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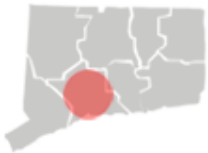
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DEP clears Madison Landing sewage system

By Amanda Pinto, Register Staff

MADISON — Developers for Madison Landing, the hotly-contested residential community planned for Griswold Airport, cleared a major hurdle Wednesday when the state Department of Environmental Protection ruled in their favor.

The DEP announced a proposed final decision to allow a water discharge permit application for the Zenon advanced sewage treatment system that Leyland Alliance LLC plans to use for its 127-unit adult community.

The long-awaited decision, first expected in August, comes after an April 11 hearing where members of Stop Griswold Over Development offered evidence they said showed the sewage system would damage the ecologically fragile site.

Discharge from the site is not likely to cause unreasonable pollution or impairment to the wetlands or Hammonasset River, hearing officer Jean Dellamarggio wrote in a report.



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"The intervenors have failed to meet their burden of proof that the proposed treatment system violates the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act," she wrote.

Howard Kaufman, principal of New York-based Ledyard Alliance, said he was pleased with the ruling.

"We've been working for five years with the DEP on this application. ... I spent eight full days at the hearing at the DEP last year and heard the evidence and knew that we had very, very strong evidence to support that Madison Landing is protective of the environment," he said.

SGOD attorney Keith Ainsworth said, although the group was disappointed, they weren't surprised by the decision.

"We knew from the very beginning that this wasn't going to be a favorable forum ... the (DEP) treated us very, very poorly from the beginning," Ainsworth said.

There is a 15-day period to file exceptions, which would result in a hearing, before DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy will render the final decision.

State Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said he has expressed reservations about whether Zenon is effective in disposing of sewage. He said his office would be reviewing the report and possibly responding to it.

Ainsworth said his group plans to file exceptions, though he said how many documents, and what they would include, had not been determined just hours after the DEP announcement was released.

First Selectman Al Goldberg, who campaigned on a promise to bring decisions about the town's future back before the townspeople, has said he would like to do just that with the Griswold Airport issue.

Goldberg has said the Zenon system ruling is the last piece of the puzzle before development of the site is inevitable.

Goldberg said he had not read the decision, which was released Wednesday afternoon, and could not immediately comment on his plans.

Kaufman said many Madison residents are supportive of the development, slated for construction on the 42-acre airport site, but he has been "frustrated" by those who have failed to note Leyland Alliance's commitment to environmental responsibility.

"Madison Landing is going to be a model community for how to build on the coast and how to do it properly to protect the environment," Kaufman said.

Ainsworth said if the DEP upholds the decision, SGOD may take the case to court.

"This fight is long, many years from over," he said.

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