

PORTAGE DAILY REGISTER

Columbia County's Daily Newspaper Tuesday, October 24, 2006

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Group to appeal ethanol permit

By Ann Marie Ames

Opponents of a proposed ethanol plant near Cambria will make another attempt to block its construction. John Mueller, a spokesman for the grassroots group Cambrians for Thoughtful Development, said Monday that the group plans to file an appeal Tuesday of the conditional use permit granted to Didion Milling by the Columbia County Board of Supervisors Planning and Zoning Committee.

The permit, granted on Oct. 3, allowed Didion to operate an ethanol plant in the town of Courtland, just across village limits from its grain storage facility on the southern edge of Cambria.

Grand River Distribution, owners of Didion Milling, received air permits via e-mail from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources last Thursday. This was the last step in the approval process in the plant, and groundbreaking began Friday to prep the site for construction, said Dale Drachenberg, Didion's vice president of operations.

Mueller said his group hopes to stop the construction that is planned for the next 12 to 14 months by proving that the county's guidelines for granting conditional use permits were not adhered to and that the Planning and Zoning Committee did not have a public deliberation of the subject at its Oct. 3 meeting.

"There was no visible public deliberation," Mueller said. "There were a couple of apologies before a vote was taken. But there was no deliberation."

In late September, the village of Cambria hired an attorney to help draft suggestions for stringent conditions to be placed on the plant by the county. Village President Gary Nehring said Monday that the village is currently determining whether it will take steps to oppose the plant and may be closer to a decision early next week.

Once the appeal is filed, the five-member Columbia County Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing to hear testimony on the plant. The board could uphold, overturn or re-word the committee's decision, said Planning and Zoning Director John Bluemke.

Drachenberg declined to comment on the appeal until after it is filed.

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