

Fix water system, then worry about fluoridation

THE ISSUE | Proposition 1 in the City of Corning.
OUR OPINION | Fluoridation has merit, but the city's water system needs fixing first.

There's a few things to acknowledge right off the bat concerning Proposition 1 that Corning residents will vote on Tuesday.

First, is the confusing way the ballot question is written. Basically, residents who want fluoride added to the city water supply should vote "no" and those who don't should vote "yes." So, voting "no" means yes and voting "yes" means no.

Second, anyone who says this vote merely addresses the powers of the City Council as it pertains to the city charter and has nothing to do with fluoride shouldn't be listened to. Fluoridation is the sole reason for this vote, period.

Lastly, fluoride definitely helps prevent tooth decay. Its benefits are well documented.

That said, we believe this is not the right time to start adding fluoride to the city's water system. More pressing priorities exist, namely replacing the city's ancient and leaky water distribution system that would carry the fluoride additive to households.

Most of the city's underground water pipes are 80 to 100 years old and one-fifth of the water pumped through it leaks into the ground, according to city officials. It would make more sense to fix the pipes first before more is spent on what is pumped

through them.

The cost of replacing the city's water pipes would be \$10 million or more and take several years to complete. It's a necessity that has to be done with long-range planning.

Also, the actual cost of fluoridating the water system and its impact on users is unknown. The estimates that have been used by fluoride supporters are two years old and inaccurate.

An engineering study done in 2006 concluded fluoridation would cost \$195,000 if it was done as part of a larger project — totaling \$600,000 — that included enlarging the well houses and changing the way the water system is disinfected.

For two years, attempts to secure grants to defray the costs have been unsuccessful. Also, the cost of fluoridation would jump dramatically — possibly \$500,000 or more — if it were done independently of the disinfection project, because some costs overlap.

Further, the impact on water users would be much higher than the \$3 per year claimed by some.

In many respects, what this issue comes down to is need vs. want. The city *needs* to fix its water system while some *want* fluoride.

We think the choice is pretty clear.

ARTIST'S VIEW



GUEST EDITORIAL | FRANK COCCHO

Vote 'no' on Prop. 1

On Tuesday, we'll be supporting our favorite candidates. At the top of the ballot is Proposition 1 which, if approved, will strip the City Council of its authority to fluoridate the city's water supply. Proposition 1 is the result of a few Corning residents exercising their rights to circulate a petition calling for the referendum. These same people want us to believe a "yes" vote automatically transfers the power to enact fluoridation to the citizens of Corning, which is totally false!

On June 21, 2006, after numerous discussions and public meetings on fluoridation, the Corning City Board of Health unanimously recommended to the City Council that Corning fluoridate its water supply.

In an attempt to ensure the public was fully aware of any possible ill effects from fluoride, a group of physicians and dentists participated in a well-promoted public panel discussion to answer allegations that fluoridated water poses health risks. The panel consisted of Dr. Gary Enders; Maureen Gonta, DDS; Thomas Curran, DDS; Dr. John Gunselman; and Dr.

Jacob Felix.

The panel answered numerous questions submitted to them by members of the City Council and the public. The panel was unanimous with their opinions: fluoride is instrumental in promoting good oral health; unanimous that there has been no evidence fluoridated water has any negative effects on the body's organs or bones; unanimous that fluoridation is a safe and effective way of reducing dental decay; and unanimous that water fluoridation benefits everyone, especially our children.

In November, 2006, the City Council resolved to adjust the level of fluoride in the city's water supply providing the supporters of fluoride raised \$100,000 to assist with capital costs. When the \$100,000 was raised, the City Council voted in favor of fluoridation. However, on March 3, 2008, a new City Council rescinded the Nov. 6 resolution.

Our neighbors in Painted Post, Erwin, Bath, Horseheads, Elmira and others, have been drinking fluoridated water for decades. Two-thirds of New York state and 170 million Americans benefit from

fluoridated water. Over 100 local medical and dental professionals publicly support water fluoridation and encourage a "no" vote on Proposition 1. Can all these health professionals be wrong?

Last year I observed a local pediatric dentist treating a sedated 10-year-old Corning girl for extensive tooth decay. I prefer not to witness this saddening procedure ever again. The advanced dental disease this young lady was suffering from could have been avoided or significantly reduced if she lived in a fluoridated community.

There are individuals saying I am beholden to the dentists because of their "large" contributions to my reelection campaign. I received a total of \$150 from two dentists. Be assured I would never support anything that had the remote possibility of being injurious or detrimental to the health and safety of our citizens, most importantly our kids.

I strongly encourage the citizens of Corning to vote "no" on Proposition 1.

■ Frank Coccho is the former mayor of Corning.



GUEST EDITORIAL | CHAD MOORE

Vote 'yes' on Prop. 1

Proposition 1 in Corning is not a yes/no vote on water fluoridation. If you want a yes/no vote on water fluoridation then the only way that can possibly happen is if we vote yes on Proposition 1.

The law prohibits it any other way. Vote "yes" to transfer the power to fluoridate our city water supply from a nine-member City Council to we the people. Vote "no" to relinquish your control to the City Council.

Ithaca has had a local law since 1965 that is identical to Proposition 1, which prohibits the council from enacting legislation to fluoridate the city's water supply. Since Ithaca's 1965 referendum, the public has voted on water fluorida-

tion, the last time being in 2000. The citizens of Ithaca rejected putting fluoride in their drinking water.

There is no better way to have democratic system than to vote "yes" on Proposition 1. Voting "yes" will actually strengthen local control. We will not lose control. Steuben County does not own Corning's water supply and, therefore, has no jurisdiction over it. The county doesn't want the liability or expense of our water supply. Therefore, those lawn signs are lying. The "no" camp is running a fear and smear campaign. Could they please just provide the facts? The problem is the facts are hard to swallow.

Why are the dentist saying no? Why don't they want us to decide?

What does your vote

mean?

"Yes" — I want to make the decision on fluoride in the voting booth.

"No" — I trust five of nine people to choose for me, whatever it costs.

People who do not want to add fluoride to the public drinking water should vote "yes" on Proposition 1. Voting "yes" will change our City Charter to stop the council from fluoridating our water supply.

If we vote "yes," water fluoridation can come up again. However, if it does, the public will vote and not the City Council.

Voters who want a say about adding fluoride to our drinking water are voting yes on Proposition 1 on Tuesday.

■ Chad Moore is a Corning resident.

Election night is like the Super Bowl for newspapers

The election is just two days away and the anticipation is

on par with what I went through in February when the Giants were getting ready to face the Patriots in the Super

CITY BEAT



Je Dunning

Bowl.

The presidential election will be history-making no matter who wins. The results of our area's congressional race should be close and bringing an end to the contest for Steuben County Sheriff will be a relief.

Here at the paper, we're anticipating a busy night to get the most accurate results and reports by deadline for Wednesday's edition. It'll be chaotic as it always is every four years. But in the news business, election night is like our Super Bowl and the hardest part is waiting for it to finally get here.

That said, here are some fearless predictions (not endorsements) for Tuesday's election:

■ Barack Obama will beat Sen. John McCain for president. The electoral votes will be 336-202 and Obama will receive a mandate with at least 50 percent of the popular vote.

■ Eric Massa will upset U.S. Rep. Randy Kuhl in the rematch race, 52 percent to 48 percent. As he did in 2006, Massa will carry Monroe County but I also think he'll win in Ontario and Chemung counties where the margins were narrow two years ago. Kuhl will easily carry Steuben, Allegany, Cattaraugus, Schuyler and Yates counties but it won't be enough to overcome more vote-laden areas.

■ State Sen. George Winner will be returning to Albany with a landslide victory over Elmira Mayor John Tonello. The margin will be 20 points, if not more.

■ Assemblyman Jim Bacalles will also be returning to Albany and will garner 99 percent of the vote cast for his seat. (He's running unopposed but there will be a few write-ins).

■ Joel Ordway will return to the Public Safety Building as sheriff by beating Dave Cole, 55 percent to 45 percent. The Republican base will rally for Ordway and Cole's strategy of recruiting Jim Waight as his undersheriff to put him over the top won't produce the desired results.

■ Proposition 1 in Corning will pass amid voter confusion over the ballot question. "Yes" will prevail over "no," which means no fluoride in the city's water system. I think more residents don't want fluoridation or higher water bills than the vote totals will reflect, and I predict there will be plenty of miscast votes. The "no" advocates have been much more vocal and organized, but I think the "yes" supporters represent a silent majority on this issue.

■ Je Dunning is managing editor for *The Leader*. He can be reached at jdunning@the-leader.com or 936-4651, Ext. 362.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Choose Rose for town justice

TO THE EDITOR | This year's general election ballot will have many people to choose from, and many of you may just vote your own party line. I urge you not to do this. You should choose the candidate that you feel will represent you in the fullest capacity. For the Town of Corning, I encourage you all to vote for Glen Rose for Corning Town Justice. Retiring from the Corning Police Department with 27 years in law enforcement, Glen has the knowledge of the law and the experience of the courtroom. This is a very important position and experience does count. As a police officer it was an everyday occurrence to protect and serve his community. He also witnessed all aspects of the courtroom and proceedings. As a man, he has shown fairness, respect and responsibility. Glen Rose is the right man for the position of Corning Town Justice.

Kathleen A. Rose
Corning

Winner fights for our volunteers

TO THE EDITOR | Many us know that the volunteer fire and ambulance company is the heart and soul of a rural community. It's not only about protecting our homes and our lives. Our volunteers serve our communities in many ways.

If we want to preserve the traditional fabric of rural areas, we need to understand how hard it's becoming to attract and to keep the volunteers that we've always depended on to respond to emergencies and help build our communities.

New York State Sen. Winner, who's running for re-election this year, is the leading voice for rural New York in state government. Since becoming our state senator four years ago, he has constantly fought for legislation to help communities attract and retain volunteer firefighters and EMTs, and to protect local property taxpayers.

We need to re-elect Sen. Winner. He's fighting to protect all of us because he's the only one fighting for the future of our volunteers.

Ralph Vedder
Himrod

LETTERS POLICY | THE LEADER

The Leader encourages members of the community to tell us their thoughts on issues of public importance.

■ Letters should be typed or neatly printed.

■ Letters must be kept to a maximum of 250 words. Letters longer than that will not be considered.

■ Letters must be signed and include an address and phone number. No letters will be published unless verified with the author in person or by telephone.

■ Letters may be edited for space considerations.

■ The publication of any letter is at the discretion of the editor.

■ All letters become the

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