

Spirit ADVOCATE

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OUR VIEW

When 'anti-Rockwool' morphs into 'anti-ratepayers'

A decision to reject the bond to finance the construction of a sewer line to the plant would not hurt Rockwool. It would hurt households in our community for years to come because the sewer service will still be provided, just with no zero-interest financing.



SETH FREEMAN

Protesters since summer have insisted Rockwool in Ranson will ruin life here, but the Denmark-based company is operating safely in the United States, Canada and dozens of other communities around the world.

We urge Charles Town leaders and Jefferson County residents in positions of power to think carefully about the decisions ahead on sewer and water service to the site where Rockwool plans to build its second U.S. factory.

Some members of the Charles Town City Council clearly don't want Rockwool here, but a decision to reject a bond to finance the construction of a sewer line to the plant would not hurt Rockwool. It would hurt households in our community for years to come because the sewer service will still be provided, just with no zero-interest financing from the state of West Virginia.

A "no" vote from city officials would no doubt thrill those in the ToxicRockwool movement, but what kind of leader would choose to sock ratepayers, including low-income households, with higher bills for decades just to score a few cheap political points today?

Officials with the Charles Town Utility Board could not be more clear: CTUB cannot legally deny service to Rockwool.

Just this week, Lee Snyder – the president of Kearneysville's Jefferson Utilities Inc. – responded to a series of questions asked by Council Mike Brittingham and others who expressed extreme confusion and frustration about the myriad details of the planned extension of water service to onetime Jefferson Orchards site.

QUESTION 1

What volume of water (measured in gallons per day) are you proposing to provide for the Rockwool-Ranson facility to meet its immediate demand and how does that volume change over time?

Lee Snyder's answer:

In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding, Jefferson Utilities expects to provide approximately 160,000 gallons of water per day to Rockwool, once the plant is in full operation. We do not know with any degree of certainty what future demands may be.

QUESTION 2

Of the public documents JUI has recently developed related to this project, which document most accurately describes the company's plan and agreements to provide new water service in the Jefferson Orchards area of the county? Provide a copy of the document(s).

Lee Snyder's answer:

The Memorandum of Understanding and the User Agreement both describe what has been agreed upon. Copies of both are attached. They are both public record. Moreover, as a public utility regulated by the PSC, JUI is obligated to provide water service to all new

customers within its service territory that apply for service. Indeed, the PSC's Water Rule 5.5.a (W. Va. Code R. § 150-7-5.5.a), states that "[a] water utility, whether publicly or privately owned, is under a public service obligation to extend its mains, and its plant and facilities to serve new customers within its service area who may apply for service."

QUESTION 3

In a document filed with the WV Public Service Commission (dated June 26, 2018), the company indicated the Rockwool-Ranson facility may need up to 500,000 gallons of water per day. The company has indicated it will only need about 320,000 gallons per day at a maximum production. The additional 180,000 gallons per day is 56.25 percent higher than the company's stated need. Please explain the need for this much additional water, identify any expected new customers that would benefit from the additional water capacity, and who is paying to construct the additional capacity.

Lee Snyder's answer:

First, we believe the 500,000 gpd volume was simply a conservative estimate. However, providing high quality water service to any and all customers who may need it is the reason we operate. Our mission is: "To improve lives by providing and improving public water service." We will be happy to supply 500,000 gpd if that demand materializes. Unfortunately, the vile unfounded opposition to the Rockwool facility will likely damage the potential of other businesses to locate in Jefferson County or the cities of Ranson and Charles Town for many years to come.

QUESTION 4

In the same document filed with the Public

Service Commission, the scope of work included the construction of a 16" water line with fittings, valves and accessories. At this size, is the pipe limited to 500,000 gallons per day or can it accommodate additional flow? If so, what is the maximum amount of water that can flow through a line of this size per day?

Lee Snyder's answer:

There is no simple answer to this question. We at Jefferson Utilities chose to plan for the installation of 16" transmission lines many years ago to assure the adequacy of our lines to serve a growing county. The 16" lines can easily carry in excess of 500,000 gallons per day to the Jefferson Orchard Business Park. Large lines are necessary to allow the pumping of water from water treatment plants and booster stations to the customers and to refill storage tanks.

Larger lines allow water to be moved more economically and with lower pressure variations caused by the friction head developed in the transmission mains.

When we design and install water lines, we realistically expect those lines to be in service for over 100 years. Accordingly, our planning horizon needs to be well past what can be predicted with accuracy. With the growth that has occurred in Berkeley County, we have seen their need, within a few decades of installation, to relay water lines through developed neighborhoods. Our goal is to provide long-lasting pipe lines of such size as we feel are adequate and most prudent.

QUESTION 5

The JCDA and JUI Memorandum of Understanding limits Rockwool's ability to initially access only potable water provided by JUI. The company had indicated they plan to recapture and use stormwater to offset some

of its water needs. Is the company's plan to reuse stormwater a direct violation of the MOU? If so, what are JUI's plans to enforce this provision of the agreement?

Lee Snyder's answer:

JUI does not feel that Rockwool's use of raw water collected on their own property is a violation of the MOU. Moreover, JUI is not aware of any West Virginia law or regulation that restricts an individual's or entity's ability to capture stormwater and reuse it.

Lee Snyder – no relation to any of the Snyders working here at the *Spirit*, by the way – has provided ample, easy to understand answers to Brittingham and others who present themselves as so completely perplexed on the subject. The truth is, the matter here is more clear than they want to see. Rockwool followed the rules in coming to Jefferson County, the opposition wasn't paying attention until after the project's groundbreaking and now seeks to find some way, any way, to stop a company with a long tradition of being a positive community partner.

We urge members of City Council, Mayor Scott Rogers and those on the Jefferson County Development Authority now and those appointed in the days to come to responsibly investigate the claims made by Jefferson County Vision and others fighting Rockwool and begin to see the hysteria for what it is.

Citizens paying for water and sewer in the county shouldn't endure higher bills for years to come just because so many in the county are in an uproar over a company that's operating safely in numerous communities around the globe.

There are infrastructure deals on the table, and we should say yes to them ASAP.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Resentful' about Rockwool

Rockwool representatives assure us they want to be a good neighbor. A good neighbor would not be trying to drop a polluting stink bomb in the middle of Jefferson County.

My good neighbors in Jefferson County are extremely unhappy with the West Virginia Development Authority and the Jefferson County Development Authority. We can and will vote them out. They will never pull another dirty trick on us.

Jefferson County citizens do not appreciate polluters coming from Europe and telling us what they're going to do in our back yard. You ignore our pleas to go away at your own peril.

Even if you are able to force your way into Jefferson County, you will never be regarded as a good neighbor. We are resentful now and we won't be any happier or friendlier after you start pelting us with chemicals, particulates, noise and traffic. You will have no community or political support in years to come. Do you really want to be somewhere you are not wanted?

REGINA HENDRIX
Charles Town

Face it: Sugar is a toxin

Just this week, *The Washington Post* editorial section highlighted two toxins for children that most are aware of, tobacco and alcohol. Here is my voice from the darkness of the current health status of children in response to both the Nov. 16 front-page article, "FDA unveils broad anti-tobacco effort to reduce underage vaping, smoking," and the Letter to Editor on Nov. 24, "The next epidemic the FDA should tackle: Underage drinking."

As a physician in the most obese state in the country and now dealing with what used to be adult disease in children – Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, fatty liver, metabolic syndrome, sleep apnea and var-

ious mental health disorders that travel with obesity – I find it discouraging that the leading driver of what is a global pandemic for the current and future generation is hiding in plain sight. The first article justly critiques and makes a call to respond to "flavored nicotine products, often in fruity, sweet and creamy flavors, that appeal to kids." The writer shares the alcohol industry's similar tactics of sweet flavored alcohol drinks appealing to young drinkers. My plea is for us all to look at what we are feeding to children in the same vein as other addictive substances.

In school breakfasts and lunches which are based on federal dietary

guidelines, children can take in over 200 grams of processed carbohydrates and sugar, not just in the form of the sweetened drinks but also in the added sugars and sweeteners to pretty much everything on their plate: the breakfast cereal, spaghetti sauce, ketchup, baked goods, dressings and gravies, and even the fruit cups. And then they go home to more junk food and Mountain Dew. Unbelievably, yet legally, the No. 1 product purchased with SNAP dollars is soda. When is the FDA and CDC going to take action on sugar as a toxin?

The dose makes the toxin and the evidence is staring right at us and we are at toxic doses all over the world now. We eliminated all sugar-sweetened beverages at my small

hospital, Jefferson Medical Center. It's one small step but giant leaps are needed and the FDA and CDC most lead us in bold action. The world knows now to throw out the lettuce in response to the CDC's bold warning. We have been made aware of potential respiratory toxins with the thousands of "Toxic Rockwool" signs canvassing the county. When will the authorities tell us to get rid of the edible toxins causing more death and disease than anything we have ever witnessed in human history? Until then empower yourself, your family and your community to resist the status quo and create change.

DR. MARK CUCUZZELLA
Shepherdstown

'Atrocities are happening in our name'

So many atrocities are happening in our name under the Trump administration, it's hard to keep from being desensitized by it all. The latest: Trump has gone from separating immigrant children from their parents and putting them in cages to tear gassing them as their parents try to seek asylum along our southern borders.

Does this Make America Great Again? Is this what Jesus would do? Where is our heart, our compassion, our moral authority?

What's to be done as our elected "leaders" remain silent? I'm at a loss. The election of 2020 seems too far off, and our district just re-elected Trump head cheerleader, Alex

Mooney, to represent us. I'm exhausted from the moral outrage and yet this administration won't let up.

Make no mistake – Trump is testing us to see whether we'll remain silent while children at our border are tear gassed. I am appalled and ashamed daily by what's happening – in my name – to children, marginalized people and to our environment and perpetrated by these elected "leaders." Call, write and continue to hold them accountable. We can't let up. Many lives are at stake!

KIT MCGINNIS Charles Town

WORTH NOTING

On the Rockwool uproar at a candidates forum last month:

"I must say that I'm astonished, I'm absolutely astonished, that a lawyer and a former prosecutor [candidate Ralph Lorenzetti] would stand in front of you and say that meeting the law is not enough. What do we do? Make up laws and make up things as we go along? We follow the law as it's written. If the law needs to be changed, then some level of legislature, either state or federal, needs to be lobbied and the law needs to be changed. But if we don't go along and follow the law and say, 'Well, it's not enough to follow the law, we have to do something else,' What is that something else? Where is the standard that we go to? We're not in a situation where we can just sit down and say, 'Well, we're going to make this up for this and we're going to make this up for that.'"

PETER ONOSZKO, then-Jefferson County Commissioner