

## Horseheads Village Gives Schlumberger Green Light

*Concerned citizens outraged by lack of environmental review*

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Less than a week after identifying 12 environmental concerns, the Horseheads Village Board of Trustees determined that there is no need for further environmental review.

On Tuesday, October 6, the trustees met to go over part III of the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR). They were to discuss the 12 items they had identified the week earlier as potential environmental impacts to ground and surface water quality, air quality, wildlife and public health and safety.

In this part of the environmental analysis Horseheads Village, as the lead agency, was supposed to take a “hard look” at the impacts and determine whether or not they are mitigated by the project. However, it appears that they read a document prepared by Bergmann Associates, as in the document there is reference to “our employees” and “our efforts”. At the end of the meeting the village board reached a “negative declaration”. This means that Schlumberger does not need to provide a more detailed environmental review and could clear the way for construction.

But some residents say, “Not so fast.” They are outraged that the village board will not require a full Environmental Impact Statement given that six days earlier the board had noted that the project development could potentially impact ground and surface water quality, air quality, wildlife and public health and safety.

Within 24 hours of the decision, a group of more than 130 residents filed legal notice to the Village Board of Trustees regarding their failure to require an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Schlumberger facility. They cited multiple violations of the environmental review process for the project.

"The village has violated local and state laws in a number of ways in their handling of this project," said Helen Slottje, the attorney representing the citizens. "We are taking action to demand that those failures be corrected."

In a letter faxed Wednesday to the village board, Slottje accused the board of undermining the SEQRA process. Among the claims: that the village board allowed Schlumberger to begin construction before environmental review was complete and by doing so, the board has failed to properly execute its responsibilities to safeguard the public welfare.

The citizen group requested that the board revisit the SEQR it completed at their October 6 meeting and make a finding of “significant environmental impact” for the project.

The letter also demanded that the board direct the village code enforcement officer to issue a stop-work order and a cease-and-desist order for the site currently in use by Schlumberger as a temporary facility until such time as they complete a proper environmental review for the temporary permit.

To add complexity to confusion, on Monday, October 5, Schlumberger submitted an alternative site plan review. In order to review the new information, the village board canceled their October 8 hearing at the last minute, and instead gave the meeting over to discussion. They moved the

hearing date to Tuesday, October 13 for public comment. No report on that meeting was available at press time.