

Comstock Township residents protest proposed drain project

Published: Tuesday, May 03, 2011, 11:38 AM Updated: Tuesday, May 03, 2011, 1:24 PM



By **David T. Young** | **Special to the Kalamazoo Gazette**

COMSTOCK TOWNSHIP — About 40 **Comstock Township residents** packed the township board meeting Monday night to try to head off a local drain project at the pass, only to learn it was the wrong place at the wrong time.

The township board, after some misunderstandings, voted 6-0 to allow a petition for drain improvements for a retention pond in the "Kilowatt" district off ML Avenue to proceed to a special Board of Determination hearing to be scheduled by the Kalamazoo County Drain Commissioner's office.

Trustee Sandra Bloomfield, a resident of the district, abstained.

Residents voiced opposition to the need for any kind of improvements. They insisted only one resident of the district, Doug Ledbetter, would benefit from the project and other property owners prefer to leave things just as they are.

Nick Carson told the board, "I've lived out there (in the district) for 46 years and there's never been a problem with any drainage. A lot of people cannot afford to have an assessment against their property."

Kalamazoo County Assistant Drain Commissioner Jeff VanBelle said the petition claims every time it rains there is a overflow from the pond and possibility of environmental concerns from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. He promised he would hold the line at \$10,000 if the project

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was to go through and estimated that with 51 properties in the district, the average household cost would be \$130.

Mike Zuverink still questioned any need for improvements, saying, "When you get rain, the water from the pond will rise anyway. The water runoff is normal, it hasn't hurt anyone, it's run over the road or anyone's property."

But Ledbetter's property is adversely affected and VanBelle said, "This is not just a drainage issue, it's an ownership issue."

He was referring to the fact the pond's easement is under both the township and county.

Township Supervisor Tim Hudson explained, "It would not be responsible to just let it go until the drain fails. The township is not going to rescue that drain (because it doesn't have the financial resources)."

Residents affected will be notified of the date and time of the Board of Determination hearing, which likely will be held at the Community Center.

The special board of three impartial citizens who live outside the district and township will be appointed by the drain commissioner.

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