

# Public Reacts To Water District Extension Proposal



**THE SCOUT BOTTLE DRIVE** takes place the first Saturday of every month at the Community Center. Last week's drive netted \$135.25 for Troop # 48.

A brief history of the development of public water in Lansing and a summary of the technical and financial aspects of this proposal appeared in the November 21st issue of the Lansing Community News.

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It was nearly "standing room only" at last Wednesday night's public informational meeting at the High School as residents from the Algerine, Ludlow, Bill George and Lansing Station Road section of town wrestled with the costs and benefits of extending public water to their neighborhood.

The residents first listened and then vigorously posed questions as town engineer David Herrick presented an initial proposal and cost estimates for the project. The proposal was prepared after the Town Board received a petition last summer from a majority of the area's property owners requesting a study of public water service.

As Herrick outlined the scope and cost of the \$2 million proposal, he stressed that any decision to proceed would be subject to modification depending on residents' feedback.

Though the public's reaction was diverse, four concerns kept recurring during the question period after the presentation.

Landowners appeared nearly unanimous in wanting the town to pursue research on the possibility of attracting grant or low-cost loan funds to reduce the impact of cost recovery on taxpayers. Town officials appeared more than willing to investigate fur-



**A FULL HOUSE** packed the High School lecture hall Wednesday, Dec. 4 for an informational meeting on the proposed Water District 17, Extension 5.

ther, but did not hold out much hope that the area's income level would make the project eligible for federal grant money.

Second, many residents to the east of the Conrail tracks were concerned about their having to share in the \$200,000+ cost of bringing water lines to those living on the west side of the tracks.

Third, many landowners appeared surprised to learn that if their property lies within the ag district, no new construction may be connected to public water. Though affected landowners may petition to have their land discharged from the district, this option will not be available in Lansing until 2004.

Finally, many (both those in favor and those opposed to the initial proposal) expressed strong reservations about the proposed cost allocation formula. Under the formula which factors road and back acre-

age as well as dwelling units, several agricultural tracts of land might have to pay annual assessments exceeding \$5,000.

"You're asking people with large vacant ag land to shoulder an unconscionable burden," said Daniel Konowalow. "As far as I can figure, the 175 agricultural acres that I and one other owner have in the project are going to be assessed 15 percent of the project cost. And because we're in an ag district, I won't even be allowed to hook up to the system I'd be forced to pay for."

With some residents willing to pay any price at all to get water they can drink and others feeling squeezed by high projected assessments that won't benefit them, the Town Board tanked landowners for their comments and indicated that a more detailed survey will be forthcoming to determine if a reconfiguration of the system and/or user assessment formula can be developed.

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