

### Public Comment

Dear Members of the City Planning Commission,

I would like to respond further to some of the thoughts expressed at your recent meeting. I know the planning office is very conscientious about making sure everyone on the commission gets the same information, so I'm sending this to all of you, to keep on the back burner in the event of future aquifer-related decisions.

First, I want to thank you again for your attention and patience. I served a term on county planning & zoning, and I know it's a lot of work and responsibility on volunteer time. Your efforts are appreciated.

As I mentioned last Monday, the city has done a lot of work on understanding the Casper Aquifer. There still is much to be learned, but we have the basic outlines, as described in the Casper Aquifer Protection Plan.

The City of Laramie is exceedingly fortunate to have access to a relatively pristine groundwater resource that is "recharged" by precipitation on its surface (the area east of town to the crest of the Laramie Range).

Because contaminants on the surface (or near surface, like septic systems) eventually will find their way to the aquifer, the way to protect the aquifer is to regulate land uses.

There already is some development over the aquifer, most of it dating from several decades ago when nobody was thinking "aquifer." The existing subdivisions have resulted in documented but localized contamination issues.

Aquifer protection generally is a matter of addressing *cumulative* impact. No *single* development is likely to cause a serious problem (except maybe Tumbleweed!). To take up Commissioner Homer's example, if we did a study on Little Valley like his anti-smoking study, it probably would show that Little Valley's impact on Laramie's water supply is likely to be relatively small.

However, "small" is not zero, and the smalls add up. Little Valley plus another development, plus another development, plus another development, means a progressive degradation of aquifer quality. Bit by bit, it will get worse. Even if we don't reach the point of official water quality violations (and having to pay for treatment would make taxpayers unhappy), what is the sense of degrading a pristine resource? Is "barely legal" our only aspiration?

Bear in mind, also, that our current understanding of - and ability to detect - the full range of potential pollutants is limited. We tend to focus on nitrates because they are an obvious indicator of contamination and the detection technology is well developed. However, we know next to nothing about the effects of personal care products, pharmaceuticals, and cleaners that find their way into the aquifer from septic systems, nor about the impacts of pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, road runoff, etc. that go into the aquifer even if the area is on city water and sewer.

Engineering controls can be good as far as they go, but they require monitoring, maintenance and funding ... forever. Who is going to check, later on, to make sure a lined channel really takes the runoff away from the fault zone? Who checks to make sure filters are maintained or replaced? Who checks on whether the landscapers are using the proper amount/type of fertilizer/herbicide?

Right now, I think an honest answer to these questions is: no one ... much less someone 10, 20, 50 years down the road.

Granted, again, that most of the responsibility for aquifer protection lies with the county. But I encourage the city to set a good example.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Gorin