

PUBLIC COMMENT ON PAWLING VILLAGE WATER AND WELLS
BY MAYORAL CANDIDATE STEVE GOLDBERG
VILLAGE TRUSTEE MEETING; OCTOBER 18, 2021

At the last Trustee meeting, the Mayor and the Board “triumphantly” announced the permitting of the Umscheid Wells. And then, a few days later, followed up with a notice – the first of its kind ever sent out – which touted the news.

But, the truth, the part that was conveniently left out of the carefully worded announcement is that this is only a three-year permit. Not a ten-year permit (the maximum allowed.). So, let’s take a moment to properly frame this:

- Let’s not forget the Village was offered a two-year permit over a year ago. A permit you turned down because it was unacceptable to “have one that short in duration.”
- Let’s not forget that since then you’ve spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on Engineering bills, Legal bills and on a Lobbyist. For what? For an extra year?
- And mostly, let’s please not pretend that this is a permanent solution.

I’ve spent long hours discussing this situation with consulting firms including LaBerge, Wright-Pierce and M&J Engineering, with Staff Members in the State Assembly and Senate and with staff at the DEC itself.

No one. Not one of them...gave any credence to the idea that these permits are permanent or even that a renewal would be easy. Most made clear that the circumstances indicated these are permits “granted only to give the Village... time to find a real and permanent solution.”

The DEC was especially clear that the permits mandated close monitoring of the wetland hydrology, which we already know will be impacted, as well as finding additional sources of water.

Who can blame them?

After all, no one seriously thinks that the withdrawal of 300 million gallons of water will actually leave the wetland unimpacted.

Now you may think you have assurances this renewal is “in the bag.” But why would any resident or any developer trust those assurances? Here are some reasons not to:

- One, when this project commenced, we were told these wells and these wells alone “would solve the Village Water problem.” This was repeated over and over in several public meetings of the Trustees and Planning Board. But as the Planning Board’s water report showed, that was never ever true. We always knew we would need more wells.
- Two, when the Umscheid parcel was optioned for \$1.1M (a cost per acre so astronomical as to be farcical) we were told, on the record, that there were “no other suitable well sites within the Village or 2500 feet of the Village Boundary.” And yet, you have now drilled wells at Baxter, a property the Village has owned all along. And, you publicly claim those Baxter wells might in fact deliver almost as much as these Umscheid wells. Were you lying then...are you lying now?

- Third, this project, was originally supposed to cost only \$3 or so million and the price tag...without the renewal work...without the monitoring work...without the additional Baxter Wells is now over \$4.6M.

So, no...no smart or fair-minded person, no resident, no developer would trust (or should trust) this administration or its consultants when they say, "oh don't worry, we will get a renewal." And while some might say "why would you the Village mislead us?" I would simply say, "why would everyone else be wrong?" and "Why have you misled us all along?"

What a dangerous game you are playing with the Village! Essentially, you are playing chicken with the DEC but you are playing it with our future. And when you lose – which many of the experts I've spoken with believe you assuredly will... others will have to clean up the mess. Others will have to sell Umscheid at a loss, others will have to pay down debt we can't afford. Others will need to find a new plan...get grants, etc. Others will have to deal with finished buildings for which there is no water.

But all of this, as bad as it is, does not really speak to the nature of your "Mission Accomplished" style announcement.

Your crafty wording reveals your actual disrespect for our Village. It reveals your cynical belief that people will **not** pay enough attention to notice your actions. It reveals, at long last, why you work so very hard to discourage participation and avoid criticism.

History will cast a sharp and critical eye on what is already abundantly clear...this was nothing more than a political stunt. Nothing more than hubris.

What a terrible shame.