

July 7, 2015 Joint Work Session - Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors and State College Borough Water Authority

Excerpts transcribed from C-Net video by K. Watt on July 18, 2015 (cnet1.org/video/ShowByMember/7/ at 73:20)

Steve Miller, Ferguson Township Supervisor

Yeah, I guess the – I really appreciate the information that you've put together here. And we're certainly going to review the processes in the future as to how we address stormwater in the development plans starting from the beginning.

But I guess the real question that we need to have some feedback on is, this particular project, and you know, there is, this is the one area in that slope area that is zoned for development at this point, in terms of residential development. The fields below it are all zoned agricultural. And obviously any attempt to change that would have to involve the water authority. We certainly would not rezone any land below that.

But the fact remains that right now we have about 45 acres that are zoned for high-density development. We have a plan on the table, that has reached the point where we have to vote on it. And there are a lot of implications to either vote.

So the real question we need to know is, is there a significant risk, with this development, not looking at it as the first step in a lot of other things, or what might happen next, but this development that we have to make a vote on. Does that present a significant risk to the Harter Thomas wellfield?

And I know you hate to answer that specific a question, because it's not a real clear thing, and science has always got a certain amount of 'yes and no, pluses and minuses' to it. But we have to make a decision, so that's our question, at least, the initial question.

So I guess I'd throw that to whoever wishes to speak for the authority.

Mark Glenn, PE, Gwin, Dobson & Foreman Inc., SCBWA Engineering Consultant

Steve, I think in terms of the written questions that were posed to the water authority, we have circulated the formal response. And...I think if you look at the responses, it's hard to respond to a lot of the questions with a great deal of precision, just by the nature of things.

Steve Miller

I understand.

Jeffrey Kern – State College Borough Water Authority Board Member

I think I'll be speaking for everyone and if I'm not, why I'm sure they'll tell me that. I don't think any of us would have recommended that it be zoned as it is now, back in [2004] when it was rezoned. I think that we would follow the recommendations that were just presented as a Zone 2 area, and said that was just the wrong thing, to rezone that property R4.

Having that as an accomplished fiat, we're stuck with it, I assume, unless you want to re-do that. And that's a difficult thing to do legally and everything else.

Having said that, as Mark just said, there's no scientific way that we can say build it or don't build it, because we've got sinkholes around it, we've got water problems on top of it, we've got soils on top of that that are not the best soils. But, your engineer and their engineer have gone out of the way to try to satisfy many of our concerns, so that we're much less concerned and again, I will try to speak for everybody there.

Two months ago at the last, or three months ago at the authority meeting, we were all very concerned. We came up with a lot of questions and our consultants worked with the engineering staff to allay some of those concerns. They mitigated some of those concerns, but they didn't fix them. The risk is still there. The risk is less than it was, but there's always going to be a risk. As Dave said, we live in an area where whatever we do on the surface just might get into the ground.

We're concentrating more surface activity there than we think you ought to do, but the alternative may be even more surface activity because of what you have with zoning.

So we can't say, as an Authority, yes or – first of all, as an Authority, legally we don't do that, and as a personal recommendation all I can say, and again, I think I speak for everyone else, it's a heck of a lot better than it was six months ago. We wouldn't have zoned it that way. It is zoned that way. So if it could be made even better, that would be better for all of us in the end. And perhaps the delay until September will allow some more improvements.