

(March 26th, 2003 to the Beaver Dam Daily Citizen)

To the Editor:

I have been a resident of the Village of Cambria since 1978. I am not affiliated with any committee either for or against ethanol nor am I involved in the campaign efforts for our upcoming elections.

Currently we as a community are wrestling with the question of whether or not our Village Board should grant a permit to Didion Milling, Inc. for construction and operation of an ethanol plant.

The upcoming elections for several Village Board members, the Village President and a referendum question on the issue of allowing ethanol has caused the rapid proliferation of campaign signs, pro-ethanol signs, flyers, etc. Many of these signs extend well out into the country.

Our elections for candidates and referendums are governed by several Wisconsin Statutes. Candidates and political committees are required to register and to make available for public inspection their financial records. Candidates placing signs up are required to place a disclaimer on their signs, as well as their literature, so that we voters know who is paying for their campaigns.

I recently discovered that a referendum fund committee was established by Didion Milling key executives. The purpose of this committee is to promote a "Yes" vote on the upcoming referendum question. In spite of easy to understand and easy to obtain instructions from the Wisconsin Elections Board Didion has failed to file a complete Campaign Registration Statement. Two other committees, likely with far less financial resources than Didion, filed complete statements. But not Didion.

Didion has also failed to file a pre-elections financial report as required by Statutes. This report was due to our Cambria Village Clerk on March 24th. As of today, March 26th, it has still not been filed. I have requested this report as it is a public record as defined under Wisconsin's Public Records statute. Without this report being filed on a timely basis and so close to the April 1st election I and other voters have no ability to see who has contributed, what funds have been spent for, etc. Again, Didion has expert attorneys and easy access to Elections Board publications, etc. Yet they failed to follow simple requirements.

I have correspondence from an elections auditor with the Wisconsin Elections Board. He affirms my interpretation of Statutes. Didion's report of finances is late and there is absolutely no excuse they can offer.

I am NOT opposed to ethanol. I AM, however, opposed to Didion Milling operating an ethanol plant within or even close to our village limits. Their track record on environmental issues is horrible. They have ignored our own Village permitting process and, now, they cannot even follow Statutes in forming a committee to put out signage, literature, etc. all over the Village and into the rural areas.

In their efforts to secure a permit from our Village Board they have brought in their attorney numerous times. Their attorney and others affiliated with the company have lectured our Village Board and committees to "follow the law". Yet, this finding of an incomplete campaign registration and a tardy financial report is just one more example of Didion failing to follow the laws that other candidates and committees have chosen to follow.

I am asking the voters in the Village of Cambria to send a strong message to Didion by a "No" vote on the ethanol referendum question. This is "No" to a company that cannot follow the laws, yet lectures our hard-working Village Board to follow the laws. Enough is enough. Cambria, like most other communities, needs businesses and jobs but we need responsible businesses that live by the same sets of rules the rest of us have to live by.

Thank you,

Kenneth Merwin
Resident, Village of Cambria