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Columbia County committee approves rezoning

by Capital Newspapers Staff

PORTAGE - After more than two hours of debate, the Columbia County Planning and Zoning Committee approved a rezoning of land intended for a Didion Milling ethanol plant on Tuesday.

The divisions between property owners were stark during the debate; town of Courtland officials and residents asked for the ethanol plant to move forward, saying the plant would bolster revenues and provide employment for the sparsely populated area.

On the other side, residents from inside Cambria told the committee there were enough issues such as water use and environmental concerns to warrant rejecting the rezoning.

Despite allegations from the audience late Tuesday that committee members were at best insincere toward opponents' concerns, committee chairman Doug Richmond said the decision was nothing short of anguishing, forcing him up at night (sic) recently.

"This has probably been the most mind-taxing thing I've gone through on County Board," he said. "It's a very emotional subject, and I know it's pitting neighbor against neighbor and it's a hard thing to do."

The rezoning, which would switch the parcel to an industrial classification, will go to the full Columbia County board, perhaps as soon as June 21.