<http://www.gmtoday.com/news/local_stories/2018/05162018-permit-for-large-dairy-operation-raises-concerns.asp>

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Some local officials are concerned about the impact on water quality and aquifers of the large dairy operations.*** *Kelly Smith/Special to The Freeman* |   TOWN OF IXONIA — Local government officials in Oconomowoc, Lac La Belle, and Delafield are expressing concerns about the renewal of a water pollution discharge permit to the Tag Lane Dairy on Gopher Hill Road in the Town of Ixonia in Jefferson County.  “The increased land spreading of manure generated from the Tag Lane Dairy operation, if not done properly, could negatively impact the water quality of the area lakes and rivers,” according to a resolution adopted by the city of Oconomowoc and the village of Lac La Belle, which is supplied with Oconomowoc water.  “The aquifer recharge area for the city of Oconomowoc’s drinking water is located near the dairy operations and fields being used to spread manure,” the resolution continues.  The resolution asked the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to “take the appropriate steps necessary to protect the water quality of area lakes and rivers” when consider renewing the permit.  Delafield City Administrator Tom Hafner told The Freeman he may testify about the dairy’s liquid manure spreading practices at a permit renewal hearing later this month.  He said dairy operators endangered some local residential water wells and stormwater drainage when they spread liquid manure on farm property located in the city.  He said the potential danger and strong smell from the manure prompted the Common Council to approve an ordinance that prohibits the spreading of manure in the city unless it is from farms located in the city.  The DNR has scheduled a public hearing about renewal of the permit for the dairy for on May 31, beginning at 10 a.m. at the Oconomowoc Common Council chambers at City Hall, 174 E. Wisconsin Ave.  The dairy produces an estimated 16,000 to 17,000 gallons of milk a day, according to its owners.  The dairy has 2,633 acres. About 325 acres are owned by the dairy and another about 2,300 are controlled through contracts and agreements, according to the DNR.  The farm has 1,290 milking and dry cows and 470 heifers and 350 calves, according to the DNR.  An additional approximately 1,000 milking and dry cows are expected to be added to the herd by 2020, according to DNR.  The dairy will generate about 10.4 million gallons of manure and process wastewater and 16,600 tons of solid manure during its first year of operation under the renewed permit.  An additional approximately 6 million gallons of manure and process waste water and an additional approximately 10,000 tons of solid manure will be added when the expansion is completed, according to the DNR. The dairy is owned by the Griswold family.  Family members have told The Freeman they are making improvements in farm operations and expanding the dairy herd as part of an ongoing effort to grow the business while complying with state and federal regulations.  “If you are standing still you are going backward in today’s economy,” said Kevin Griswold.  Griswold said his family has chosen the Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) style of farming because they believe it allows them to operate a profitable farming business while maintaining a lifestyle suitable to the family.  Environmental and animal advocacy groups have criticized CAFOs. The environmental groups argue the massive amounts of manure and wastewater generated by the operations pose a threat to the surface and ground waters near CAFOs.  The animal advocacy groups argue confining large numbers of dairy cows in giant barns rather than allowing them to graze in pastures is treating the animals inhumanely.  Griswold family members maintain they have operated the dairy and liquid manure spreading in compliance with state and federal regulations intended to protect the environment.  They say the animals are treated humanely because they are in large ventilated barns where food and water are always available to them.  They say pasturing large herds of dairy cows during the winter in Wisconsin is not practical because of the state’s weather conditions.  The existing permit was issued in 2008 and it expired in 2013.  Federal and state law allows the dairy to continue operating on the 2008 permit until it is renewed or replaced by state and federal authorities.  James R. “Mike” Carlson of the DNR said state officials have waited to complete the process of renewing the permit until the United States Environmental Protection Agency finished working with the farm to comply with standards in the 2008 permit.  The federal EPA is the primary permitting authority for CAFOs, according to Carlson.  Carlson explained the DNR is the state authority responsible for permitting and enforcing the federal regulations. | | | FacebookTwitterEmailPinterestLinkedIn | | |  | | |  | | |  | | |  |  | |  | |