Commissioners want action on injection well

By STEVE ROBB Messenger staff journalist  Feb 22, 2017

A letter will be sent to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources asking the agency to enforce its regulations in regard to the Ginsburg injection well, the Athens County Commissioners decided Tuesday.

The commissioners also voted to ask County Prosecutor Keller Blackburn to investigate whether there have been any criminal violations at the well and, if so, to prosecute.

The Ginsburg well, owned by Carper Injection Well-Albany LLC, is located on Ladd Ridge Road in Alexander Twp.

Felicia Mettler, a member of Torch CAN DO, an organization formed after the opening of injection wells in Troy Twp., was at Tuesday's meeting of the commissioners to request that they contact ODNR about the Ginsburg well.

Mettler said state inspection reports indicate that the well was not in operation on Oct. 19, 2015, and did not operate for all of 2016. The injection pump has been removed. However, there is an open pit that has liquid in it, although an inspection report last December indicated it did not appear to be leaking and there were no violations, according to information provided by Mettler.

In 2015 there was soil contamination from a dumpster with holes in it that was used to dispose of brine filters. A Feb. 3, 2016, report indicates the contamination has been remediated, according to Mettler. Other inspection reports cited by Mettler indicate other issues have occurred over the years at the well.

Injections wells are use to dispose of brine and other waste from oil and gas well drilling.

Mettler asserted that, under terms of a 1984 injection well permit, the well should have been plugged and abandoned within 60 days of it ceasing operations. Also, she asserted that keeping liquid in the pit for an extended period of time is a violation of state law.

However, ODNR spokesman Eric Heis said the well does not have any downhole or mechanical integrity issues rendering it “incapable” of injecting fluids, and state law calls for a well that is incapable of injecting fluids to be plugged.

“The surface pump is being rebuilt which has caused the delay in operation,” Heis said. “We have kept up inspections on the well during the down time, including an inspection last week. The inspector also told me that the pit is liquid tight and functioning properly.”

Mettler asked that the commissioners also request that the county prosecutor write ODNR and urge the agency to plug the well. Commissioner Charlie Adkins said he felt the they should go further and ask the prosecutor to look at the situation, determine if there are any criminal violations and, if any are found, to prosecute. The commissioners voted to send such a letter.