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Greenwich selectmen show support for fracking ban

By Ken Borsuk | June 9, 2017

GREENWICH — A group of concerned citizens that wants the **Board of Selectmen** to ban accepting any water or solid waste left over from fracking made its case to the group Friday.



Greenwich has never been home to any of the waste left over from the controversial extraction process for natural gas known as fracking. The state has no policy in place about accepting fracking waste.

The group wants a pre-emptive ban in place to prohibit storage, handling, treatment, disposal or use of the waste in Greenwich if the states that do permit the practice consider moving it to or through Connecticut. Their pitch got unanimous support from the selectmen.

"What we want to do is get your attention and get the power of your office behind town departments to help us move this forward," said **Richard Margenot**, a member of **Greenwich Conservation Advocates**, which made the presentation.

First Selectman Peter Tesei said there were "tremendous merits" to the initiative.

"This is tremendously informative," Tesei said. "Our departments should help the subcommittee by providing whatever resources they can to have this issue brought forward in a proper manner. In many ways, your work here is educating not only us in the public but the people in our departments as well. I certainly embrace this effort."

Any official ban would have to be done through the town's ordinances.

The group plans to present its request to the Representative Town Meeting Monday. Margenot said he hoped the RTM would consider appointing a subcommittee to work on crafting the ordinance over the summer that could be presented back to the Board of Selectmen for a vote.

Selectman **Drew Marzullo** Friday said there have been ongoing issues in Greenwich created by contaminated soil. Accepting fracking waste could make contamination in town an even bigger problem.

"Methane emissions are dangerous," Marzullo said. "Shallow migration of this toxin can seep into drinking water. Studies indicate that fracking can trigger respiratory issues, noise-related problems, has been known to cause injury and is harmful to the environment. And the last thing Greenwich needs is elevated radioactive waste in its soil. Imagine how long fields would be closed then.

An effort to ban the acceptance of the waste throughout the state has stalled at the State Senate level. House Bill 6329 passed through the state's house but did not get a vote before the session ended. The bill can be reintroduced in the next session for the state legislature.

State Rep. **Livvy Floren** (R-149th) was a co-sponsor of the most recent version of the bill and said on Friday she would continue to support the ban of fracking water and waste through all of Connecticut. State Reps. **Michael Bocchino** (R-150th) and **Fred Camillo** (R-151st) also voted in favor of the ban.

State Sen. **L. Scott Frantz** (R-36th) said he would have voted for the ban if it had come up for a vote in the senate.

"There is no evidence of fracking waste coming to Greenwich or passing through it, nor would there be a reason to think it would be an issue in the future," Frantz said.

"New York has banned fracking, period, and no other New England states have the geological resources. Fracking waste, being a liquid and very expensive to transport, would go the opposite direction from high cost New England," he said. "I am sure it will come back again next year as this is the second, if not the third, time we have seen a variation of it."

Several members of the citizen group who appeared at Friday's selectmen meeting said they would continue to push the ban.

"There will be no reticence on our part to find people and connecting them so they can make presentations as requested that will be valuable to the joint committee over the summer," **Jay Loudon** said. "We are a local outgrowth of a larger movement to become much more well educated on the potential perils of the material."

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