Dear Senator Glick,

I am writing you in regard to the Legislative Study Committee meeting about CAFO/Factory farm impacts, to be held on September 19. I wish to make public testimony about impacts of a CAFO built in spring of 2104 near the communities of Hatfield/Eureka. I feel well qualified to do so owing to my home being located about a quarter mile from that CAFO, which houses 55,000 turkeys being grown for slaughter. I would estimate there are hundreds of other people living within this quarter mile to three-eights mile range. The CAFO is owned by a Mr. Joe Parker, who resides many miles from the CAFO in another county.

There are four issues that I discuss: (1) odors, (2) health matters, (3) county health board and county commissioner matters, and (4) property values.

1. The odors the first summer (2104) were awful, almost daily. A person could not stay outside to have a cookout or just gossip with others. Indeed, many mornings the strong odors extended at least 8 miles east of here to the community of Reo, as attested by many people living there.

Obnoxious odors diminished after that first summer, but was still really bad for parts of most days. Apparently the owner installed a fan system that helped a bit. Then, this spring number the frequency of obnoxious odors decreased to about once a week. I am informed that the owner had an air filtration system, installed by a firm in Evansville.

Another problem was maggots. Piles of them. The owners were putting their dead turkeys in a dumpster alongside a main public road. The dead birds became putrid, and smells were terrible. Rotten blood was seeping from the dumpster into a ditch and into a shallow aquifer. That went on for some 4 or 5 months until IDEM ordered the dumpster to be removed from along the road. IDEM did not even fine the CAFO owner. I have no idea if the maggot problem still persists in a dumpster away from the road.

The point is that measures can be taken to mitigate odors from a fowl CAFO, if an owner wants to. But there are no Indiana state regulations requiring them do so.

2. Immediately after the CAFO was built, one person developed severe breathing problems, and sold his home and moved to Florida. Many others report breathing issues. Also, there is one case of physician-documented case of C. difficile (a serious bacterial infection), in which an infant went to Riley Hospital in Indianapolis, twice. The parents lived about a quarter mile from the CAFO. The infant went to Riley the first time the symptoms arose, whereupon the issue cleared up. Then, upon returning home the symptoms recurred, and again upon going to Riley the symptoms cleared up. The parents then moved 10 miles away, and the infant has since done fine.

The point is that numerous health problems have arisen since arrival of the CAFO.
3. Many people attended meetings of the county commissioners when it was announced in late 2013 that an application had been made to build the CAFO. Citizens in the Hatfield/Eureka area expressed their concerns about odors and other matters, such as the CAFO being built directly upon a major shallow aquifer that thousands of people depend on for their drinking water. The commissioners assured the public that there would be no odor issues, other than every 6 months or so when the barns were cleaned out. That turned out to be completely false. The commissioners also said that people had been spreading manure on the aquifer for many years, with no problems. That is true, but that manure from pre-CAFO time was not laden with the sorts of chemicals that are fed to animals in CAFOs, such as growth hormones.

Another problem has arisen with the county health board. The health board was informed, in writing, of the possible C. difficile issues from the CAFO. The health board did not follow up on this; their justification for not doing so was on the basis that the attorney for the health board reported that the infant did not live near the CAFO at a time when the C. difficile could have been contracted. That was absolutely wrong. I am a close relative of the mother of the infant, and I know the exact sequence of events. Moreover, the attorney never contacted any of the family for verification of timing or any other facts.

The point is that we have county authorities who do not take CAFO-related health matters seriously. That obviously needs to be done at state level.

4. Home values have crashed in the area. Many are on the market but cannot be sold. Those that do sell are at fire-sale prices—or CAFO-nearby prices. New home construction has stopped, completely, despite being in a desirable area not far from Evansville. New home building was progressing well before arrival of the CAFO.

The point is that those who tell you home values will not be adversely affected are not telling it the way it is.

I am sending copies of this communication to the Spencer County Commissioners and to the Spencer County Health Board.

Respectfully,

Edie Weber
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