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FEATURED

MENTZ

## 'Our hands are tied': Mentz residents continue to fight against manure lagoon

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Cayuga County Legislator Ben Vitale shares what he knows about the manure lagoon project in Mentz at a public hearing for a local law on road preservation Monday night.

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Megan Ehrhart, The Citizen

**MENTZ** — Both residents and officials have more questions than answers when it comes to the manure lagoon being built in the town of Mentz.

A meeting was called in the town of Mentz on Monday to discuss a road preservation local law; however, about 50 residents took advantage of the opportunity to voice their concerns regarding the negative impacts the manure lagoon being built off Maiden Lane Road could have on the town and their lives. The lagoon is being constructed by CH4 Generate Cayuga and the organization has currently voluntarily stopped work due to receiving a notice of violation from the state Department of Environmental Conservation due to lack of proper permits.

Cayuga County Legislator Ben Vitale explained at the meeting that CH4 is an investment company based in California that has an agreement with the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District to operate the digester.

Vitale continued to say that CH4 is interested in digesting both manure and food scraps and will be accepting more food scraps from restaurants and other facilities in the future as laws change to require more food recycling.

"When a farmer brings in a load of manure for the digester, they take home a load of effluent," Vitale said. "So, when they start to take in more and more of the food scraps, the farmer isn't going to be there to take care of the effluent so CH4 is going to have to provide storage for their own effluent. So that's (the plan for the lagoon) out there right now."

Residents made it clear during the meeting that they are doing all they can to stop the storage lagoon project from reaching fruition. Various concerns were expressed ranging from road preservation to water quality to property values.

"We're going to pay and we're going to lose the values of our homes, our school base — we're going to lose every which way, and those who are benefiting from this are just going to continue to get richer and richer," Sherry Menotti expressed to the town board at the meeting. "We're asking for your help."

The town board members largely listened to residents' various concerns and committed to acquiring more information before the next regular board meeting on Aug. 21.

"We're listening to what your concerns are with what limited resources we have," Mentz Supervisor Richard Nielens, Jr. said.

"It would be good for us to have an informational meeting if we can get the folks that actually are the key decision makers and have them come be a part of a meeting," Councilman Matthew Poyneer said. "The problem is ... there is a state law in the books that says you can't regulate this stuff at the town level, it has to be regulated by the DEC."

The town board decided to move its regularly scheduled meeting on Aug. 21 from 7 to 6 p.m. to allow for more time to discuss the issue. The town board said that they would put forth effort to have more answers about the situation at that meeting.

"We're looking into everything right now," town attorney Kevin Cox said.

"For us to answer questions, we're lost," Nielens said after the meeting. "All we can do is make calls like they can do ... our hands are really tied."

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