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## Steuben County wants state to set policy on road use for drilling

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**Corning Leader**

Posted Nov 29, 2010 @ 11:30 PM

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Bath, N.Y. — Assessing damage to local roads caused by heavy equipment related to the natural gas drilling industry should be included in regulations being drawn up by the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

That was the consensus of the Steuben County Legislature Monday afternoon in unanimously urging the DEC to include road regulations in its rules for the gas industry.

The DEC is in the process of writing regulations for gas companies interested in extracting natural gas from the underground Marcellus Shale formation.

According to the resolution passed by Steuben legislators, gas companies would be required have a road agreement or submit a trucking plan to the DEC before drilling permits would be issued.

The damage heavy equipment can cause local roads is a chief concern in the county.

County Public Works Commissioner Vincent Spagnoletti said the agreement is essential in helping the county and towns receive compensation.

"We can't stop them because they're all legal loads," Spagnoletti said. "But 200, 100 legal loads, it's going to bust the roads up bad. Now, I can post the road and will post the road ... lower the legal limit from 20 tons to 5 tons."

However, posting a road after the damage is done doesn't mean the drilling firm is required to pay for repairs, he said.

Adding the road use agreement to the state DEC's requirements will force gas companies to negotiate payments with the towns and county before any traffic occurs, Spagnoletti said.

"Pennsylvania has a law forcing these companies to post a bond before they begin drilling," he said. "They're way ahead of us."

Steuben also is drafting a local law dealing with road use but, so far, the draft is far too cumbersome, Spagnoletti said.

The DEC requirement would make other road-use laws adopted by the county or towns more secure, he said.

Spagnoletti said the county road agreement could be adopted by towns, but it won't be forced on them.

In other action Monday afternoon, legislators approved, 15-1, increasing private pay rates for both semi-private and private rooms at the county Health Care Facility effective Jan. 1.

The increase included a 6 percent state "cash receipts assessment" — which drew a "no" vote from county Legislator Gary Swackhamer, R-Hornell.

Swackhamer said later the assessment is another tax on costs that are already taxed.

"It's just double, maybe triple taxation," Swackhamer said.

The increase will raise the semi-private room rate from \$260 to \$270 per day and the private room rate from \$270 to \$280 per day. The 6 percent state fee will boost the totals to \$286.20 for semi-private rooms and \$296.80 for private rooms.

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