

# Cambria to study ethanol proposal

By PAUL SCHARF  
Staff Reporter

CAMBRIA — There was still a bit of tension at the Cambria Plan Commission meeting on Tuesday evening, and video cameras were rolling, but most of the emotional energy shown earlier over the construction of a proposed ethanol plant at Didion Milling in Cambria has given way to the calm voices of attorneys.

The Plan Commission was meeting to decide on a list of questions to pass on to an independent firm that the village board would contract to perform studies about the impact of the proposed plant. The idea had been floated at previous meetings that these studies should be funded by Didion. Dow Didion, however, made it clear in a letter given to the Village Board last week, that they were "unwilling to do so."

Didion also said that the idea "that the board authorize the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the project is a step never before taken in the state for an ethanol plant project."

David Crass of Michael, Best and Friedrich, Didion's attorney, stated at Tuesday night's meeting that much of the information that plan commission members may be looking for would already be supplied

through the state's rigorous permitting process, during which village residents could have input all along the way.

"We're being asked to pay for it twice," Crass said of the request for the additional studies.

Crass also cautioned the commission against "sleight of hand" tactics by Cambrians for Thoughtful Development and challenged the commission to stick closely to the village ordinances.

On the other side of the aisle, attorney Christa Westerberg, representing Cambrians For Thoughtful Development, suggested postponing a decision on the scope of the studies until the Zoning Board of Appeals meets on Thursday, Jan. 30. They will take up the question of whether Didion needs a conditional use permit or simply a zoning permit.

After deliberation about the proper nature and purpose of the proposed studies, including consultation with Village Attorney Vytas Salna, the commission voted 6-2 to recommend that the board use a list prepared by the Garvey and Stoddard law firm as guidelines for a study to be conducted by an independent firm. The votes against the measure came from Village Trustee Zane Neal and Village President Chet Stringfield.

The list prepared by Garvey and Stoddard includes many issues for further study, but they are grouped under the following basic heads: "Air Emissions: impact on health and visibility;" "Water;" "Ecology;" "Odor;"

"Noise;" "External Lighting;"  
"Landscaping;" "Vibration from

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the following possible sources;  
"Village Services;" "Traffic  
(trains or trucks);" "Hazardous  
chemicals, by-products;" "Safety  
plan, emergency response,  
"Property Values;" and "Appropriateness of the site in reference to  
neighboring land uses."

The Village Board will take up  
the list at its meeting on Monday,  
Feb. 3.

IN A RELATED MATTER  
Citizens for Thoughtful  
Development announced in a  
press release on Tuesday that it  
was taking an earlier decision of  
the Village Zoning Board of  
Appeals to the Columbia County  
Circuit Court. The decision in  
question was made on Dec. 19,  
when the board of appeals agreed  
with the village attorney's  
opinion that Didion did not need a  
variance for the height of the  
structures it is planning to build  
at its proposed ethanol plant.  
It appeared last week as if this  
issued(sic) might not be taken to  
court. Christa Westerberg,  
attorney for Cambrians For  
Thoughtful Development, stated  
Tuesday, however, "We told the  
village we weren't looking at it at  
that time, but we said we were  
still considering it, and the clients  
met over the weekend."

Westerberg noted that  
Tuesday was the group's deadline  
to file for the review of the  
decision with the circuit court.  
"We're willing to work with the  
village on stalling the case if they  
want to do another hearing and  
reexamine the issue," Westerberg  
stated.