

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ethanol plant poses dangers

On Monday, Feb. 7, the Letterkenny Industrial Development Authority (LIDA) Board voted to sell 55 acres in the Cumberland Valley Business Park to Penn-Mar Ethanol, LLC, to build a plant that will produce 50 million to 60 million gallons of ethanol annually. The land is located in Greene Township, in the Keystone Opportunity Zone, a part of the land Letterkenny Army Depot gave to the community through LIDA. Penn-Mar Ethanol will not pay local or state taxes until 2011.

Penn-Mar had planned to build in Conoy Township, Lancaster County, but the ethanol plant was strongly opposed by residents there. Luckily for Penn-Mar, LIDA was/is not aware of the dangers the plant will pose for employees in the business park, and residents in the neighboring communities. But fortunately for Chambersburg, the approval process at Greene Township and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has not yet begun, so there is time to prevent this plant from locating in our community.

Why we oppose the ethanol plant:

- ◆ The toxic emissions that could escape from the plant are so dangerous that there will be an immediate evacuation plan for the area within 2.5 miles of the plant.

- ◆ The plant will store 8,000 pounds of ammonia, 7,000 gallons of sulfuric acid, 75,000 gallons of gasoline and as much as 1.8 million gallons of ethanol, according to a Feb. 7 Public Opinion article. A fire or other disaster could bring a high death toll.

- ◆ Ethanol plants emit a foul and offensive odor that carries miles from the plant.

- ◆ Two-thirds of the corn used would come from the Midwest

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and Penn-Mar's partnership of 13 farmers from central Pennsylvania and northern Maryland will likely supply the rest — local farmers may not benefit, but could see the price of their corn decrease due to large amounts of "imported" grain.

- ◆ Large amounts of volatile products will be transported to and from the plant over our roads and through our communities.

Here is what neighbors of ethanol plants in the Midwest say, according to published reports in newspapers and on Web sites:

- ◆ "The technology is great for production of ethanol, (but) does nothing to protect citizens from their emissions."

- ◆ "Symptoms were burning eyes, lungs, and throat, you'd get headaches, cramps in your sides and feel nauseous."

- ◆ "These plants smell and ... might prevent clean businesses from joining the community."

- ◆ "When it hits here, it's like my throat slams shut," (said a resident two miles from the ethanol plant in Preston, Minn.)

- ◆ "It made some of the kids

sick, so we'd have to close up the windows to keep the smell from blowing into the classroom."

The LIDA staff and board members are apparently woefully unaware of the history and dangers of ethanol plants. Their cart-before-the-horse approach of visiting other ethanol plants and doing their homework after signing the agreement of sale is irresponsible. How can they expect to locate desirable industries or businesses in Cumberland Valley Business Park, near operations known to pollute and create environmental, fire, and explosion hazards? Their last fiasco, Warrior Roofing, has generated numerous air quality violations from the Pennsylvania DEP, and complaints from residents and business owners up to 2 miles from Cumberland Valley Business Park.

Our association and our members are committed to preventing this undesirable plant from locating in the Cumberland Valley Business Park. We are especially concerned with the elderly, children home alone, or at school, and up to 400 prisoners locked up within the maximum danger zone at the future prison.

We have just begun the process of informing our neighbors, businesses in and around Cumberland Valley Business Park, elected officials, the LIDA board members, about the hazards, the degradation of the quality of life, the decrease in the value of all of our properties (both residential and commercial), and the proven dangers to our health that this plant would bring to the area.

More information is available on our Web site at www.c4aQe.org.

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