

# GENESEE SUN

## Local Leaders Concerned Over Brine Facility and Fracking Link

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The brine facility in Leicester on Cuylerville Rd. (Photo/ Josh Williams)

AVON — The Town of Avon passed a resolution Thursday evening to resume action on a 12-month moratorium on natural gas exploration and extraction, or hydrofracking. The development came after representatives from the New York State Attorney General's Office and the New York State Department of Conservation office (DEC) approached local leaders with a proposal to shut down the brine processing plant currently operating in Leicester.

The Leicester brine processing plant exists to treat brine that is being pumped from the Azko salt mine, which collapsed in 1994. According to officials, the plant operates at a cost of \$200,000 per month, currently being paid by Azko's insurance company, Zurich.

A number of local Town Board officials were present at earlier meetings, including Supervisors from the Towns of Avon, Geneseo, Leicester, Mount Morris and York. At those meetings they were reportedly asked by Tim Hoffman, from the State Attorney General's Office, and by other state officials, to keep the matter private. However, citing concerns for public safety, the issue was brought to the public's attention this week in the Avon, Leicester and York Town Board meetings.

According to Town of Avon Supervisor David LeFeber, the old salt mine is still producing 15 gallons of brine, or water with very high concentrations of salt, per

minute. The plant treats the brine and releases the treated water into Little Beards Creek. Without the processing plant, brine may spill into natural water sources in the region, contaminating natural water sources and potentially impacting drinking water and agriculture.

“Since we talked about this operation [hydrofracking], we thought the State was going to issue permits, the State was going to monitor things, the State was going to make sure that our resources are protected.” said Avon Town Supervisor David Lefeber. “Businesses come and go, but our ability to produce food and have fresh water is a huge thing and somebody’s got to protect that.”

The Town of Avon passed a resolution 3-2 Thursday to have Town Lawyer James Campbell begin drafting a new moratorium on hydrofracking. Board members Dick Steen and Bob Ayers voted against the resolution; David LeFeber, Tom Maiers, and Jim Blye voted for the motion.

A source with close knowledge of the situation, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the GeneseeSun.com that the DEC was recently involved in a temporary shut down of the brine processing plant, during which tests were conducted to process fracking fluid trucked up from Pennsylvania. According to the source, if successful, the plant could serve as a potential future site for processing fracking fluids.

The plant was built in 2005 and cost \$8.2 million, which was paid for by Zurich, presumably as part of Akzo’s mitigation requirements.

At a Town of York Board meeting held later Thursday after the Avon meeting, the same concerns were raised. Board members expressed strong interest in obtaining independent geological and scientific surveys before even considering a shut down of the brine processing facility.

“Our job is to protect our community,” said York Deputy Supervisor Lynn Parnell.

“These towns are justifiably concerned that the State and the DEC are attempting to delay this information from being made available to the public,” said Attorney Jim Campbell, who represents the Towns of Avon, Leicester and York. “Our concern is that the ink might already be dry on a deal between the New York State Attorney General, the DEC, and Zurich. Such a deal could have profound impacts for Livingston County and should only be considered after adequate dissemination of the facts and an opportunity for public input.”

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