

# PORTAGE DAILY REGISTER



Columbia County's Daily Newspaper

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## Local News ▼

### Cambria ethanol plant clears major hurdle

By Ann Marie Ames, Daily Register

A new plant is about to sprout near the village of Cambria. The Columbia County Planning and Zoning Committee unanimously approved a petition by Didion Milling for a conditional use permit to operate an ethanol plant in the town of Courtland on Tuesday, just over the southern-most border of the village of Cambria.

The plant will be adjacent to Didion's grain storage facility, which is located within village boundaries, and will have the capacity to produce 40 million gallons of ethanol each year. It will take about 14 months to build the plant, President Dow Didion said, and the company could break ground as soon as a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources public input session closes on Oct. 9.

"We feel good about the decision," Didion said. "It's been a long, stressful process. We understand people's emotions both pro and against the plant. We hope people will be understanding of our operation, and we hope this will be a positive project for the area and for the state of Wisconsin."

Many area grain producers wore pro-ethanol T-shirts and hats and joined Didion in celebrating the permit's approval.

"We're extremely happy," said town of Courtland resident and corn producer Lynn Wingers. "We hope it will enhance our market, increase our bottom line, increase taxes for the school district and highways and increase tourism. Hopefully people might want to come to Cambria to see how a nice ethanol plant operates."

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Across town lines, some residents were not pleased with the approval process of the plant's conditional use permit.

"This is not the end," said village resident John Mueller, a member of the outspoken grassroots organization Cambrians for Thoughtful Development.

Sarah Lloyd, who represents the area on the Columbia County Board, agreed that the group is not ready to give up the fight against the Didion plant, citing her displeasure with the approval process.

"There was no discussion in public forum," Lloyd said. "The agenda said that there would be deliberation. When did they deliberate? When did they decide how they were going to vote?"



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Members of the Planning and Zoning Committee acknowledged that the decision was a difficult one.

"This has been a very engaging issue," committee member Tim O'Neil said. "There are pros and cons on both sides. We wish things could have worked out differently for both sides as well."

The conditions for operating the plant include obtaining the necessary air and water permits, the installation and maintenance of an approved landscaping plan, regulated product storage and controlled lighting and signage, among other things. Didion also must provide copies relating to any DNR regulations to the town, village and county every six months for the first two years of operation, and upon request after that.

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