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H'town to test John Munn Road property for salt contamination

By CHRIS KNIGHT, Enterprise Senior Staff Writer

SARANAC LAKE - The town of Harrietstown will test the property surrounding its highway garage and sand and salt storage area on John Munn Road for possible chloride contamination.

Supervisor Larry Miller said at Thursday night's town board meeting that he's reached out to Paul Smith's College President John Mills to have the college's environmental program conduct the necessary tests. If the college can't do the work, the town board agreed to have Miller contact Canton-based Atlantic Testing Laboratories.

"I think it will be a good thing for us to do," Miller said.

The move comes after the Adirondack Council threatened to sue the village of Saranac Lake for allowing runoff from its sand and salt pile to contaminate Lake Colby. The threat was withdrawn earlier this month when the village agreed to sign an order of consent from the state Department of Environmental Conservation. The order requires the village to take certain steps, such as covering or moving the sand and salt pile, by specific deadlines to prevent further impacts on the lake. The village was also fined \$1,500.

Miller said there were allegations that Harrietstown's salt and sand storage area at the town highway garage may also be a source of chloride contamination. The tests will determine whether or not that's true.

"I want to make sure and document that there are no issues there," Miller said.

The town plans to test chloride levels in the wetlands surrounding the highway garage. Town officials have also asked neighboring Griffith Energy if they can test for possible chloride contamination in groundwater using three existing test wells on the company's property.

Regardless of the outcome of the tests, Miller said the town plans to take action this fall, either by building a storage shed or pole barn to cover the sand and salt pile. The town is seeking an \$800,000 grant for a storage shed and could learn if it will be awarded the funding by early August.

Skateboard park site on town property could have complications

In other business Thursday night, Harrietstown officials discussed a letter from village Manager Marty Murphy asking if the town would be willing to allow a skateboard park to be built on town-owned property next to the Saranac Lake Civic Center.

The village has offered to pay the additional cost the town would incur by adding a skateboard park to its liability insurance.

But there are some potential complications.

The town purchased the property next to the civic center from the Pee Wee Hockey Association in 1989. The contract included a clause that the land had to be use for baseball, soccer, nature trails or hiking, Miller said.

Town Attorney James Maher has advised the board that the contract with Pee Wee Hockey would have to be modified to allow a skateboard park on the property.

Additionally, the town's insurance company provided a list of a dozen requirements that would need to be satisfied for the skateboard park to be added to the town's policy. The park has to be professionally engineered; it must be surrounded by a fence and locked when not open; helmets and other protective gear would be required; and the skateboard park would have to be supervised and inspected every week.

"Even if the village were to take it over, we'd still have liability issues," Miller said.

The board agreed to forward the information on to the village. Village officials are considering three possible locations for the skateboard park: the property next to the civic center, the William Morris play park on the corner of Bloomingdale Avenue and Depot Street, and in the village park on the corner of Ampersand and Broadway.

APA to take additional comment on Lows Lake reclassification

Miller also announced that the state Adirondack Park Agency has agreed to a request from the town to take additional public comment on a controversial proposal to reclassify the Lows Lake area, including the lake bed, as wilderness.

A series of hearings have already been held in Long Lake, Wanakena and Albany, but Miller had requested an additional hearing in the Tri-Lakes and offered to host the session at the Harrietstown Town Hall.

"I have some issues with what the APA is trying to do with the lands underneath the lakes," Miller said. "I'm afraid that if Lows Lake gets turned into a wilderness, it's going to affect all lakes and our shoreowners in the town of Harrietstown."

APA Chairman Curt Stiles responded to a letter from Miller, saying an additional opportunity for public input would be appropriate in the Tri-Lakes. The APA doesn't plan to use the town hall, but the date, time and location of the session will be announced at a later date.

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