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Zoning designation could impact cleanup efforts at LOOW

by Timothy Chipp
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Niagara Gazette — Residents looking for the Town of Lewiston's new zoning map will have to wait until the new year.

The Lewiston Town Board tabled a vote to implement the new map, in the making for years, deciding to evaluate a new issue brought before it recently.

Amy Witryol, the former state Senate candidate, asked for the board to postpone any vote until after engineers consider the impact of zoning the current Lake Ontario Ordnance Works site as industrial.

"I spoke with the engineers at Wendel and asked (Andrew) Reilly if he'd taken into consideration the impact of any decisions concerning possible remedial action at the site," she said. "He said he has not.

"The decisions made in the next few months will have an impact on our community for the next few decades, if not longer."

Witryol's concern, she said, is an industrial designation on the zoning map would influence a decision by the Army Corps of Engineers, which is trying to determine the level of cleanup and removal of radioactive material is necessary from the interim waste containment structure at the Niagara Falls Storage Site.

Witryol, along with other environmental stake holder groups, have been advocating for complete removal of all contaminated dirt to meet residential standards in the future.

With the tabled vote, the board is not expected to address the issue again until its next action meeting on Monday, Jan. 28.

Other members of the public were concerned the town's website, www.townoflewiston.us, doesn't have the updated map available to view. The town's current map, which would be replaced once the new one is adopted, has been on the website, but people looking for the new one have had to drive to town hall to study a physical map.

Tabling the issue also allows residents to provide comments about the map through Jan. 7, including written correspondence. Councilman Alphonso Bax, who made the motion to postpone the vote, said delaying a decision is about making sure the first vote is the correct one so they don't have to revise it over a general issue later.

"If people wanted to see it and we didn't have it for them, that opens us up to criticism," he said.

Though other members of the board initially questioned putting a decision off, they eventually came around to see the delay as a positive.

“We’re not under any deadline to do this,” Councilman Ernie Palmer said. “But at the same time, this plan’s been out there for a long time. And we’ve addressed all of the concerns people have had. We asked for participation.”

“Most of the zoning changes have already been approved,” Town Attorney Michael Dowd said. “What we’re talking about here is changes to the actual map. This just lays out what’s where.”

In other board news, two future meeting dates were set. The final audit meeting will be held at 3 p.m. Thursday, while the town’s annual reorganization session will take place at 6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 7. Both meetings will be at Town Hall, 1375 Ridge Road,

Lewiston.

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