

## News

### Steve Israel: Sullivan holding off on drilling till impact is known

By Steve Israel

Published: 2:00 AM - 07/18/10

How does \$15.9 million sound for a cash-strapped county like Sullivan?

That's what nearby Broome County was just offered to lease land for gas drilling.

Inflection Energy of Colorado says it will pay \$3,000 an acre to lease 5,300 acres at Broome County's landfill and airport — with 20 percent royalties, if and when gas starts flowing.

But even though Sullivan sits on the same gas-rich Marcellus shale as Broome, don't look for Inflection to offer the county the same deal — yet.

"We could look at it, but right now we're focused on Broome and Tioga," Inflection Energy President Mark Sexton told the Times Herald-Record Thursday.

And even if Sullivan lawmakers were tempted by all that dough — about the same amount the county was supposed to get annually for casino mitigation way back when — they couldn't immediately lease county land.

In March, they voted not to allow drilling on county property until its impact on the environment and infrastructure is identified and addressed.

After speakers at Thursday night's county-sponsored forum said drilling "could become one of the major potential health problems" and turn the area into an "industrial zone," it's hard to see how Sullivan could follow in Broome's footsteps anytime soon.

### Show them the money

In an example of how local anti-drilling activists are making their mark, Sullivan may soon direct board members of organizations that receive taxpayer money — like the Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development and Cornell Cooperative Extension — to file financial disclosure forms.

The move comes after two residents — Bruce Ferguson and Jill Weiner of Catskill Citizens for Safe Energy and Keep Cohecton Green — last week told county legislators that taxpayer money "is being used to advance a pro-drilling agenda," and, added Weiner, "the personal business interests of individuals, who, I believe, are trading on the name and reputation of one of our most revered institutions, the Cornell Cooperative Extension."

Ferguson was referring to the Partnership's support of drilling — which, as Partnership President Tim McCausland points out, comes with the condition that "government and industry can properly collaborate to properly protect and preserve our natural resources."

Weiner was protesting the fact that Cornell presented a gas-drilling seminar with speakers who "are in the business of making money from leasing here in Sullivan County."

Legislators got the message, according to County Manager Dave Fanslau.

"There seemed to be general support that the board members of any organization that contractually gets financial support from the county should file the forms," he said, noting that the issue will be discussed Aug. 5 at a meeting of the Legislature's Community and Economic Development Committee.

### Got a big room, anyone?

So many folks journeyed down to West Trenton, N.J., to plead their case to the Delaware River Basin Commission for and against gas drilling last week that the fire marshal had to ask several of the 600-plus people to vacate the meeting site — the local firehouse, according to commission spokesman Clarke Rupert.

The reason for the ruckus?

The commission — which regulates drilling in the river corridor that includes Sullivan spots such as Narrowsburg and Callicoon — is drafting new regulations for drilling, which should be ready by the end of summer.

When those regs are ready, there will be at least one public hearing — in a very large space.

sisrael@th-record.com