

# PORTAGE DAILY REGISTER

Columbia County's Daily Newspaper Saturday, October 28, 2006

**weather**



High: 49°F  
Low: 29°F  
Breezy

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### Ethanol battle still burning

By Ann Marie Ames, Daily Register

CAMBRIA — Didion Milling says work will continue on the 10-acre site for its proposed ethanol plant today. But some say the county should put a halt to construction, and Friday night the Village Board turned down a temporary permit that would have allowed Didion to cross Cabbage Road with heavy equipment.

At a special meeting Friday, the board approved a form to use to permit temporary access to the road with heavy equipment. Cabbage Road runs along the southernmost edge of the village and divides the village from the town of Courtland. On one side of the road is Didion's grain storage facility, and across the road is the site of the proposed ethanol plant.

The form approved by the board includes a \$100,000 invocable letter of credit from Didion Milling that would force Didion to pay, should Cabbage Road be damaged during construction of the ethanol plant. Although the form was approved, the board voted not to grant it to Didion until the matter of a possible stay, or halt, of construction that could be enforced by the county.

On Wednesday, the grassroots group Cambrians for Thoughtful Development, which opposes the site of the ethanol plant, filed an appeal of a conditional use permit granted to Didion by the Columbia County Board of Supervisors Planning and Zoning Committee in early October. According to a letter faxed to Columbia County Director of Planning and Zoning John Bluemke by the group's attorney on Thursday, county ordinances state that the filing of such an appeal "shall stay all proceedings in futherance of the action appealed from."

"One of the biggest reasons (the board turned down the application) is the stay enacted by the county," said Village President Gary Nehring. "It's useless to permit something if work is not allowed anyway."

County Supervisor Sarah Lloyd, who is a member of CTD, told the Village Board that as of 5:30 on Friday, her group had not heard from Bluemke's office about how or when a stay would be enforced.

Didion's Vice President of Operations Dale Drachenberg said late Friday night that the county had not told Didion it would enforce a stay.

"Work will continue tomorrow," Drachenberg said in a telephone interview after the meeting.

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Trustee Tim Perry was the only board member that supported giving Didion the temporary permit to cross Cabbage Road.

"This could end up costing the village a whole lot of money over nothing — over spite," Perry said.

Didion, he said, has threatened to press charges against anyone who blocks construction.

The board will hold another special meeting next week once it learns if or how the county will enforce the stay. At its regular meeting Nov. 6, the board will try to determine whether Cambria or Courtland has regulatory control of Cabbage Road, a fact that has been unclear since the village annexed the grain mill site in 1991.

On Nov. 7, the Planning and Zoning Committee will hold a public hearing in regards to a conditional use permit Didion applied for in order to move earth near shoreland.

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