

This is in response to the July 25 Op-Ed, “Pinelands no closer to sewers” by Councilman Frank Caligiuri of Monroe Township.

The Pinelands Preservation Alliance (PPA) would like to clarify some misleading statements made in that article.

It is true that PPA took the Pinelands Commission to task in our annual State of the Pinelands Report for certifying Monroe Township’s Reexamination Report (update to the township’s Master Plan). The Reexamination Report recommends that the Diamond Lake community, located in a Rural Development Area, be serviced with public sewer. Sewers are strictly prohibited in Rural Development Areas of the Pinelands. The intent of prohibiting sewers in this management area is to keep these areas “Rural.” Once sewers are brought into an area, higher development density automatically follows. It is for this reason that PPA supports the Pinelands policy of barring sewers in conservation-oriented management areas, especially when there is no proof that there is a genuine public health problem. Pinelands regulations provide municipalities the flexibility to bring sewers into a Rural Development Area once a public health problem has been documented. Monroe can always exercise this option.

The argument for extending sewers to Diamond Lake is dubious at best. If the real concern were that residents could be drinking contaminated water from their wells, the answer would be to extend public water to the homes, not sewers. Pinelands regulations allow for public water in Rural Development Areas. Monroe can undertake this measure at any time. Some residents of Diamond Lake suspect, and we agree, that they are being used as a pawn to force a public health scenario on them, that will really serve as the rationale to bring sewer from afar to increase development potential along the Black Horse Pike. Finally, PPA has never opposed any study of the Diamond Lake area, nor would we.

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