patriot Water Treatment, LLC notified the Town of Owego that they were withdrawing their application for a treatment facility. Since last fall Andy Blocksom, one of the three owners of Patriot Water, has been working with Town of Owego and Tioga County representatives to determine what permits the company needed to locate a frackwater recycling plant on Taylor Road.

Blocksom began seeking permission from local officials in October 2009, when he brought his site plans to the Tioga County Planning Board. A week later he presented his plans to members of the Town of Owego Planning Board and 50 residents, most of whom opposed the heavy truck traffic on Bodle Hill and East Front Street in the Village of Owego.

After listening to Blocksom, and an hour or more of citizen comments, the board decided that they needed more information before making a decision. They tabled Patriot's request for site approval and chairman Robert Rieg sent Blocksom home with a long list of items to address before bringing the proposal back before the town planning board.

Four months later Blocksom returned with a revised site plan and a request for a special use permit for construction in a flood zone. He described his plans to the Tioga County Planning Board on February 17, answering questions from board members as well as those raised by some two-dozen residents.

A week later Blocksom was back in Hubbard Auditorium, this time in front of the Town of Owego Planning Board and well over 100 residents. Planning board members asked for specifications on the water holding tanks and how frackwater would be tested and monitored throughout the treatment process. They also asked about qualifications for employees operating the treatment facility and plans for entrance and egress for trucks hauling wastewater to the facility.

As with the meeting earlier in February, residents brought up numerous concerns about the planned truck route and impact of traffic on local roads. Rieg mentioned that the planning board has received 25 comments on the proposed project since October.

Neither board could generate enough votes in favor of recommending the project. At the close of the February 23 meeting Rieg told Blocksom that while the process had potential, he'd picked a "lousy site". He also told Blocksom that the planning board would take no action until the special use permit had been granted.

Now that permit is moot because last Wednesday, a little after 3pm, Sarah Grace Campbell, Esq sent a message to the Town of Owego saying, "On behalf of my client, Patriot Water Treatment LLC, I hereby withdraw all planning and zoning applications pending before the Town of Owego regarding property located at 936 Taylor Rd. We

wish to thank Town officials and staff for their assistance in this process." Neither Grace nor Blocksom would comment beyond the e-mail sent to the town.