

FARMINGTON TOWNSHIP

A Brine Newsletter from concerned property owners and residents (continued)

In 2016, at the October township meeting, a small group of residents attended, voicing their concerns and opposition to continued brining. A journalist from the Pittsburgh Post Gazette attended and authored an article about Farmington's brine story.

A well-known researcher from Duquesne University traveled to the township, taking several baseline samples of the roads and private water wells. Other researchers have expressed interest in testing for brine migration, township supervisors have not responded back with permission.

Over winter, an alternate road dust control company rep from Pittsburgh met with supervisors Wenzel, Beardsley, roadmaster Bloomgren and several private residents. It was his opinion that before alternate dust control materials could even be considered, township roads needed to have the brining stopped, massive upgrades, drainage and literally 100's of thousands of dollars in gravel.

A town meeting was originally scheduled for February 2017 to allow residents to voice their opinions about brining. It became postponed until March and the focus shifted to "If not brine.. then what?".

The March meeting was well attended with the overwhelming majority of attendees wanting the township to ban brine. Chairman Beardsley stressed brine cost the township very little to apply and that he did not want one family's well-known and unfortunate experience with oil and gas wastewater to prejudice others in the community who did wish brining to continue. The point was again re-iterated by the residents that they had gone as far as signing petitions requesting brining be banned.

Chairman Beardsley then challenged residents to research alternate dust control methods, applications and cost. It was implied that the brining would continue unless an alternative method for dust control was found.

Issues:

1. The township budget has not included money in 2017 for large scale dirt road maintenance, upgrade or gravel. Money is not included for alternate dust control. However, according to Section 3202(e); Second Class Township Code, there appears to be a procedural mechanism by which supplemental appropriations may be made.
2. A short reading of the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Code, Title .75, Section 9106 'Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance' appears to provide funding/grants for gravel roads improvement and maintenance. It is not known if the town has pursued this, and/or to what degree.
3. In the Second Class Township Code, Section 2303, "Road Complaints", it states if citizens believe township roads are not being maintained in accordance with the law, a court may appoint three persons to examine the highways and report the findings back to the courts. The complainants must (at least initially) bond or enter security to pay all costs.
4. Both the Second Class Township Code and the Cumulative Supplement #5, Section 607, state: The board of supervisors shall: (1) Be charged with the general governance of the township and the execution of legislative, executive and administrative powers in order to ensure sound fiscal management and to secure the health, safety and welfare of citizens of the township.
5. The PA DEP requires townships, generators of brine and spreaders of brine to keep certain records. Environmentalists have long complained these records are woefully inadequate, unenforceable and painfully out of touch with reality. They believe neither residents nor the environment receive even the most basic protection against brine spreading abuse.

DEP Rule Examples: (Can be found on DEP Website)

Brine must not be applied within 150 feet of a stream, creek, etc.

Brine must be spread by use of a spreader bar.

Brine must not be spread on wet roads, during rain, or when rain is imminent.

Brine is to be spread no more than once a month at a rate of one-third gallon per square yard.

The type of brine to be used is specified.

Brine must be controlled so it does not run off.

Farmington township residents will tell you they have witnessed all these rules and more being violated. In every Brine Spreading review Plan (ie. Farmington 2014) PA DEP states, "Should any pollution result from the brine spreading activity, the generator of the waste, the spreader of the waste, and the municipality involved will share responsibility regardless of the approval of the pollution measures outlined." But they leave it to the citizen to be the cop. The DEP wants the resident to note times, dates, frequency, even photograph. Then call the PA DEP (or email) at 1-866-255-5158, 1-888-723-3721 or 814-332-6839. There are computer links to call the EPA also.

Farmington Twp. dirt road residents have made many requests and have signed 2 petitions asking that brine spreading in the twp. be stopped/banned. It is a complex issue and to date Chairman Ed Beardsley has resisted siding with the people. The next township meeting is on the second Tuesday of April, April 11, at the Lander Fire hall. The issue is not settled, please attend.

Concerned Resident

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Russell, PA 16345

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For several years, individual Farmington Twp. Residents have approached the township supervisors and requested brine spreading on their roads be stopped. In 2016, a large percentage of all the Farmington Twp. dirt road residents signed 2 petitions asking that brine spreading be stopped/banned on township roads.

Resident concerns included but were not limited to:

1. The frequency and amounts of brining. Many residents reported brine being dumped on their roads twice a day, multiple days per week, throughout the non-snow season.
2. Ability of the brine to make its' own dust. It is dumped, it dries, and blows within hours.
3. Destabilization of dirt roads. The more truckloads of brine a road receives, the more difficult it becomes to navigate in wet weather. In dry conditions, over-brined roads become like concrete allowing the mechanical action of tires and wheels to create more dust.
4. Costly premature rusting of vehicles, farm implements, and buggies.
5. Health. Unavoidable exposure becomes 24 hrs. per day, 7 days per week, year after year.
6. Constant exposure to chemicals and toxins inherent in oil and gas wastewater (which is known as Brine.)
7. Radiation exposure – An integral component of all oil and gas wastewater (commonly called Brine.)
8. Potential damage to water wells from off-road migration of brine.
9. Excessive house, garden and barn dust from air-dried brine.
10. Environmental damage to water-ways, flora and fauna.

(Continued on back)